

God's Grace Gift to Mankind

"Grace is about a divine heart, discontent to be by itself. When God chose **grace**, He embodied that character quality in the baby laid in Bethlehem's manger. So He chose **grace**, and humbled Himself to take on human form. **Grace** is God's determined design to share His heart with us." These succinct thoughts were quoted from Preston Gillham, president of Lifetime Guarantee.

In preparation for **God's Grace Gift** to mankind, Isaiah prophesied, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be **given** to us (Isa. 9:6). The Apostle John later reported the fulfillment, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of **grace** and truth" (Jn. 1:14).

But let's go back to the beginning. God promised Eve that He would send His **grace gift** to mankind by way of the "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15). Eve thought that her first-born was God's **grace gift**, saying, "I have gotten a man child – the Lord" (Gen. 4:1, literal translation). However, Cain turned out to be a murderer, killing his younger brother Abel. Where was the seed? God provided Seth to carry on the lineage of the "seed."



God's Grace Gift

Abraham and Sarah waited ten years for God to fulfill His promise of the seed. They thought that they needed to help God out.

Sarah gave Hagar her handmaid to Abraham through whom Ishmael was born. Abraham pleaded with God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You! But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him" (Gen. 17:18-19).

God fulfilled His promised **grace gift** (Isaac) to Abraham and Sarah 13 years later when it was physically impossible for them to have a child in their own strength.

The people of God continue to think that they need to help God accomplish His will and purpose in their own way. The Apostle Paul states it this way, "If it is by [God's] **grace**, it is no longer on the basis of [one's] works, otherwise **grace** is no longer **grace**" (Rom. 11:6).

God's way in God's time

Israel had not heard a word from God in over 400 years when the angel Gabriel came to a young teenage girl named Mary. He said, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son [God's promised **grace gift**], and you shall name him Jesus (Lk. 1:31).

Mary questioned, "How can this be, since I am a virgin" (Lk. 1:34). Gabriel announced that God would bring His **grace gift** by His Own initiative into the world, "The Most High will overshadow you...The holy offspring shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35).

Mary was engaged to Joseph, and when he realized that she was with child, he was troubled and planned to release her since he knew that he had nothing to do with her pregnancy.

However, "An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son;

[God's **grace gift**] and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20-21).

Joseph cooperated with God's leading, "And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus" (Matt. 1:24-25).

The couple's laborious trip to Bethlehem in the last days of Mary's pregnancy was not due to Joseph's careful planning in order to fulfill Micah's prophecy. God used Caesar Augustus' census to propel them to Bethlehem just in time for Jesus to be born, 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL'" (Matt. 2:6).

The Apostle John again testifies, regarding Jesus, "He was in the beginning with God... In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men... (and) **grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ [God's grace gift]**" (Jn.1: 2,4, 17).

John further clarifies, "But as many as received Him [God's **grace gift**], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:12-13).

The Christian life from start to finish is all of God! The daily Christian life is not a do-it-yourself-life that calls on Jesus only in 9-1-1 emergencies. May we learn to continually rest in His ways and trust in His predict timing.

"A famous American scientist said, 'If you want to sell an idea, wrap it up in a person.' This is exactly what God did at

Bethlehem. He sent into our lost world the saving truth of His **grace**, wrapped up in a virgin-born baby -- a baby who, in manhood, said 'I Am the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE.'" (Quoted by Dr. H. L. Fickett, Jr.)

**"Great and marvelous
are Your works, O Lord
God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are
Your ways...
For all the nations will
come and worship before
You" (Rev. 15:3-4).**



**All glory to Jesus, begotten of God,
The great "I Am" is He:
Creator, sustainer--but wonder of all,
The Lamb of Calvary!**

**To think that the guardian of planets in space,
The Shepherd of the stars,
Is tenderly leading the church of His love,
By hands with crimson scars!**

**The king of all kings and Lord of all lords,
He reigns in glory now:
Some day He is coming, earth's kingdom to claim,
And every knee shall bow!
AND EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW!**

John W. Peterson



Our Family Update 2006

Deanna and Jim Finley with Laura (17) Sarah (15) and Rebecca (13) live in Delavan, WI. Jim has apartment rentals and Deanna is a neo-natal nurse practitioner. dfin@ticon.net.

Denise and Kirk Perkins with Bobbie Jo Ann (13) and Mike (13) live in Milton, WI. Kirk is a school bus driver and Denise is a customer service representative for the local daily newspaper.

Deedra Bingham is a discipler with CUPbearers/Gracestoration, works part time with Cadence, Int., and is an adjunct professor with Rocky Mountain Bible College and Seminary in Englewood, CO. deedra@shepherdinggrace.org.

Lori and Vince Burke with Vincent (17 and Julie (15) are serving in the Philippines with First Love, Int'l. Kelly (23) and Tami (20) are attending college in the Chicago area. vinceburke60068@yahoo.com

Sheri and Kevin Robery with Tara (21) in collage and Shara (17) live in Park Ridge, IL. Kevin is a videographer for AWANA and Sheri works with a chiropractor. Josh and Rachel and baby Riley live nearby. kevinR@AWANA.org.

John and Rose Connor with Johnny (21) and Katie (18) in college, Bobby (17) in high school, and Shannon (10) and Bethany (8) live in Boca Raton, FL. John owns an installation company; Rose is a physician's assistant. jconnor@pruiba.com

Patti and Mark Bogner with Mark (13) Charissa (11) Matthew (9) Connor (7) and Jaclynne (3) live in Centennial, CO. Mark and Patti both teach at Jim Elliott Christian School. markpattibogner@msn.com.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the Annual **Memorial Day Retreat** **May 25-28, 2007.**

Information will be in the **March 2007 Update.**

May you and yours enjoy Jesus Christ—God's Grace Gift—during this special Holiday Season!

