

**When the enemy comes in – like a flood –**

**the Spirit of the Lord shall**



**LIFT UP A STANDARD**

**against him and put him to flight**

Isaiah 59:19

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## A Study on Isaiah 59:18-20

**NIV** – According to what they have done,  
so will he repay wrath to His enemies  
and retribution to His foes...

From the west, men will fear the name of the Lord,  
and from the rising of the sun, they will revere His glory.

For He will come like a pent-up flood  
that the breath of the Lord drives along.

The Redeemer will come to Zion...

to those who repent of their sins, declares the Lord.

(20th Century translation)

**Amplified** – According as their deeds deserve,  
so will He repay wrath to His adversaries,  
recompense to His enemies...

So as a result of the Messiah's intervention  
they shall reverently fear the name of the Lord from the  
west, and His glory from the rising of the sun.

When the enemy shall come in like a flood,  
the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him  
and put him to flight for He will come like a rushing stream  
which the breath of the Lord drives.

He shall come as a Redeemer to Zion...

(those) who turn from transgression, says the Lord.

(20th Century translation)

**RV** – According to their deeds...He will repay,  
 fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies.  
 So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west,  
 and His glory from the rising of the sun:\* for He  
 shall come as a rushing stream, which the breath of the  
 Lord driveth. And a Redeemer shall come to Zion,  
 and unto them that turn from transgression...saith the Lord.  
 \*(or)...when the adversary shall come in like a flood,  
 the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

(translation May 1898)

**King James** – According to their deeds...he will repay,  
 fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies...  
 So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west,  
 and His glory from the rising of the sun.  
 When the enemy shall come in like a flood,  
 the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.  
 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion,  
 and unto them that turn from transgression...saith the Lord.

(translation in 1611AD)

**Good News Bible** – He will punish His enemies  
 according to what they have done... From east to west  
 everyone will fear Him and His great power. He will come  
 like a rushing river, like a strong wind. The Lord says to  
 His people, "I will come...to defend you and to save all of  
 you that turn from your sins.

(20th Century translation)

## **FORWARD**

Our chosen text for meditation has apparently been difficult to translate because it is painting a picture with words. The King James Bible has translated literally the original words from the Hebrew and the RV is supposed to be also a very close translation to the original but has put as a footnote what the KJV translated. However the 20th century translations have left the actions of the enemy and the involvement of the Standard out of their versions altogether, because of the context of the rest of the chapter.

However there is such a mighty truth in the original that we, the writers, are challenged to come to grips with it, and the following are our thoughts and meditation on this prophecy.

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## 1 THE ENORMITY OF THE PROMISE AND GOD'S HEART

The most exciting thing about reading the Bible is that these are the very words of God which He has put into the heart of the writer, to express His wisdom to all generations down through the ages. From the very beginning, after God, who is full of love, had created mankind, He chose a family after His likeness. This "likeness" is the most amazing privilege, and God, who always trusts, took an amazing risk. Mankind was given the privilege of creating with words just as God had created the universe.

When the devil tempted Eve she spoke a **lie**. God had said to Adam, "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die". (Genesis 2:17) However Eve said to the devil, "God did say, you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die". (Genesis 3:2) God had placed two trees in the middle of the garden. (Genesis 2:9) He had provided the tree of life, from which they would eat and live forever. (Genesis 3:22) Eve had just created a dilemma which resulted in Adam and Eve being forced from the garden, because they could not "touch" the tree of life! Death was absolutely inevitable – not just physical death but even worse, spiritual death, becoming an enemy of God. What was worse was that she had believed God's enemy, therefore "siding" with him, becoming one with him.

We know, because it has been recorded, that God spoke fresh prophecy to countermand Eve's spoken words. The devil's "headship" would be crushed by a woman's offspring or seed. Since women do not have seed it would be implanted "from on high". (Luke

1:35) On no account would the devil, the enemy of God, ever win if mankind obeyed God, fearing His Name, that is, His nature, His character, His decisions and His words, revering and honouring His glorious majesty.

This battle began on the first pages of the Bible and continues right through to the records of Jesus' death and resurrection, through which the decreed death penalty was paid in full. The Triune God's desire was for a family who would be "a kingdom and priests to serve His (Jesus') God and Father – to Him be glory and power for ever and ever". (Revelation 1:6)

Then the battle does not really stop there either because it actually goes on until the devil is thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20:10) He truly is an enemy of God and of all God's family. He has always operated by deception and power. Isaiah writes that he struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression. (Isaiah 14:6)

God hates to see His people suffer, even if they have given opportunity to the devil to attack, by their own folly or another human's evil actions. Our sins have separated us from God's protection so we must turn to God, having repented of going the wrong way. Outside of God's protective shelter, is where the "fowler's snare and the deadly pestilence" are, (Psalm 91:3) but He holds His arms open wide as the father of the prodigal son did (Luke 15:20&21) so that He can save us.

It is very strange that some people have come to believe that it is God who sends trouble and disaster on us. They demean the words

of the Bible and go on about whether there is a God at all. "Where was He", they say, "when such and such happened"? It is easy to see that the devil is exercising his power and deception, but the established church does not seem to be passionate enough about God's plans and purposes to engage in the battle, preferring to stay in their "ivory towers", hoping those who are presently following the devil will come to them. Of course many people in the churches pray but the Word states "how can they hear without someone preaching to them". (Romans 10:14) If we are to be a "kingdom and priests", we are also to "stand in the gap", to mediate between God and man. (Ezekiel 22:30&31) In these verses God is expressing agony that He was going to destroy people (the land) for their gross sins because there was no one to tell them to repent.

## 2 THE PROPHET'S INSIGHTS

Isaiah begins his vision by stating, on God's behalf, that all His chosen people have become rebellious. But God also begs that His people will reason with Him – "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow – if you are willing and obedient". (Isaiah 1:18&19) After Isaiah himself had been obedient and spoken the words God put on his heart to say God gave him more insights. He confidently writes, "He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths". (Isaiah 2:3) He later describes this path as the Way of Holiness. (Isaiah 35:8)

God continues to reveal His secrets to Isaiah who spoke out about the Branch of the Lord who will cleanse those scarlet bloodstains by

the Spirit of judgment and fire. (Isaiah 4:4) It is after this that Isaiah has his vision of the Lord in Heaven and is commissioned by the Lord because he wanted to GO to tell the people, even though they would resist his words. (Isaiah 6:1-10)

When we are willing to speak on the Lord's behalf we are fulfilling His plan for His family. He has never changed this plan and after each act of obedience He tells us another secret, which is to be spoken into being because He is a God who calls things that are not as though they are, and encourages and commends His children who do the same. (Romans 4:17) This is the greatest privilege that God offers us – God has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. (2 Corinthians 5:19&20)

God's next secret revealed to Isaiah was about the virgin who would give birth to Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) and that He would be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace and His government would never end. It would be just and righteous from beginning and forever because the Lord Almighty had purposed and would accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6&7) "A shoot will come from the stump of Jesse; from the root a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord – and he will delight in the Lord". "In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him and His place of rest will be glorious". "He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles...He will assemble the scattered people". (Isaiah 11:1-3 and 10-12)



Isaiah begins to prophesy to God's enemies – "raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them...I have commanded My holy ones; I have summoned My warriors to carry out My wrath". (Isaiah 13:2&3) Long before when Moses stood on a hilltop and raised his staff while Joshua fought against the Amalekites, the battle went their way. At the decree of Moses this memorial altar was called "The Lord is my Banner" (YHWH Nissi). (Exodus 17:15)

For the nations (even His chosen nation, Israel) who do not choose to follow God's ways there is big trouble coming, but inserted within these warnings are promises about the One who will seek justice and speed the cause of righteousness. (Isaiah 16:5) God cannot help Himself because He is full of love. He will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because that one trusts in God. (Isaiah 26:3) Perfect peace is the translation of the Hebrew "shalom shalom". This word being doubled indicates the intimate relationship which God desires, and trust is an outworking of that relationship. Solomon wrote "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths". (Proverbs 3:6) This advice is the exact opposite of what Eve did in the garden of Eden. Another of God's revelations to Isaiah about Messiah, the Christ, describes the Cornerstone who will be a sure foundation; the one who trusts in Him will never be let down. (Isaiah 28:16) Peter quotes these words and then adds, "now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. They

stumble because they disobey the message – which is what they were destined for". (1 Peter 2:6-8)

"This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel says, "in repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength". (Isaiah 30:15)

All these insights and revelations were written more than 700 years before the birth of Jesus but God has not changed over these nearly 3000 years. Paul wrote about God's grace and the gift of righteousness which comes to us through Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:15-21)

### **3 THE CONFUSION OF THE TRANSLATIONS**

The context of our chosen meditation is again a warning. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear". (Isaiah 59:2) "The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, He was appalled that there was no one to intervene". (Isaiah 59:15&16) God decided that He would have to intervene. Although He had given authority to mankind to rule the earth there was no one...all had fallen short of the glory of God. The verses describe how He would bring about this salvation. He put on righteousness as His breastplate, and the helmet of salvation, garments of vengeance and wrapped Himself in zeal as in a cloak. Judgment was about to fall on His enemies. But God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked if He can avoid it, if the righteous will heed His warning. He demonstrated this with the destruction of Sodom. (Genesis 19:1-26) He also tried to save Nineveh when He sent

Jonah. To Sodom God sent angels and to Nineveh He sent a man. But to Gideon, when the Midianites were destroying the land, God sent the Angel of the Lord, and He revealed Himself as "The Lord our Peace". (Judges 6:11-24) The Angel of the Lord is usually identified with God as an extension of the Divine personality, and speaks as God. He is also honoured as God by those He meets. He can therefore be regarded as pre-incarnation Jesus. This is usually called a Christophany.

To simplify the concepts, the modern versions have reduced the presence of the Lord to God and the Holy Spirit, but the older versions bring Jesus' presence into the situation. He was destined to be the High Priest between God and man. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life and He is the Saviour of the world. When He is lifted up... He will draw all men to Himself. (John 12:32) Yet He is calling Himself the Son of Man. When He is lifted up He represents mankind. This lifting up was shown to the Israelites when they sinned and God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole; anyone who looked up at the snake on the pole would live. (Numbers 21:8&9) To the early translators this symbolism was important to be conveyed in the text. So holding up the standard, the flag, the banner to represent Jesus' presence was an important part of the rescue of God's people. They must be willing to look to the Banner, the Lord our Victory. Then they will indeed know that it is the Lord who has rescued them and they will give Him the glory.

They will understand even more than this. For every attack of the enemy, no matter how severe, God will send a response that is greater in power than the enemy can produce. The text is actually a

play on words – when the enemy comes in like a flood...like a flood (or a rushing stream) the Spirit of the Lord will raise the Banner and put the enemy to flight. The Three-in-One God is at work in unity with great zeal and protectiveness, taking the opportunity to demonstrate His love for those who follow Him. It is that love which warms cold hearts and turns people to God. God has said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay". (Romans 12:19) God will never let those who put their trust in Him be disappointed, perplexed and confused. (Psalm 22:5) This was Paul's testimony – hard-pressed but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:8&9)

When Jesus paid the death penalty for all mankind He had redeemed, or bought back, all the world, but in practical terms, this redemption depends on each of the redeemed actually turning to Him to receive it. This is why the Holy Spirit (sometimes called the breath of God) blows where He will. (John 3:8) He is also the One who convicts of guilt as to sin, righteousness and judgment. (John 16:8)

#### **4 THE BLESSINGS OF PERSECUTION**

Why does God let the enemy come in the first place? This is a question that many people have been asking. But John explains that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. (1 John 5:19) When the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and tried to tempt Him with the offer, "I will give you all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to", Jesus did not refute the devil's words but only refused to

worship him, quoting God's Word. Jesus knew, because He was there at the beginning, (Colossians 1:15-17) that the devil had actually stolen the authority from Adam and Eve, by trickery. He had no intention of telling the devil that He had come to represent Man, as the second (or last) Adam, to win the authority back in God's way. (Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:45)

Jesus, Himself, says "blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you". (Matthew 5:10-12) Luke writes, "blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven". (Luke 6:22&23) It is a tremendous honour to represent Jesus, yet it was God's plan for His children to do this all along. This is why Jesus came **as a Man**. He says we will do what He has been doing. (John 14:12) He actually commands that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will continue His work to the close of the age.

This representation is mentioned by Jesus when He sent first the disciples and then seventy more followers to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-6 and Luke 10:1-16) He particularly mentions that if the people will receive the one who is sent they have also received Jesus. Paul also has something to say about this representation. "God has committed to us the message of

reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us". (2 Corinthians 5:19&20) Further – "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life". (2 Corinthians 3:6)

Perhaps in the past it has been implied that these words only refer to the Apostles or "professional" ministers, but if the workers are too few Jesus seems to be very happy to "send" anyone who will go in His name. (Luke 10:2) But in going there is the possibility that we will be rejected and even ridiculed. Jesus assures us that they are rejecting us because of the Christ – the Anointed One who is on us and in us. It is in His authority and His power that we go.

It can be unpleasant to be rejected and ridiculed but the most encouraging aspect of persecution is really our topic and the title of this book. When the enemy comes in...like a flood, (a rushing stream) (the breath of) the Lord will put him to flight. God is on our side against our common enemy, the devil, in whatever form he has presented himself. Isaiah writes God's promise to all who turn to Him. "A Redeemer will come to Zion, to those...who repent of their sins – turn away from them and turn to God....This is My covenant with them, says the Lord. My Spirit who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of your descendants from this time on and for ever". (Isaiah 59:20&21)

This echoes the promise made when God gave the commandments; "showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments". (Exodus 20:6) Every time

we are persecuted God shows His love and faithfulness to us. He is our Saviour, (John 3:16) our Healer, (Exodus 15:26) the Lifter of our heads, (Psalm 3:3) our Shepherd, (Ezekiel 34:11-16) our Intercessor. (Hebrews 7:25) He will be our Advocate who justifies and even commends what we do in His name and He will be our power source, backing our faith prayers and actions. (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

## **5 GOD'S LAST LAUGH**

The book of Psalms begins with good advice. "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked (believing what they say, which is by definition contrary to God's point of view)...or stand in the way of sinners (behaving in ways that God does not like or straight out forbids)...or sit in the seat of mockers (those who scorn God's presence and choose to be His enemy, thus siding with the devil). (Psalm 1:1) The man who is blessed by the Lord takes delight in God's Word and meditates often. God promises that we will yield good fruit and prosper in everything we do.

But the wicked, the sinners and the mockers are in a very dangerous situation. Dallying with the devil leaves one in a precarious situation because the devil's policy is to kill, steal and destroy. (John 10:10) Many people say they do not believe there is a devil, but this statement also is contrary to God's Word. When the kings of the earth take a stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord, it is also regarded by God as against His Anointed One, the Saviour of the world. (Psalm 2:2) If nations conspire and peoples plot – "Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters", they have

refused to accept the act of Jesus that assuaged God's wrath and hatred of sin. The Bible says that the One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then He rebukes them and terrifies them. Peter quotes words from this psalm in his prayer to God after they were persecuted by the Sanhedrin officials. The Apostles prayed for more boldness, and more miracles. They understood the principle that Isaiah had written about the Lord coming in with greater power than the enemy and his helpers could muster. No matter what the enemy throws at God's people God has a better and more powerful answer.

God has exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11) God's rebuke to the kings and rulers of the earth states that "I have installed My King on Zion, My holy hill...and I have proclaimed, You are My Son; today I have become Your Father (have begotten You)". (Psalm 2:7) This proclamation was made by God more than 300 years before the incarnation of Jesus.

God's laugh has a solemn warning. He has freely given to Jesus all the nations as His inheritance, the ends of the earth His possession. This makes the devil's offer to Jesus when he was tempting Him look rather stupid. "Therefore you kings be wise, be warned, you rulers of the earth". (Psalm 2:9-12) The Son will rule them with an iron sceptre. Therefore, "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice (in the Holy Spirit). Kiss (honour) the Son...lest you be destroyed".



David paints a word picture of a wicked man. (Psalm 52:1-7) "Why do you boast of evil, you mighty man...you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God? Your tongue plots destruction; you practise deceit; you love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth. (Think about that!) Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin...He will uproot you from the land of the living. (Think about that!) The righteous will see and fear; they will laugh at him, saying, here is now the man who did not make God his stronghold but trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others!"

## 6 THE SPECIAL FAVOUR / RELATIONSHIP

The last few verses of Psalm 52 (8&9) are David's testimony after being betrayed by Doeg the Edomite. "I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. I will praise You (God) for ever for what You have done; in Your Name I will hope, for Your Name is good. I will praise You in the presence of Your saints". David was one of the few people in the Old Testament who had a personal relationship with God, **developing this relationship through trusting fully against the perceived circumstances**. This level of trust will always bring in God's favour. In the Messianic Psalm that David composed, David writes, "All who see Me mock Me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads and saying, 'He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him, deliver Him, since He delights in Him'. (verses 7&8) He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from him but has listened to his cry for help". (verse 24) We know

that there was a short time that the Heavenly Father turned His back on Jesus and we understand the reason was because Jesus took every sin that was ever committed on Himself until God regarded the price was paid. David writes in another place, (Psalm 16:5-10) "Lord, You have assigned me my portion and my cup; You have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance...I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is always at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad...my body also will rest secure, because You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay".

After Jesus was exalted to the highest place for His obedience (Philippians 2:8&9) He has invited Mankind to receive the same power that enabled Him to do the mighty works. To the church in Thyatira was given the very words of the Son of God – "to him that overcomes and does My will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – He will rule them with an iron sceptre; He will dash them to pieces like pottery – just as I have received authority from My Father. I will also give him the morning star". (Revelation 2:27 and Psalm 2:9) This morning star is the devil. (Isaiah 14:12) When we lift up Jesus' standard, God will dash the devil's plans to pieces because he is already defeated, but continues to bluff. (Colossians 2:9-15)

It is so important to understand that Jesus has given to us the fullness of the Deity in bodily form. This is Christ in us, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27) Our sinful flesh life has been circumcised. The more we allow Jesus to rule our lives the more this promise becomes a reality. Jesus says, "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and

they follow Me". (John 10:27) He also says, "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...we did this and that in Your name..."then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you". (Matthew 7:21-23) These words are a strong warning that God requires obedience in His children and a desire to not only know Jesus personally but to follow His leading, and so demonstrate that we are indeed children of the Heavenly Father. But God is a very generous Father and has made wonderful promises to His faithful ones.

## **7 OUR HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS GOD**

We have written much in our previous books about God's goodness, holiness and righteousness but for the reader who has chosen this one without having read others we will say a lot about this subject again. We meet many people who started reading the Bible in the Old Testament, not methodically, but by skimming through and therefore reading about what God does about sin, because He loathes it. He is so pure and holy that His very holiness will burn it up. "Our God is a consuming fire". (Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29)

We can read how, at the beginning, God's heart was filled with pain and He was grieved that He had made mankind in His image when He saw that every inclination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:5&6) When we see evil proliferating in these days, perhaps we are not surprised at God's decision to eliminate it from the earth so long ago. But Jesus was willing to deal with the sin

problem by dying to pay the penalty of death for all of mankind for all time, so now God's hands are tied because of His agreement with Jesus. The death penalty for wrongdoing is all but eliminated in western society, though not in Muslim countries which hold to Old Testament law and do not acknowledge Jesus as Saviour of the world. But neither the sloppy sentimentality nor the fierce legalism change men's hearts. This present situation must be as grieving to God as it always was.

Our God is defined by John as LOVE. (1 John 4:8) Paul describes LOVE. Love is patient and kind. LOVE does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. LOVE is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered and it keeps no record of wrongs. LOVE does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. LOVE always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. LOVE never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) It is therefore quite extraordinary that atheism is increasing when these qualities are on offer, but as Jesus acknowledges, "men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil". (John 3:19) The holiness and righteousness of God is a stumbling block to a selfish heart.

Of course this should not be if the Church, the body of Christ, demonstrated this same righteousness and holiness. Paul wrote to encourage us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling...do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out (on to) the word of life". (Philippians 2:12-16) Many who say they are Christians feel free to disagree with the words of God and to

argue their own perspective which is tainted by their fleshly thinking. To demonstrate God's righteousness His family must be loyal to His principles.

God first expressed His principles in the Ten Commandments. These were given long after Abraham developed his relationship with God, by talking with Him and obeying what God asked him to do. After the deaths of the patriarchs God's people became slaves, and slaves have to do what they are told, so a slave mentality is not a cooperative spirit but an obedient one only because of fear. So when God came down on Sinai the Israelites chose to fear rather than to be free. (Exodus 20:18) But God's intention was quite plain. "I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all the nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". (Exodus 19:4-6) A holy and righteous God wants a holy family who is His treasured possession. Although He began with the Israelites He intended that eventually all nations, all tribes, all languages would be drawn into this family, because of His promise to Abraham. (Genesis 12:3) These words can hardly be thought to be describing a God of wrath! But sin is a killer of faith, hope and love. A guilty conscience becomes full of fear and anything pure and holy is a threat. Our God who is a consuming fire hates the sin, not the sinner. Many, many times God's prophets ask the sinner to turn to God and be rescued before the sin becomes full-blown spiritual death and complete separation from the source of purity and love. Many, many times God has let the devil do his dirty work in the hope that the afflicted one will call out to be

rescued. In these days of an increase in atheism many people have seemingly gone beyond rescue, but God never sees it this way because He is the ultimate optimist, because He does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

## **8 HIS DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

It is the most extraordinary thing that God has raised the Standard against the enemy and this Standard has given His authority to His brothers and sisters to do the same. It is now redeemed mankind that holds up the Standard. Every time the enemy comes in the job of any of God's family is to raise the Standard, to exalt Jesus, the Christ.

Each of the letters to the churches encourages the readers to **overcome**. "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches". (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22)

Many of the things to overcome are character weaknesses. These are always the devil's first line of attack because we excuse ourselves when we fail in our loyalty to God's expected standards for His children. We are quite good with good deeds and hard work but maintaining our pure relationship with Jesus takes a measure of sacrifice. When worldly pressures come we find it easier to compromise rather than be persecuted for our convictions. Sometimes we are not willing to speak up when those we love are going off course. A typical example of this is when parents do not protest when their children lower the moral standards God has set. Then when God allows the enemy to come against this loved one in order that they might repent, they become indignant with God.

"Where was God when..." they ask, as if God has somehow been failing in His duty, when all along it is us who are failing God. God is always calling us to repent, to turn from going our own way and to follow Him and to obey Him.

In one of the letters (Sardis, Revelation 3:1-6), the messenger to the church writes, "I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember what you have heard; obey it and repent...walk with Me, dressed in white". This robe of righteousness is what Jesus dresses us in. It is the gift He purchased for us with His blood, a righteousness we have not earned or deserved, but in which is the only way we can represent Jesus to the lost. The Standard is seated in heaven at the right hand of God and His body, the Church, is to continue to enforce the victory He won over the devil. The church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) is rebuked because they are luke-warm – neither hot nor cold – and disgusting God. They have apparently forsaken their white robes. It did not seem to matter to them what their witness was like because they were so confident that they were OK. They, like the Pharisees rebuked by Jesus, (John 9:39) were blind to their backslidden condition and their complacency.

This delegated authority is the greatest privilege God can offer us. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have worked together in sync from the beginning and God has chosen that in the present age He will work with His children and the Holy Spirit to continue the work of rescuing the lost. Every time the enemy comes in like a flood we, Jesus' representatives, lift up His name. The name of Jesus is above every name, and at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. It was this

name that gave healing and strength to the crippled man. (Acts 3:1-16) It was this name that restored the sight of Saul. (Acts 9:17) It was this name that transformed the lives of the household of the jailer at Philippi. (Acts 16:31) At Ephesus there were so many miracles that the name of Jesus was held in high honour. (Acts 19:17)

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8) He lives for ever and He has a permanent priesthood and He continues to intercede for those who come to God through Him. (Hebrews 7:24&25) In Christ (the anointing and power of God) all the fullness of the Godhead lives in bodily form, and we have been given this fullness in Christ, who is the Head over every power and authority. (Colossians 2:9&10) But are we willing to step up to the privilege offered?

## **9 EXPECTED RESULTS**

God is GOD. He has made His decisions for good in our world and He is never thwarted. He also makes promises He fully intends to fulfil and if we believe and receive them they are absolutely mighty and sure promises.

In chapter 2 we began to write about Isaiah's insights, leading up to our study text. But we stopped at his revelation about Messiah. We will take up from this point. "A King will reign in righteousness". (Isaiah 32:1) But although this King rules in righteousness and wonderful and glorious miracles will happen, God has always intended His man to rule the earth. (Genesis 1:28) This Kingdom of righteousness and peace is largely dependant on whether His mankind obeys or not. The promise is "the fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of



righteousness will be quietness and confidence for ever". (Isaiah 32:17) But there are many more promises in this book alone. "He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure". (Isaiah 33:6) God is always up-to-date in His strategies for holding evil back. "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak...those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength". (Isaiah 40:29&31) He also encourages and strengthens those who want to serve Him.

This is when the prophecy of Isaiah gets really interesting. It is plain that the words directly refer to Jesus, the Servant of the Lord. Jesus said about Himself, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many". (Matthew 20:28 & Mark 10:45) Jesus also said to His followers, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is the messenger greater than the one who sent him". (John 13:15&16) It is easy to interpret this service as foot-washing but this is not what Jesus meant. He took the lowliest position of the house-servant and stripped to His underwear, demeaning Himself to serve. He knew who He was in God's scheme of things, (John 13:3) having been there from the beginning at creation, (Colossians 1:15-18) yet He did not count His position as anything. (Philippians 2:7&8)

Paul makes God's intentions plain when he writes that we were buried with Christ and then raised with Him too, that we may live a new life...united with Him in His death and in His life. (Romans 6:4&5)

What Jesus wants to do in our world we do in His power, as His servants.

Isaiah writes about the Lord's servant, "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles (those outside of Covenant with God – even His enemies), to open eyes that are blind, to free the captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness". (Isaiah 42:6&7) These things are God's expected results from His servants.

But Isaiah wrote these words down 700 years before Jesus actually fulfilled this prophecy, so that mankind was redeemed, and the price paid for the sin of the world. Since God does nothing without speaking first, (Amos 3:7) everything was revealed to a trustworthy human voice. So He makes another promise. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is My word that goes from My mouth: it will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it". (Isaiah 55:9-11)

When we obey God and do what He asks us to do in the name of Jesus...the results are guaranteed!

## 10 THE FOREVER FAMILY

John writes that "to those who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God". (John 1:11&12) "No one can enter the Kingdom (or family) of God unless he is born of water (naturally) and the Spirit". (John 3:5) Yet God longs for children after His kind or in His image. Luke writes, "if you...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him". (Luke 11:13) "When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth...He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you". (John 16:13&14) "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father". (John 14:12&13) These things are the heritage of God's family. "Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God"! (1 John 5:4&5)

"For this is what the high and lofty One says – He who lives for ever, whose name is holy: I live...also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the heart of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite". (Isaiah 57:15) "This is the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke...to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see

the naked to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own family".

(Isaiah 58:6&7)

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them, says the Lord. My Spirit, who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time and for ever". (Isaiah 59:21)

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you". (Isaiah 60:1) "The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendour in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God". (Isaiah 62:2&3)

"Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim till all the world adore His sacred name" – are words written as a hymn in the 19th century.

One of the most interesting scenes in the recorded life of Jesus was when the Greeks came, asking to see Jesus. (John 12:20-33) He had come into the world primarily to preach to His own, the Jewish people, but they had not received Him. He knew the prophecies that He was also to be a Light to the Gentiles (who were sometimes referred to as the Greeks). (Isaiah 42:6) Jesus comments that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. He talks about a grain of wheat that dies to produce many seeds. "Whoever serves Me must follow Me...My Father will honour the one who serves Me". Then He talks about being lifted up from the earth in order to draw all men to Himself, referring to the way He would die, but also the way He would open into the presence of God. This would become an eternal promise –

each time Jesus is exalted it will bring in the presence of God in all His mighty power.

When anyone will repent and turn to God, no matter what has come against them, when the Christ is lifted up, the Standard for our lives, our example, our inspiration, the Spirit of the Lord is also there to put our enemy to flight!

**HIS BANNER OVER ME IS LOVE.** (Song of Songs 2:4)