

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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He Will Save His People From Their Sins

by Dan Trygg

"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins. Now this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel', which translated means, 'God with us.'" Matthew 1:21-23

This message, which Joseph received from the angel, communicates at least **one important aspect of the purpose of Jesus' coming, He came to rescue us from our sins.** Interestingly, this is also the emphasis of John the Baptist's introduction of Jesus to Israel, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29) The account in Luke 1 adds a different dimension, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (vss. 32,33). Three months later, however, as the Holy Spirit came upon Zacharias, he prophesied, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant... Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of those who hate us... that we... might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all of our days." Zacharias went on to prophesy that his son, John, would "be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before [Him] ... to prepare His ways; to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because... the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness..., [and] to guide our feet into the way of peace" (selected portions from Lk. 1:67-79).

Yes, He would be the Messianic King, to free Israel from their enemies, but a key element of His work would also be to free us from the judgment of sin, and to lead us into a life of peace. **The name Y'shua (Jesus) literally means "Yahweh saves", or "the salvation of Yahweh". He came to save us from the penalty, power, and presence of sin, so that we might be reconciled to God once more, and that we might serve Him without fear.**

The Problem of Sin

Adam and Eve's act of disobedience caused an inner wound, a sense of "nakedness", fear, shame and guilt. This not only disrupted the relationship of the man and his wife, but also caused them to shrink back from God. **As a consequence for their sin, they also experienced outward frustrations.** Their work took on a "toil-some-ness" that was new to them. It no longer was easy. The prospect of survival was laborious and wearying. Personal peace and contentment were no longer characteristic of their daily life. Beyond these other complications, **sin was a terminal illness** which would drain and debilitate the person, wearing them down until eventually it culminated in physical death. Finally, **sin also makes us offensive to the holy nature of God.** It causes a "wrath reflex", which demands the destruction of all that is imperfect and tainted with evil. We saw the incredible patience and self-restraint of God in "overlooking sin" for generations, until He could righteously give expression to His wrath in a manner that would be safe for us, yet also would be just (Rom. 3:23-26).

Jesus came to deliver us from both the perverse illness of sin, as well as its offensive "stench", so that we could once again feel complete acceptance, wholeness, and integration within ourselves, as well as before God. **Eventually, the entire universe will be set right once again** (Rom. 8:19-21). The corrupting effects of sin will be forever removed (Rev. 20), and then we will be fully delivered from our "enemies". **Not only will the penalty of sin be paid, and the power of sin broken, but even the presence of sin will be gone.** We will not have to deal with the inner wound, the outward frustrations, or even the pressures and temptations of living in a sin-infected world.

God's Solution For Sin

The plan of God to deal with sin centers upon the human child born to Mary in Bethlehem. We could explore the details of what God did through Jesus, and why He chose to do it as He did, for many pages. For now, however, I want to simply introduce three concepts for our discussion: **(1.) Christ for us; (2.) Christ as us; and (3.) Christ together-with us.**

Christ For Us

Most of us are familiar with this concept. **Basically, it means that Christ paid for our sins instead of us.** It is like we owed a debt, and we had no ability to even *begin* to pay it back, so God sent Jesus to pay *our* debt. In the OT, if someone committed a crime against someone else's property, e.g., theft, robbery, vandalism, or abuse, the judgment of the law was that he/she had to make restitution. If he could not afford to do so, or even if he owed money that he was unable to pay for other reasons, he could be sold into slavery to repay the debt. In such cases, a close relative could step forward to pay the amount owed in order to free the debtor from his indenture. This person was called a "kinsman redeemer" (e.g., Lev. 25:23-55).

Jesus has come from God to be our Kinsman Redeemer. No human could ever pay for the sins of another, since we all have sinned, and the penalty for sin is death (Psa. 49:7,8; Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Anyone who had ever sinned, even one time, would only be able to pay for his or her own sin. It would do no good to offer to die for another. **It was more than money that was required in payment for sin, ...it was life itself.** From a legal standpoint, once we recognize and acknowledge that we are sinners, the question is, "How can my debt of sin ever be paid for?" Christ's death *for us* answers this question. Jesus, as a perfect sinless human, was able to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sin of all people. **He paid our debt for us, by offering His very life in exchange for our freedom** (Heb. 9:11-14,22-28). He Himself said, "The Son of Man came ...to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45), so that "in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph. 1:7; cf. I Pet. 3:18). **In order to benefit from His provision, we must repent (change our understanding), trust in and accept His payment on our behalf, and commit ourselves to live to serve God.**

Christ As Us

This second aspect of Jesus' work to deliver us from sin has to do with substitution. This idea of paying our debt would not be possible unless Jesus could somehow "stand in" for us. The idea of substitutionary atonement was solidly imbedded in the mind of the Jewish people. They clearly understood that when they offered up an animal on the altar, it was "standing in" for *them*. They would lay their hands upon the animal, signifying their identity with it and symbolically placing their sins upon it, ...and then they would slay it, signifying their own death. In a similar way, **Jesus set us free by voluntarily taking our place and accepting the punishment that was meant for us** (Isa. 53:1-12; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24; Rom. 5:6-11). Somehow He managed to take the punishment which God's wrath demanded, so that God has no more wrath to pour out on those He had represented. The death blow that was meant for the rest of us fell upon Him (Isa. 53:8).

Christ Together-With Us

This third concept is not as familiar to most people who have been exposed to Christian teaching, because it has not been well taught, and it is difficult for people from our cultural background to understand. The concept has been given fancy names by different theologians. Some refer to it as *federal headship* or *corporate personality* or as *representative solidarity*. Basically, **the idea is that Jesus somehow represents humanity so perfectly and completely that when He acts, it is as though we also act, ...likewise, when something is done to Him, it is also done to all those He represents.** To us, as individualistic-minded Westerners, this makes no sense. To the Eastern mind, however, -- where the *group* is the center of one's identity, not the *individual* -- this concept is not difficult to grasp. Paul discusses this in Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21-23,45-49; and II Cor. 5:14-17. In his own conversion experience, the resurrected Jesus referred to this reality when He asked Paul, "...why do you persecute *Me*?" (Acts 9:4; cf. Mt. 25:40) This "in-your-face" encounter he had with the reality of Christ's solidarity with His people probably is why this apostle seems to appreciate and refer to this concept more than anyone else in the NT. It is the basis for most of his teaching about growing as a Christian in Romans 5-8.

As incredible as it may seem, what Paul teaches is that:

When Jesus was crucified, we also were crucified;

When Jesus died, we also died;

When Jesus was buried, we also were buried;

When Jesus rose from among the dead ones, we also rose from among the dead ones to newness of life.

This is fundamental, basic Christian doctrine. **If we do not understand this, or at least learn to apply its reality on a practical level, we will not be able to move into maturity.** The *basis* for freedom from bondage to the flesh, from the power of sin, and from the demands of the law are firmly established upon the reality of our union with Christ in His death, resurrection, and even His ascension. The fact that there *is* a "new person" that we can "put on", as well as an "old person" that we can now "put off" is also founded upon this same principle.

"...and you shall call His name Y'shua (Jesus), for it is He who will save His people from their sins."
Mt. 1:21

The baby born in the stable that day had come to save us from the

Penalty of Sin

By means of:

Christ's work *for* us

Power of Sin

Christ's work *as* us

Presence of Sin

Christ *together-with* us