

# SALT AND LIGHT TELEVISION

## Series 2 JESUS, THE "I AM"

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Rev 1:17-18 "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And he placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.' "

17. 1 Peter 3:18-19 "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison."

18. 1 Peter 4:6 "For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God."

John 11:25-26 "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' "

Rom 10:7-10 "But what does it say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

## JESUS, THE "I AM"

11. Matt 27:50-53 "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, 'Tetelesti' and yielded up His Spirit."
12. "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." A public display!
13. "And the earth shook and the rocks were split." A public display!
14. "The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many." A public display!
15. John 20:1 "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark and saw the stone already taken away." Not to let Jesus out but to let us in, in order to let us see that Jesus wasn't there!

*"Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Saviour,  
He tore the bars the bars away, Jesus my Lord'  
Up from the grave He arose  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;  
He arose the victor from the dark domain  
and He lives forever with His saints to reign;  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah, Christ arose.  
(Robert Wadsworth Lowry)*

16. John 20:4-7 "The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. "

One of my wife Janette's favourite passages of Scripture! Jesus had time to be tidy.

The origin of the name "I AM":

Ex 3:1-15 "Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up.'

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' And Moses said, 'Here I am.' 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey - the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' And God said, 'I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.' Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?'

God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you." God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you." This is my

name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.' "

I want to draw your attention to 9 things:

1. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flames of fire within the bush.
2. The bush didn't burn up. It was nothing unusual to see a bush suddenly burst into flames and burn up in a couple of minutes. But this one continued to burn. This was supernatural!
3. As Moses draws close to the bush, God stops him in his tracks by calling his name, "Moses! Moses! Do not come any closer, take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."
4. Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God."
5. "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them. Are you suffering at this present time? Would you describe your state as one of misery? Then be sure to know that God has seen your misery and is concerned about your suffering! And that He will come down and rescue you!
6. Moses asks, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" Now, why would Moses ask this question? Acts 7:25 "Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not." The sin of presumption. King David prayed in Ps 19:13 "Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression."
7. And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." One of the least assuring signs in Scripture. When you finish doing what I say then you will receive your sign!
8. Moses then says to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' then what shall I tell them?" Now comes a history-changing answer. Although God had been

4. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him.
5. Having forgiven us all our transgressions.
6. Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us.
7. He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

*My sin – oh the bliss of this glorious thought,  
My sin not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more.  
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord Oh my soul.  
It is well, with my soul. It is well it is well with my soul.  
(H. Spafford)*

8. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, Heb 2:14-15 "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." The phrase "render powerless" means to "reduce to zero". When our daughter Rachel was five years old she came in from school one day and enquired, "What do five zeros and eight zeros added together make?" She couldn't receive my answer. She said, "But daddy, there are five of them and eight of them. They must make something!" I replied, "If there were five hundred and eight hundred they would still add up to nothing."
9. 1 John 3:8 "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." Destroy has the sense of becoming unglued! Have you noticed that soap containers glued to the wall don't seem to last all that long.
10. He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. A conquering monarch would return in triumphant procession followed by a chained group of captured prisoners.

## I AM the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:25-26 "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'"

Gen 1:28 "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

Gen 3:6 "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

Rom 5:18-19 "So then, as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

1. Sin came into the world! You never have to teach a child to be naughty. They do it naturally, that's because it is in their nature.
2. High Treason! Not only did sin come into the world, but by obeying Satan, Adam committed high treason. He automatically handed over the keys of government (not ownership) to Satan and Satan became the prince of this world with the ability to blind the eyes of this world (2 Cor 4:4). Jesus speaks of the ruler of this world being cast out (John 12:31). Luke 4:5-7 "And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.'"
3. Col 2:12-15 "...having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

referred to the LORD God in Genesis, for the first time ever, Almighty God was specifically revealing His earthly name by which He would be known for ever (From generation to generation)! Ex 6:2-3 "God also said to Moses, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.'"

9. Matthew Henry wrote: "Two names God would now be known by, a name that denotes what he is in himself, I AM THAT I AM. This explains his name Jehovah, or Yahweh (LORD) and signifies:
  - a. That he is self-existent: he has his being of himself.
  - b. That he is eternal and unchangeable, and always the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.
  - c. That he is incomprehensible; we cannot by searching find him out: this name checks all bold and curious inquiries concerning God.
  - d. That he is faithful and true to all his promises, unchangeable in his word as well as in his nature;

Let Israel know this:

- a. I AM hath sent me unto you.
- b. I am, and there is none else besides me.
- c. All else have their being from God, and are wholly dependent upon him.
- d. Here is a name that denotes what God is to his people. "

(From Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database. Copyright © 2000, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Ex 6:6-9 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'"

Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. Isn't this ironic, Israel would still not receive Moses!

Now we will see the spectacular, connection between the babe born in Bethlehem and the Angel of the Lord in the burning bush!

John 8:56-59. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad. So the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.' Therefore, they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple." Jesus was claiming that He was Jehovah God, the one at the burning bush.

He was the one who told the wife of Manoah that she would have a child.

Judg 13:2-23 "There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children. Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.....and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.'

Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, 'A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name.' But he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'

Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, 'O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.' God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her. So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, 'Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared to me.'

One group living in a house near to where Janette and I lived grew and sold marijuana. It was nothing for them to walk by at the top of our road completely naked. Many hippies acquired drugs from them but these guys always insisted that they paid something for the drugs. If they didn't have cash then some item of value would do. On one occasion a person paid with a Gideon Bible. One by one they began to read the Bible and one by one they received Christ as their Lord and Saviour until all except one had entered the small door and were walking the narrow way. So they locked him in a room alone with the Bible and said you are not coming out until you repent and receive Jesus Christ. They are all still walking with the Lord and two of them are pastors. One of them lived with Janette and I for over a year!

Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

"Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou shouldst pursue; the truth which thou shouldst believe; the life which thou shouldst hope for." (Thomas a Kempis, "Imitation of Christ," iii., 56)

My life message is summed up in 1 Corinthians 8:6 "For us there is but one God, the Father from whom are all things and we exist for Him. And one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we exist through Him."

John 10:10: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Satan deceives and entices Christians to turn away from following the way, i.e. one man I know ended up committing murder, three others committed suicide, two others were murdered. Three of them were very dear friends of mine. But I could tell you of thousands of people who entered the narrow way by receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour who were on the broad road to destruction -- murderers, drug dealers, growers and dealers of marijuana, safe breakers, armed robbers, rapists.

A few years ago I visited Almos prison in Argentina. It housed the very worst criminals. Two thousand of the inmates were now born again. A twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week prayer meeting was held, where there were never less than 250 in attendance. The cells were always left open and while prisoners slept other prisoners visited the cells and prayed over the occupants. The last I heard, the two thousand member church was being served by five pastors, two of them were guards and the other three were prisoners!

Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, 'Are you the man who spoke to the woman?' And he said, 'I am. Manoah said, 'Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?' So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, 'Let the woman pay attention to all that I said. She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded.'

Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, 'Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.' The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, 'Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD.' For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD. Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, 'What is your name, so that when your words come to pass, we may honor you?' But the angel of the LORD said to him, 'Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?'

Isaiah 9:6 "And His Name shall be called Wonderful..."

So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.

So Manoah said to his wife, 'We will surely die, for we have seen God.' But his wife said to him, 'If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear things like this at this time.' "

This is also the one who appeared to Abraham Gen 1:1-18:22

"Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, and said, 'My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight,

please do not pass your servant by.' So Abraham prepared a meal for the three men .....Then they said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.'

He said, 'I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?'

And the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?" Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.' Sarah denied it however, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'

Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. The LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him...' Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD. "

Gen 19:1 "Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening."

All three appearances are what we call Christophanies, Christ appearing as the Angel of the Lord.

Turning our attention back to Jesus in the New Testament, here we have a fine definition of the name "I AM". Heb 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

This is the introduction to a series entitled "The seven "I AM's" or seven attributes of Jesus!

In the following weeks we shall examine seven statements of Jesus in which He starts with the two words "I AM".

Heb 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

### The Truth

- He is the truth expressed in words. Matt 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." John 6:63 "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."
- He is the truth expressed in action. He is the ultimate reality! Everything else is off centre. Everything Paul taught was centered "in Christ". 1 Cor 3:11 "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."
- He is the truth about what God is really like. To Philip He said "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

### The Life

Col 3:3-4 "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

The life is not only "in Christ", it "is Christ" and it is "Christ in me".

Eph 3:16-21 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

## I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life

A Baptist pastor in the UK answered a knock on his door and was ordered by a police officer to take down a poster on his church notice board. He was committing an offence. The crime was incitement to cause a disturbance of the peace. The poster said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes unto the Father but by Me."

### The Way

The term "the way of the Lord" is used in the Old Testament.

Jer 5:5 "I will go to the leaders and speak to them; surely they know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God."

Matt 3:3 "This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' "

The followers of Jesus were called the people of "the way."

Acts 9:1-2 "Saul went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem."

The Way is a small entrance and a narrow road.

Matt 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Before Jesus could fully be "The Way" He first of all had enter into the throne room of heaven and the presence of His Father on the basis of His own shed blood. In Hebrews 9:12-13 we read "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

## I AM the Light of the World

"Nothing in the created world is equal to the remarkable essence God assigns to light." Dr Richard A. Swenson ("More than Meets the Eye" NavPress). He goes on to record the following facts:

- It establishes the speed limit for the entire universe.
- Its speed is the only constant in the entire universe.
- It is outside of time.
- It never ages.
- It anchors the laws of relativity.
- It is both a wave and a particle.
- It allows us to see.
- It comforts us with its presence and depresses us by its absence.
- It conveys the energy and warmth that allow us to live.
- It consumes darkness but is never consumed by darkness.
- It is mentioned as the first thing God created after the heavens and the earth.
- It apparently has a divine aspect to its nature.
- It travels at precisely 186,000 miles per second.
- At the speed of light, time stops.
- It is made up of pockets of light called photons which are extremely small.
- The familiar effect of visible light consists of large numbers of these tiny photons streaming out of energy sources.
- A flashlight with fresh batteries emits about a million trillion photons each second.
- A 100-watt light bulb emits about 200 million trillion photons each second.

Jesus was the one who created light. John 1:3 "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that has been made."

### 1. Jesus, the light of the world.

John 8:12: "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' "

John 1:4-5 "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

## 2. Disciples of Jesus are the light of the world.

Matt 5:14-15 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house."

## 3. Good works bring glory to God!

Matt 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."  
NASV

Paul in Ephesians 2 talks about us being created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Glory is the Greek word "doxa", which means to reveal in a seeing, tangible, touchable way something of the wonder, beauty and magnificence of God.

John, speaking of Jesus, 1 John 1:1 put it this way, "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life..."

It is sad and tragic to hear non Christians complaining about the bad behaviour of believers and saying "If that is supposed to be Christianity then I want nothing to do with it."

## 4. Seeing eyes are enlightened, or understanding eyes.

Matt 6:22-23 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light (in other words if you have understood that God loved the world and gave His one and only son to take our punishment for sin at Calvary's cross and you have received Christ as your Saviour and Master, every thing about you is full of light) But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of

The night I was given the news of this decision, I was handed her book by a friend who had been instructed by Sarah, "Make sure Barney gets this book, now don't forget." The book is about her and her husband Paul hearing the news from their doctor that the recently conceived baby in Sarah's womb would die. They were offered an immediate termination and that offer was repeated a number of times, but after prayer they both felt God say to them, "This is my baby, and I want you to look after this little life for me." They had hoped and prayed for the child to be healed, but to no avail. Sarah told the story of when the time drew near for the birth. They had been informed the baby would die either just prior or during the delivery or immediately afterwards.

That night I went to my study and read the first chapter. I was tired and feeling somewhat distressed so I went to my bed, taking the book with me, with no intention of reading it. But having got into bed, I decided to read some more. Now there is one thing I never do and that is to read the end of a book without having read all the previous chapters first. But that night I broke this rule, and began with second to last chapter. It was all about Sarah giving back her precious child to God, a child her two daughters had gently caressed and to whom they had on many occasions spoken tender words of love. This baby had received so much of Sarah and Paul's love and affection. But now it was time to give their little sweetheart back to God.

Suddenly God spoke to me and said: And now it's time for you to give back your treasure to me. You have many times told others that leaders of God's people are only stewards of what God has entrusted to their care. You have said that God releases stewardship but never ownership. Now it's time to hand back what I entrusted to you. My heart broke as I responded "Lord it's the truth, it was never mine. You give and take away, blessed be your name." I think it was Shakespeare who wrote in Romeo and Juliet "Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Is God pruning you at this moment of time? Let me encourage you, don't struggle, yield to the Father's pruning knife and then expect more fruitfulness.

- Organist - too old and no longer able to do a good job.
  - Owner of a business - going bankrupt.
  - Manager - fired.
  - Foreman - fired and replaced by the new manager's friend.
3. No branch is able to bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine.
  4. If a man remains in Christ and Christ in him he will bear much fruit.
  5. The Father receives glory when we bear much fruit, and it shows that we are true disciples of the Lord Jesus.
  6. We didn't choose Jesus but Jesus chose us, and appointed us to go and bear fruit -- fruit the would last.
  7. If a man remains in Christ and Christ's words abide in him He can ask whatever he wishes, and it will be given him. The Key is Christ's words!
  8. Apart from Christ we can do nothing.

*St Patrick's Breastplate*

*Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me. Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger. Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

9. As the Father has loved Jesus, so Jesus has loved us.
  - Now we must remain in His love.
  - If we obey His commands, we will remain in His love, in the same way He has obeyed His Father's commands and abides in His love.
  - His command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.
  - Greater love has no man than this that he lays down his life for his friends.
  - We are Christ's friends if we do what He commands.

I want to tell you a testimony of God pruning me! A couple of years ago a decision was made that excluded me from an important responsibility that I had held for 31 years. It was very painful. Sarah Williams wrote a brilliant book entitled "The Shaming of the Strong"

darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! If people don't see the truth about Jesus coming into the world to rescue us from the curse of sin, then they are living in darkness!

Again let me repeat: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

**5. Everyone, at some time in their life, will catch a sight of the true light.**

John 1:6-9 "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."

**6. Standing in the dock before the God of the universe.**

John 3:19-21. "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

If I were to stand fore God as an unrepentant sinner at the great judgment day, the prosecuting council would say, "Barnabas Richard Coombs, what did you do with Jesus Christ? Did you welcome the light of the world into the centre of your life or did you prefer darkness?"

**7. When you walk with Jesus you know where you are going.**

John 12:35-36 "Then Jesus told them, 'You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.' "

John 12:46 "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness"

2 Cor 4:4-6 "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." The key to knowing God is found in the face of Jesus Christ. Once you have met Him and given your life to Him you have found peace with God. Your eyes have been opened. In the old music hall joke, "You have seen the light!"

### 8. When someone "sees the light" everything changes.

Famous British comedians "Cannon and Ball" worked together in making people laugh, although the fact is they never really liked each other. To make matters worse, one day, Ball turned up for rehearsals and informed Cannon that he had become a Christian. As the months went by, Cannon could not help but notice that Ball was a changed man! Without telling Ball, he made an appointment to see a Christian minister who explained to him the gospel (good news) of how God sent His Son to deliver us out of the domain of darkness and transfer us into the Kingdom of His Son. Cannon felt the warmth of God's love drawing Him to Christ and kneeling in prayer he confessed his sin and his need of salvation and invited the Lord Jesus into his life.

He left the building and started to walk along the road. Walking towards him was an extremely attractive young lady. He said, "An hour previously, I would have undressed her in my mind and imagined all sorts of lustful thoughts towards her. Instead, to my utter surprise I felt a physical revulsion to such an idea. I was a new man." In one moment of time he was out of Satan's domain and transferred into the kingdom of Jesus!

Eph 5:8-10 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in

John 15:6 "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."

Matt 7:18-23 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Matt 13:18-23 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

### 2. Branches that are pruned by the Father.

John 15:2 "Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."

Is pruning a pleasant experience? Never! Practically speaking, how does God prune us?

- Pastor - people want him to leave.
- Youth leader - young people are rejecting him.
- Associate pastor - losing his job.
- Worship leader - replaced by a more anointed leader.

## I AM the True Vine

John 15:1-8, 16. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Verse 16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit -- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other."

The only purpose of a vine is to grow grapes!

In Ezek 15:2-4 God asks "what is the vine wood more than any tree?" i.e., what is its preeminence? None. In fact, it's quite the reverse. Other trees yield good timber; but vine wood is soft, brittle, crooked, and seldom large; "will men take a pin of it, to hang any vessel thereon?" not even a "pin" or wooden peg can be made of it. Its sole excellence above all trees is its fruit; when not fruit bearing it is inferior to other trees. So if God's people lose their distinctive excellency by not bearing fruits of righteousness, they are more unprofitable than the worldly, for they are the vine, the sole end of their being is to bear fruit to His glory (from Fausset's Bible Dictionary).

- Jesus is the true vine.
- God the Father is the gardener.
- We are the branches.
- The branches only exist in order to bear fruit. 1 Cor 6:8 "for us"

### 1. Branches that are thrown away by the Father

John 15:2 "He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit."

all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord."

1 Thess 5:5-8 "You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet."

### 9. The Bible as light.

Ps 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

### 10. The teaching and training from our parents as light.

Proverbs 6:20-23 "My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life."

1 John 1:5-10 "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." (NASV)

### Conclusion:

In the breastplate of the High Priest there were 12 stones, each representing one of the twelve tribes. In addition there were two special stones that were used for making decisions:

One was called "Urim" which means "lights".  
The other was called "Thummim" which means "integrity".

If we are a committed Christians who love and serve Jesus Christ, the world needs to see God's life being lived out in us. We should be shining as lights in a dark world and be people of integrity twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week.

In 2007 we heard of Susanne, a German missionary in Turkey, whose husband was murdered by young Islamic fundamentalists. They had stabbed him and two others, and cut their throats.

In an act that hit front pages in the largest newspapers in Turkey, Susanne Tilman in a television interview expressed her forgiveness. She did not want revenge, she told reporters. "Oh God, forgive them for they know not what they do," she said, wholeheartedly agreeing with the words of Christ on Calvary (Luke 23:34).

In a country where blood-for-blood revenge is as normal as breathing, many, many reports have come to the attention of the church of how this comment of Susanne Tilman has changed lives. One columnist wrote of her comment, "She said in one sentence what 1000 missionaries in 1000 years could never do."

Jesus addresses their false interpretation of what he meant when he said "eat my flesh and drink my blood" His answer to their question is this, "The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing."

So this has nothing to do with His human flesh, other than it would be put to death on Calvary's cross and His blood would be poured out. The benefits of that would be eternal life for all who believe. And it is this life which we receive.

So how does the Spirit give life? The answer is found in verse 63, "The words I have spoken unto you are spirit and life."

Deuteronomy 8:3 "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

2 Peter 1:3-4 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Now we come to the controversial part both for these Jews talking to Jesus and with Christendom today.

John 6:53-58 "Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.' "

Jesus also said: "I am the true vine." Did He mean a literal one or did He mean the truth that He was saying was real! Very real!

To the woman at the well in John 4:10-14 we read: "Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.' 'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?' Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' "

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."

John 6:63-64 "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

John 6:66-69 "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.' " You are the one who has the oxygen tank!

The difference between what is literal and what is real.

## I AM the Door of the Sheep

Let me set the scene for this parable:

In the time of Jesus, shepherds would club together and for safety's sake there would be one large sheep pen. During the day, the shepherd would lead his flock out into the open country-side to feed. At dusk he would lead his flock back into the safety of the pen, and there protect the flock from wolves and wild animals and sheep stealers.

In Luke 2:8 At the birth of Jesus we read these words: "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night."

John 10:1 "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

In this story so far we have "a door" and "a thief or a robber" who avoids going through the door. We have someone who goes through the proper entrance, who is described as the shepherd, and we have a doorkeeper who opens the door to the shepherd. We have sheep that hear the shepherd's voice. We have the shepherd who calls the sheep by name and he leads them out of the sheepfold. He puts out all his own sheep and goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. The sheep, under no circumstances, will follow a stranger, in fact they will run in the opposite direction.

Those listening had no idea what Jesus was talking about, so He carefully spells it out.

Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the

sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Jesus plays a number of parts in this parable as we shall see. Let us ask some questions and seek to answer them.

**Who are the thieves and robbers, the ones who climb up some other way?** Almost certainly they were the scribes, Pharisees and lawyers. This would include religious dignitaries such as Caiaphas the High Priest together with many priests and Levites. They only come to steal and kill and destroy.

Matt 23:33-34 "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town."

**Who is the gatekeeper?** The Lord Jesus. Those who enter through Him are saved and they go in and out and find pasture. They not only have life but they have it more abundantly.

**What is the sheep pen?** The church! The body of Christ! The temple of the Holy Spirit! The family of God! The corporate people of God. A place of safety!

When my brother Tim died, sadly he had taken his own life! He had been missing for about a week. The day after they found his body I had to go to Gatwick Airport in England to receive a singing group from St. Margaret's Community Church, Vancouver. My heart was greatly saddened. Just after they landed and had boarded the bus a torrential storm broke out over the airport. It was so severe it was impossible to drive off. I got talking with Burt Dumerton, the leader of the group and told him of my brother's death. He then got the attention of the young people and they sang to me Ps 27:4-5:

"One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will

4. That He himself is that heavenly nourishment of which He spoke, and who was typified by the manna in the desert.

To show that He himself is the true bread from heaven, he proves two things:

1. That His doctrine is the true nourishment of the soul, and that those who were to be put in possession of the blessings promised in it must come to God by faith.
2. That He would give His body for the life of the world: that as bread is the stuff that supports the natural life of man, so the salvation procured by His death should be that by which the bodies and souls of believers should be preserved unto life eternal.

John 6:33 "For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

John 6:34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

"John 6:35 "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.' "

John 6:47-51 "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life."

Now Jesus deals with their comparing "big miracle working" Moses with himself:

"Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

It was an opinion of the Jews themselves that their fathers, who perished in the wilderness, should never have a resurrection.

## I AM the Bread of Life

This statement from Jesus has been a cause of much debate among Christians throughout the years. It has resulted in strong differences of opinion between Roman Catholics with Transubstantiation, Lutherans with Consubstantiation, High Anglicans with the Eucharist, The Christian Brethren with the Lord's Table and Non Conformists with Holy Communion.

The following discourse between the Jews and Jesus has been the catalyst.

John 6:30-35 "So they asked him, 'What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?' "

They had already seen the miracle of the five loaves and two fish and obviously were not impressed, even though it was an amazing demonstration of unlimited power and goodness! Somewhat sneeringly they challenge Jesus with "So what will you do?" But before Jesus could answer they further add, "Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' "

Basically they are saying, alright, you may have fed five thousand with five loaves and two small fish, but how does that compare with Moses who for over forty years fed a million people in the wilderness with bread from heaven. Come on, you do something similar and then we will believe in you in the same way we believed in Moses.

"Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.' "

Adam Clarke in his commentary points out the following. Our Lord refutes the argument of the Jews, by proving:

1. That it was not Moses, but God, who gave the manna.
2. That this bread was not the true bread, but was merely a type of it.
3. That God had given them now bread infinitely more excellent.

keep me safe in his dwelling (shelter); he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock." While the choir was singing, it dawned on me that the church family in Basingstoke was the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God. I found out in the following days the comfort and strength that God provides through His family. Over the years I have heard hundreds of people who were going through great difficulties say, "I don't how other people can cope without the Lord and without Christian brothers and sisters."

**Who are the sheep?** They were Jews who were following Jesus, and historically, all those Old Testament men and women who had put their faith in Jehovah God. These were justified because of faith, people such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Rahab the prostitute. You can read of others in Hebrews 11.

**Who is the Good Shepherd?** The Lord Jesus.

**Who is the watchman?** The Lord Jesus.

**Who is a hireling?** He is the stranger. Anyone who is not a true shepherd!

John 10:1-10

- "I tell you the truth." This is not a good translation. It is "truly, truly!" i.e. like a parent with an inattentive child "Listen to me! I said listen to me!" Or the town crier ringing a bell and shouting out "O yea, O yea!"
- The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.
- The watchman opens the gate for him.
- The sheep listen to his voice. The lambs also recognize the voice of their mother and the ewes recognize the voice of their lambs. i.e. the illustration of the lost lamb that was difficult to catch, it ran away from me. I caught it and searched for the flock. There were hundreds of sheep and even more lambs. My little lamb was bleating, I think it was crying mummy, mummy. The sheep were totally disinterested, except for one! She started to bleat in a deep voice and set out towards me. I put the lamb down and the lamb scampered towards its mother who gave it a good sniff and off they walked together.

- He calls his own sheep by name. It takes considerable time for a sheep to recognize its own name.
- And leads them out. In the eastern lands at the time of Christ, sheep were led, not driven. Hired hands drove the sheep.
- When he has brought out all his own,
- he goes on ahead of them, and
- his sheep follow him
- because they know his voice.
- But they will never follow a stranger.
- in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice. Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.
- It is a fact, however, that sick or weak sheep can be led astray by strangers.

"This simple creature, the sheep," says Martin Luther "has this special note among all animals, that it quickly hears the voice of the shepherd, follows no one else and completely depends on him and seeks help from him alone; it cannot help itself but is shut up to another's aid."

John 10:14-16 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

There are three additional things to note:

- Jesus knows His sheep and His sheep know Him in the same way as the Father knows Jesus and Jesus knows His Father. This is the ideal!
- There are other sheep that presently don't belong but Jesus will bring them into the fold.
- There will be one flock and one shepherd, no separation between believing Jew and believing Gentile.

Three months later Jesus is attending the Feast of Dedication when some Jews gathered around Him (John 10:24-30) and said, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

No Jesus, You are no means economical. Even the picnic on the hill resulted in twelve baskets full of leftovers. Then there were those fishermen bobbing about in a boat all night without catching so much as a sardine. You just spoke the word and their nets were crammed to breaking point with flapping silver fish, just like You, Lord. Not content to give an average catch. It had to be an extravagant one! Mary of Bethany was extravagant in her worship of You, and everyone yelled, 'Economize!' You replied, 'This women's extravagance will be praised and remembered for ever.'

'Good, my son! You are beginning to glimpse a hue in the rainbow of My character. Extravagance to a wild and careless degree is the characteristic of my Father and I. I was never precise, calculating and sensible, when it came to giving life and love for you on that dripping hill. Imagine a boy in love with a girl, being economical! And that is why I have a reputation, in heaven anyway, of being the most extravagant person ever to walk the dust paths of this planet. Your common sense, my son, is all very well in the petty, trivial things; but it can never be the bedrock of life. For common sense usually produces timidity, and timidity tags along with economy. You see, it's possible to be so economical, that no risks are taken, nothing is ventured, everything is calculated. Consequently, faith is abandoned for common sense, and my life is robbed of all excitement and adventure.

I tell you, my son, not only has wealth been deified these days, but also economy; and when economy is enthroned, man will do nothing that has a vague suggestion of extravagance. You cannot hoard yourself up for a rainy day, son, and justify it in the light of my teaching. You must give yourself extravagantly. For security is the wisdom of your own economic prowess and is directly opposite to the extravagance of My Father, who revels in feeding birds, cultivating grass, and inventing flowers. Simply because... because.... because He enjoys doing it.' "

- "My cup overflows", the cup of blessing! The cup of salvation! I would never let God pour me out a cup of tea. He doesn't know when to stop!
- "Surely goodness and love will follow me", the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, love divine all loves excelling.
- "All the days of my life", to my dying day.
- "I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever", in the presence of God.

Is the Lord your good shepherd?

Do you hear His voice?

Are you following Him?

Are you going through a valley of death experience?

Do you believe that He is with you?

Do you believe that He will never leave you nor forsake you?

He loves you so much that He gave His life for you. As He said, "The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

"YOU ARE SO EXTRAVAGANT , JESUS"

"You are so extravagant, Jesus; unbelievably extravagant in everything you do. To use the word 'economy' when it comes to describing You is insulting and belittling, for you made a super abundance of things that are of no use to anybody. How many people cast a second glance at sunrises and sunsets? Yet both go flaunting around the skies like a woman parading new dresses. How many of us bother our heads about a field full of varnished buttercups? We can't eat them. Yet you find buttercups so cheap and fascinating to produce, that golden carpets flop around everywhere. They tell me, Jesus, that oysters lay sixty million eggs, and that there are ten million living organisms in a cubic inch of fertile soil. Then there's the huge, heaving seas. Why make so much water, Jesus? We can't drink it. And all those snow flakes endlessly parachuting to earth. Why send so many? And why each one a different pattern and shape? Sheer extravagance, I call it.

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

Here are seven very important thoughts for our consideration:

1. Jesus says to these Jews, "You do not believe, because you are not my sheep." Can you say "I am one of His sheep?"
2. My sheep listen to my voice. Do you listen to the voice of Jesus?
3. I know them and they follow me. Can you say "Yes, I follow Jesus"?
4. I give them eternal life. Do you have eternal life?
5. They shall never perish.
6. No one can snatch them out of my hand.
7. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are in partnership!

## I AM the Good Shepherd

Psalm 23: "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

- "The LORD is my shepherd", not just a shepherd, but my personal shepherd.
- "I shall not be in want" or I want nothing. This implies a supply of every possible want of body, soul, and spirit, in the Lord.
- "He makes me lie down in green pastures." Adam Clarke says this implies "not green pastures, but cottages of turf or sods, such as the shepherds had in open champaign countries; places in which they could repose safely; and pens thus constructed where the flock might be safe all the night. They were enclosures, and enclosures where they had grass or provender to eat."
- "He leads me beside quiet waters", not violent torrents, which would terrify the sheep with their roar and sweep them away with the current, but gently flowing.
- "He restores my soul", when I am despondent, depressed, feel like giving up, tired of the mundane, no energy. Or when I am suffering from a guilty conscience, I have sinned and feel utterly unworthy!
- "He guides me", the Hebrew for "He leadeth me" (naahal). It expresses gentle and gradual leading, the gracious Shepherd accommodating Himself to the strength of the sheep.
- "In paths of righteousness", God's righteous ways.

- "For his name's sake", for the honour of His name, not mine. It's not my self-righteousness, not for my merits, for I have none; but for "the praise of the glory of His grace."
- "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil", when my life is in danger.
- "For you are with me", "I will never leave you nor forsake you". Notice that up to now David has talked about the Lord, but now he speaks to the Lord. The valley experience has drawn out an intimacy with the Lord.
- "Your rod", the rod of God's authority. The "rod" was used by the owner in counting his sheep, which were said, therefore, to "pass under the rod" (Lev 27:32). It cannot refer to the rod of affliction, for here "comfort," not chastening, is what is needed when passing through the darkness. He means that your making me to pass under the rod, thereby acknowledging me as yours, comforts me. How many in their dying moments have felt strong consolation in Christ's assurance. The rod is the assurance which Yahweh gives His child by His Spirit, that He counts him as His own.
- "And your staff", something or someone to lean on. The "staff" is the emblem of support to the weak, Gen 32:10. At the same time it is the shepherd's instrument of warding off beasts hostile to the sheep. So "David took his staff in his hand" in going against Goliath (1 Sam 17:40).
- "They comfort me." Assurance that everything will work out alright. No who puts their trust in God will ever be put to shame, or disappointed
- "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Even though I am surrounded by my enemies, with no hope of finding food, God provides!
- "You anoint my head with oil", the custom of giving honour to a special guest.