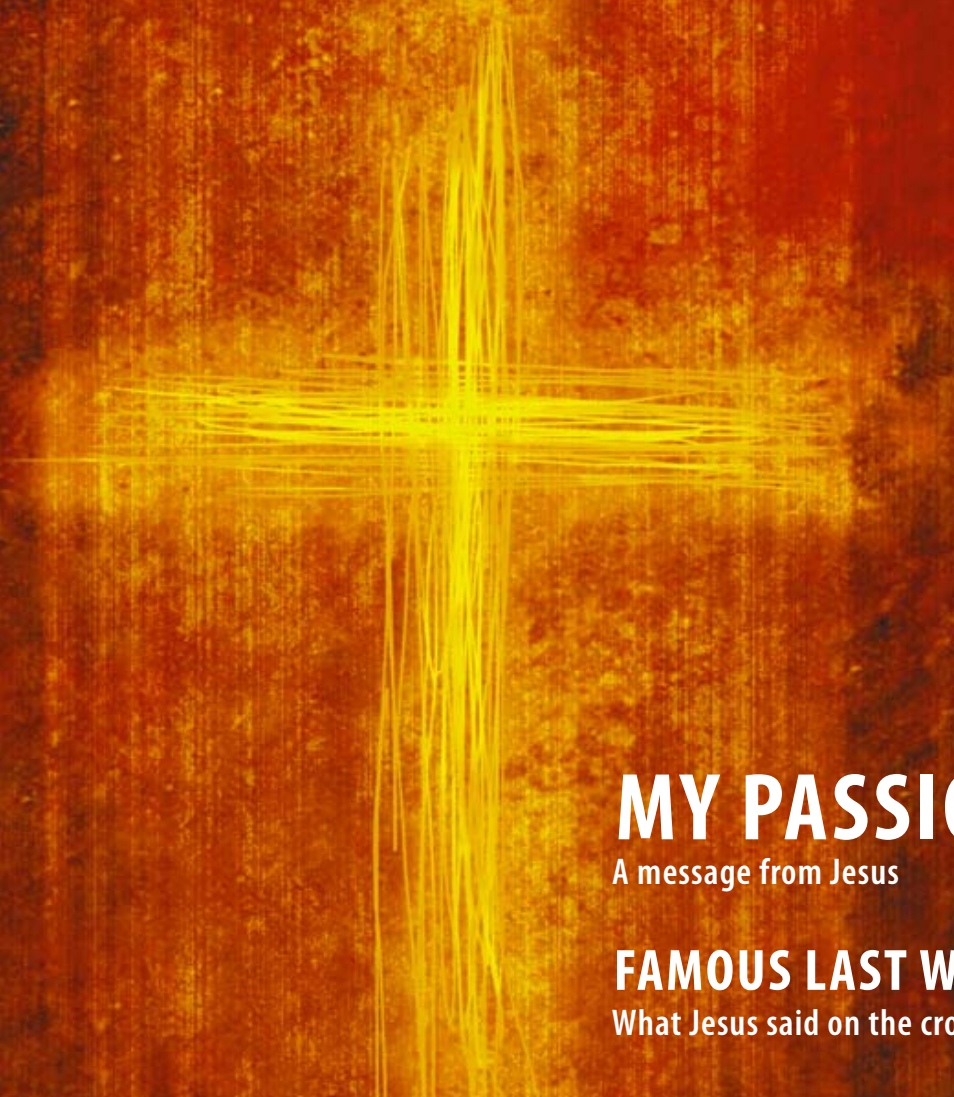


# @ctivated

CHANGE YOUR LIFE CHANGE YOUR WORLD



## **MY PASSION**

A message from Jesus

## **FAMOUS LAST WORDS**

What Jesus said on the cross

## **ENDTIME INSIGHTS**

Pre-Trib or Post-Trib Rapture?

*SPECIAL EASTER EDITION*

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## PERSONALLY SPEAKING

One year ago, shortly before Easter, Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* opened in theaters amid considerable controversy. Some film critics and religious leaders who had attended advance screenings expressed concern that the depiction of the last 12 hours of Jesus' life contained too much graphic violence and that the film could cause an anti-Semitic backlash. Others praised *The Passion* as the most accurate and moving portrayal of Jesus' suffering that had ever been filmed. Originally scheduled for release in only a handful of countries, *The Passion* quickly became an international hit, setting box-office and DVD sales records. Did Mel Gibson's international stardom fuel public interest, or did all the controversy? Probably some of both, but it doesn't really matter.

What matters most is the effect the film has had and is still having on millions and millions of people. Many Christians credit it for turning their lives around, restoring strained relationships, rescuing them from addiction, healing diseases, deepening their understanding of Jesus' sacrifice, and strengthening their connection with Him. The reception *The Passion* has had among those of other faiths is also remarkable. In the Muslim world, the film has received overwhelmingly positive responses from the public and clerics alike. In mainland China, where the government reportedly banned the film due to its spiritual nature, pirated copies have been in high demand, especially by the young. In India, one young moviegoer summed up his experience for many by saying, "I had no idea what Jesus went through! I am deeply touched by His love for me."

This issue of *Activated* contains a personal message to you from Jesus in which He explains His true passion and offers you the key to "freedom, peace of mind, joy, happiness, and true love—now and forever." May this Easter issue bring you closer to Him.

Keith Phillips  
*Keith Phillips*  
For the *Activated* family

Vol 6, Issue 3  
March 2005

EDITOR

Keith Phillips

DESIGN

Giselle LeFavre

ILLUSTRATIONS

Doug Calder,

Giselle LeFavre

PRODUCTION

Francisco Lopez

# A

## THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER,

### [RETOLD]

AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL, during their weekly class on morals, a group of first-grade students were asked to finish the story of the hard-working ant and the lazy grasshopper in the way they thought would be best.

Most of us know this story—one of Aesop’s fables—of how the Grasshopper wasted the summer months playing his fiddle while the Ant labored hard storing food for the winter. When cold finally came, the industrious Ant and his friends were all safely tucked away with all that they would need, while the Grasshopper was left to search for food and found himself dying of hunger.

The six-year-olds were asked to draw a picture of and rewrite the ending of the story in any way they would like, but it needed to involve the Grasshopper asking the Ant for help. About half of the first-graders took the general view that since the Grasshopper was undeserving, the Ant refused to help him. The other half changed the end to say that the Ant told the Grasshopper to learn his lesson, and then he gave the Grasshopper half of what he had.

Then a little boy stood up and gave this version of the tale: After the Grasshopper came to the Ant and begged for food, the Ant unhesitatingly gave all the food he had. Not half or most, but everything. The boy was not finished, however, and cheerfully continued, “The Ant didn’t have any food left, so he died. But then the Grasshopper was so sad that



the Ant had died that he told everyone what the Ant had done to save his life. And the Grasshopper became a good Grasshopper.”

Two things came to mind when this story was related to me. First, it reminded me what giving meant to Jesus. He didn’t go halfway for us, and He didn’t say we were “undeserving,” but He gave His all so that we could learn to “be good.” It was only through Him totally sacrificing His life that we were able to receive the gift of eternal life. It was just the way the Ant died for the Grasshopper in the six-year-old’s retelling of the classic tale. And for us it should also not end there. In gratitude, we should follow His example and give our all to tell of the wonderful thing He did for us.

Second, I learned what it means to give your all. It is not true giving unless it hurts, but when you do truly give, it will be multiplied many times over. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.” But it doesn’t end there. Here is the bittersweet promise that makes it all worthwhile: “But if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24). •

TOMOKO MATSUOKA IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN JAPAN.





# “WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS?”

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

---

**HE WAS BORN ON THE DIRTY FLOOR OF A BARN. AS AN INFANT, HE NARROWLY ESCAPED A JEALOUS KING'S DEATH SQUAD ...**

---

when His parents fled with Him to a foreign country, and they remained there until it was safe to return. Until the age of 30 He was a carpenter like His earthly father. But His heavenly Father needed Him for another job that only He could do.

When the time came for Him to begin His life's work, He went about everywhere doing good—helping people, caring for children, healing heartaches, strengthening tired bodies, and saving all who believed in Him. He not only preached His message,

but He lived it amongst the people. He ministered not only to people's spiritual needs, but He also spent a great deal of time tending to their physical and material needs, miraculously healing them when they were sick and feeding them when they were hungry, all the while sharing His life and His love.

His religion was so simple that He said you must become as a little child to receive it. He didn't advise people to observe any complicated ceremonies or difficult rules. All He did was teach love and show love as He strove to lead God's children into the true Kingdom of God, where the only laws are to “love the Lord with all your heart” and “love your neighbor as yourself.”

He had very little to do with the hypocritical, pompous, rich-robed, religious leaders of that day except when they insisted on annoying Him

with their critical questions. Then He would rebuke them publicly and expose them as the “blind leaders of the blind” that they were.

He refused to compromise with their false religious system, but rather worked totally outside of it. He shared His message and love with the poor and common folk, most of whom had long ago abandoned and been abandoned by organized religion.

He made Himself of no reputation, and was a companion of drunks, prostitutes, reviled tax collectors, and sinners—the outcasts and downtrodden of society. He even told them that they would enter the Kingdom of Heaven before the so-called “good” people, the self-righteous and the religious leaders who rejected Him and His simple message of love. The power of His love and appeal was so great and gave such great faith to the sincere truth-seekers that many didn’t hesitate to leave everything they had to immediately follow Him!

Once, while crossing a large lake with His disciples, a great storm arose which threatened to sink the boat they were in. He commanded the winds and the waves to cease—and immediately there was a great calm. His disciples, astonished by such a demonstration of miraculous power, exclaimed to one another, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

Throughout His ministry He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers, and raised the dead. In fact, so marvelous were His works that they prompted a leading member of the religious establishment that bitterly opposed and resented Him to exclaim, “We know that You are come from God, for no man could do these miracles that You do unless God were with him!”

As His message of love spread and His followers multiplied, the envious leaders of the religious establishment realized what a threat this formerly unknown carpenter had become to them. His simple doctrine of love was destroying their entire religious system by liberating the people from their power and control.

These powerful enemies ultimately had Him

arrested and brought to trial on false charges of sedition and subversion. And though the Roman governor found Him innocent, he was pressured by these religionists to execute Him.

Just prior to His arrest, this Man, Jesus Christ, had said, “They couldn’t even touch Me without My Father’s permission. If I would but raise My little finger, He would send legions of angels to rescue Me!” But instead, He chose to die, to save you and me. Nobody took His life from Him; He laid it down. He *chose* to give His life because He knew that was the only way God’s plan for our salvation could be fulfilled.

But even His death did not satisfy His jealous enemies. To ensure that His followers couldn’t steal His body and claim He’d come back to life, they placed a huge stone over the entrance of His tomb and posted a group of Roman soldiers there to guard it. This was a scheme that proved futile, however, as these same guards became eyewitnesses to the greatest miracle of all. Three days after His lifeless body was laid to rest in that cold tomb, Jesus rose from the dead, the victor over death and Hell forever!

Death itself could not stop His work or His words! Since that miraculous day nearly 2,000 years ago, this same Man, Jesus Christ, has done more to change history and the course of civilization and the condition of man than any other leader, group, government, or empire. He has given hope, eternal life, and the love of God to billions.

God, the great Creator, is a Spirit. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere and in everything—far beyond our limited human comprehension. So He sent Jesus, in the form of a man, to understand us and show us what He Himself is like and to bring us to Himself. And though many great teachers have spoken and taught about love and about God, Jesus *is* love and He *is* God! Jesus is the only one who died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead. He is the only Savior. •

# MY PASSION

A MESSAGE FROM JESUS



EL GIBSON'S FILM *The Passion of the Christ* has caused a stir and raised controversy.

Instead of trying to discern what the director is trying to say, ask yourself this: "How does this movie affect me? What does it mean to me? Does it mean I should change something in my life? Where do I go from here?" If you let this film inspire you to be a better person and to live the way I want you to live, then you will come out ahead.

Yes, this is Jesus, and I am speaking directly to you. And yes, I am alive, well, and very active today.<sup>1</sup> I will speak to anyone who will listen. If you want to know more about My truest, greatest passion, read on.

The central focus of the film is My suffering and death—the intense, brutal, gruesome torture I endured when I was on earth 2,000 years ago.

I endured all this for you, because of My love for you. There had to be a punishment for your sins, so in dying this horrible death I took your punishment. I died for you, so that you could be forgiven, cleansed, and be together with Me forever. I gave Myself for you, so that you could be happy and fulfilled in this life, and someday join Me in Paradise for all eternity.

Why? Because I was driven by love to save you, to pay the price for your salvation. My love for you, just you, the one who is reading this now, is that great. If you were the only person in the whole world, I still would have died for you. I want you to be happy for eternity. You are My passion.<sup>2</sup>

Life is all about choices, and I made many choices that led Me to the cross. I could have backed out many times, and I had ample opportunity to do so. I didn't have to keep silent when I was brought before Pilate, I could have defended Myself, but I didn't. I died to save you and I have never regretted that decision.

While My last hours on earth represent a part of the passion I have for you, it didn't stop there. My passion has been thriving for 2,000 years.

I want you to focus on My love for you right now—today. My love for you is true and lasting. It can never be dissuaded; it cannot be quenched. It never loses hope, and it knows no limits. My love for you is complete. My passion for you is real, and I want it to be a part of your everyday life.

I gave My life for you, and now I have more—so much more—to give you. I want to fill you with the total-ity of My love, if you will receive it.

I know everything about you, including your flaws and mistakes, continued on page 8 >>



*“If you were  
the only person  
in the whole  
world, I still  
would have  
died for you.”*

## We owe Jesus everything!

Jesus was willing to die for us to save us, and He wants us to be willing to sacrifice to help Him save others (1 John 3:16). He bought and paid for us with His own blood. We're His property; we belong to Him now. Jesus saved our souls for eternity, so of course we should do what He asks of us, which is to try to win as many others as we can.

Jesus didn't go halfway to the cross for us, or almost all the way; He went *all* the way and gave His *whole* life for us. The main job He came to do was to die on that cross, and so the main job we've got to do is to bear *our* cross. He said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” (Luke 9:23–24).

We can only find the fullness of faith that we seek in the path of complete obedience, when we're really willing to take up our cross and deny ourselves, yielding our pride and our will to follow Jesus. Then He will give us the power to follow as we surrender to Him. •

—D.B.B.

<sup>1</sup>“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

<sup>2</sup>“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23 KJV). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

I CARE  
ABOUT  
YOU, AND  
I WANT  
TO BE  
INVOLVED  
IN EVERY  
ASPECT OF  
YOUR LIFE.

and I still love you. I love you intensely and passionately, now and forever. I love you as a father loves his child, and as a husband loves his wife.

My love is forgiving, it is merciful, and it is constant. I care about you, and I want to be involved in every aspect of your life.

Others will fail you, but I will never fail you: I will always be here for you. I want to help you, guide you, comfort you, and care for you. Our love can grow deeper every day.

Even if you don't understand everything about the sacrifice I made for you—why I had to give My life and why it had to happen the way it did—if you will open your heart and accept My love for you, then you will know that it is real, and in time you will understand it more.

I appreciate your remembrance of My death, and now I want you to move forward and keep on experiencing My passion. By knowing Me personally, you allow My passion to become a part of your life, to fill you and complete you.

If you don't know Me yet, you can get to know Me right now. Just open your heart to Me. You can begin by saying this simple prayer:

*Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done. I don't understand everything about Your passionate love, but I want to know You. I ask You to please come into my heart, give me Your free gift of eternal life, and teach me more about Your love. Amen.*

If you already know Me, get to know Me better. Work on our relationship. Open your life more to Me. Now that we are connected, please do not neglect Me.

Read My messages to you in the Bible, and try to apply them to your life. If you read the account of My life and the words I said as recorded in the Gospel of John and the other Gospels, you will understand more about My great love and passion.

I know it is difficult in this fast-paced world, but if you will make the effort to take time daily to get alone and quiet so you can talk to Me and let Me speak to you, it will make a difference in your life. You can talk to Me anywhere, any time, out loud or in your heart—any way you like! Tell Me all that is on your mind. I will communicate with you through an impression, a thought, a whisper to your heart. Open your mind and heart to Me and you will come to know the depths of My love.

The cross is empty now. I live, and I long to give you a happier life, filled with true love, with good things. I want to teach you about My deep, eternal, passionate love and to help you share that same passion with others. It will change their lives too.

My commission to those who love Me is this: Love Me first with all your heart, mind and soul, and then love others.<sup>1</sup>

Do the things I ask of you, and I promise that your life will overflow with joy, your satisfaction will know no bounds, and your happiness will know no equal. You will not only receive forgiveness for your sins, but you will find freedom, peace of mind, joy, happiness, and true love, now and forever.

Passionately,  
Jesus

<sup>1</sup>“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39).



# GOD'S FORGIVENESS

## never say never

### PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, I thank  
You so much  
for loving  
me. Your  
mercy is so  
great, incom-  
prehensible,  
indescr-  
ible, and it  
is renewed  
for me every  
morning.  
You don't  
remember my  
mistakes and  
sins from day  
to day. As  
soon as I tell  
You I'm sorry,  
You cover  
them over  
with Your love  
and mercy.  
You give me  
a brand-new  
start and  
encourage  
me to try  
again. Such  
love!

**O**NE DAY SHARON AND I met Debbie, and after talking for a while, Sharon asked Debbie if she would like to receive Jesus. She said she would, but halfway through the prayer Debbie raced off, on the verge of tears and apologizing profusely. "Jesus could *never* forgive me for my sins!" she shouted back at us.

I ran after her, took her by the arm, and said emphatically, "Yes, He can!"

She argued that He couldn't and wouldn't, and burst into tears. I also burst into tears over her obvious anguish, and we went back and forth for a few moments—her insisting that Jesus couldn't forgive her and me insisting that He would—until finally she explained that she had had an abortion.

I quoted a few promises from the Bible that said plainly that she would be forgiven if she would only ask for and accept it. We talked for a long time, and in the end she prayed with me to receive His forgiveness. She had been carrying this burden for many years, but Jesus lifted it the moment she asked Him to!

—DEBBY BLETTNER, AUSTRALIA

**A** FRIEND OF OURS introduced us to his brother, Marco, and our conversation eventually turned to God's love and forgiveness in Jesus.

"I belong to the other guy!" Marco replied, meaning the Devil.

And he looked like he did—at least at that moment. He was having a hard time talking or concentrating, and was probably either on drugs or drunk. Whatever the case, it was obvious that he was very unhappy and needed the Lord. We knew that if he would just pray with us to receive Jesus as his Savior, that would be the first step toward the Lord solving his problems.

"It's *impossible* for me to change," Marco would say every time we told him that Jesus loved him. "I'm too bad a sinner!"

Several of his friends were standing around, and they were quick to agree. "He's too messed up," they said. "He really needs help, but he'll *never* change."

Marco said he needed to get some fresh air, and we followed him outside. Away from his friends, we assured him once more that the Lord loved him personally, regardless of anything he had ever done. Marco's eyes filled with tears, and he said he wanted to receive Jesus.

He repeated a short prayer after us, asking Jesus to come into his heart and forgive him for all the wrongs he'd done.

When we saw him a week later, he was like a different man!

—ESTEVÃO AND RUTH, BRAZIL

# WHAT JESUS SAID ON THE CROSS

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER



EVERYTHING THAT JESUS SAID ON THE CROSS WAS A DIFFERENT EXPRESSION OF HIS LOVE. HIS WORDS SPOKEN THEN STILL MOVE PEOPLE TODAY.

## LOVE FOR ENEMIES

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

“Them” were the Roman soldiers who had been following Pontius Pilate’s orders when they nailed Jesus on the cross to die. They had been following orders, but they had also been cruel and vicious in their mocking and whipping, proving what was in their own hearts. “Them” were also those in the misguided, manipulated mob that had called for Jesus’ death and forced Pilate’s hand—the same common people who had hailed Jesus as their King only a few days earlier (Mark 15:6–14; Mark 11:8–10). How cruel, how awful, how unjust! How could Jesus say that any of these people didn’t know what they were doing? To a certain degree they had to, but they

didn’t realize the enormity of what they were doing—that they were killing the Son of God.

In asking His Father to forgive those who had turned on Him and those who had carried out His execution, Jesus actually spoke in their defense, and in so doing proved in the most powerful way possible that He believed what He had taught: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Despite the shame and pain the Romans heaped on Jesus, He forgave them. He also forgave those who had turned on Him. Now He wants us to have that much love, that much forgiveness.

## LOVE FOR SINNERS

“Today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Jesus spoke these words to the repentant thief who was crucified beside Him.

The following true story shows the present-day effect of these words.

A couple in Mexico was robbed of their credit cards, papers, and cash. Some friends prayed with them that they would be able to overcome

the trauma of the theft and that the stolen items would be recovered.

A week later the couple received a thick envelope in the mail. All of their valuables were inside. So was a note, which was signed, "From a repentant robber." There also was a drawing of three crosses. The cross on the right was circled. Jesus' mercy and forgiveness still change people today.

### **LOVE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

**"Behold your son! ... Behold your mother!" (John 19:26–27).**

Jesus spoke these words to His mother and to John, the closest of His disciples, as He looked down on them from the cross. Jesus understood the void that the end of His earthly life would leave in each of theirs, and that they could each help fill that void for the other. Jesus loved them so much that even in the midst of His most trying hour, He saw the needs of His loved ones and did something about it.

Thereafter, John cared for Mary as his own mother, and Mary loved John as her own son.

### **JESUS NEEDS OUR LOVE**

**"I thirst!" (John 19:28).**

Last Christmas some friends and I did a program at a center for the handicapped that is run by the Missionaries of Charity, the Catholic order that Mother Teresa founded. I noticed a large banner on the wall that read "I thirst," and I asked why they had chosen these two last words of Jesus.

"That cry of Christ has become our rallying cry," one of the sisters explained. "Shortly before she passed on to her heavenly reward, Mother Teresa said, 'His thirst is without end. He, the Creator of all, pleads for the love of His creation. He thirsts for our love. These words, 'I thirst,' do they not echo in our souls?'"

### **LOVE FOR GOD**

**"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).**

Did Jesus doubt God's love as He died? Had God forsaken Him? These words always troubled me until I read the following explanation from David Berg:

"What caused Jesus the greatest agony on the cross was not our sins, because He knew that we were going to be forgiven and saved. What broke His heart was thinking that His Father had turned His back on Him. Jesus went through an experience that, thank God, *we* will never have to go through—not just crucifixion, not just the agony of the body, but the agony of mind and spirit, feeling that God had actually deserted Him. 'My God, My God,' He cried out, 'why have You forsaken Me?' (Matthew 27:46). Had God forsaken Him? Yes, momentarily, that He might die the death of a sinner, without God.

"Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the whole world on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), and these sins separated Him from His Father. He voluntarily gave Himself to die in our place—He loves us that much!"

### **LOVE FOR YOU AND ME**

**"It is finished!" (John 19:30).**

What was it that He finished? On the same evening that Jesus hung on the cross, the Passover lamb was being sacrificed. Like the blood of the lamb saved the Hebrew people from destruction in Egypt, Jesus' blood—the ultimate Passover sacrifice—redeems us from the power of sin and death.

When He died on the cross His work was done, and our salvation was won!

### **LOVE'S REWARD**

**"Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit" (Luke 23:46).**

Jesus, help us to trust our lives to You and live to please You, like You trusted Your life to the Father and lived to please Him. Then what a day of rejoicing that will be when we see You face to face and enter into our heavenly reward—eternal life and love with You and the Father! •

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDEAST.

**In the midst of His most trying hour,  
He saw the needs of His loved ones  
and did something about it.**

BY SCOTT MACGREGOR

# pre-tribulation or post-tribulation Rapture?

THE SUN  
WILL BE  
DARK-  
ENED,  
AND THE  
MOON  
WILL NOT  
GIVE ITS  
LIGHT;  
THE STARS  
WILL FALL  
FROM  
HEAVEN,  
AND THE  
POWERS  
OF THE  
HEAVENS  
WILL BE  
SHAKEN.

ONE OF THE MAJOR CONTROVERSIES regarding Endtime Bible prophecy concerns when Jesus will return to “rapture” all those who have received Him as their Savior. Will it be before or after the coming three-and-a-half-year period of worldwide trouble known as the “Great Tribulation”?

Those who believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture contend that Jesus will return in secret to whisk all born-again (saved) Christians out of this world and into Heaven. Depending on when they believe the Tribulation starts, this would be either at the beginning of the Antichrist’s seven-year rule or at its midpoint.

Central to this pre-Tribulation doctrine are several Bible passages that liken Jesus’ Second Coming to a thief in the night, and also the supposition that the Second Coming and the Rapture are two different events.

Regarding His return, Jesus told His disciples: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of Heaven, but My Father only.

... Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:36, 40–44).

Here we have Jesus coming like a thief and people going up to Heaven in the Rapture at the same time. There is no indication that these are separate events.

In another “thief” passage, the apostle Paul states: “Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord

The term “Rapture” is not found in English-language Bibles, but made its way into Christian terminology as a transliteration of *rapiemur* (from *rapio*, or *raptio*), the Latin word used by Saint Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, which describes how the saved from all ages, both dead and living, will be “caught up” to meet Jesus in the air at His Second Coming.





so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–3).

“Sudden destruction” and the labor pain analogy make it clear that Jesus’ return will be a shocking, woeful experience for those not taken—certainly not the secret, stealthy Rapture of pre-Tribulation doctrine.

The point that both of these “thief” passages are making is that Jesus’ return will be sudden and unexpected, so we need to watch the signs of the times and keep our hearts right with Him so we’ll be ready.

A third “thief” passage that is often applied to the Rapture is, in context, a specific warning to Christians in the city of Sardis, in Western Asia Minor (modern Turkey) who lived in the apostle John’s day. Jesus says, “Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you” (Revelation 3:3).

There is a lesson in this passage for us too, of course, and it is the same one that the previously quoted “thief” passages make: We need to keep our hearts right with Jesus so we’ll be ready to face Him when we die or are caught up with Him in the Rapture.

A fourth “thief” passage that is sometimes added to the mix isn’t referring to the Rapture at all, but rather the destruction and re-creation of Earth’s surface and its atmospheric heavens about 1,000 years later, at the end of the Millennium: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

Now let’s look at some of the passages that support the post-Tribulation Rapture theory.

Just prior to His “thief” analogy, Jesus told His disciples: “Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:29–31).

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Jesus placed His return *after* the Tribulation period—*then* His angels will gather His elect, all those who have received Him as their Savior, in the Rapture. He couldn't have made that point clearer!

In addition, the apostle Paul explains that the Antichrist will already be in power and “sitting in the temple of God” when the Rapture happens, and we know from other passages that this happens *after* the Antichrist breaks the “holy covenant,” which triggers the Great Tribulation: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Jesus’ return] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [the Antichrist] is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4).

Paul also states that it will happen when the last trumpet sounds—the same trumpet Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:31: “The Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we [saved] who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the

twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

And finally, it is clear from the prophecies in the books of Daniel (c. 538 BC) and Revelation (c. 90 AD) that the saints—all those who have been born again—will be around in the Tribulation, because the Antichrist will war against them. In fact, several passages are even very specific about the length of this period.

“I was watching; and the [Antichrist] was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days [God] came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. ... He [the Antichrist] shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time [three and a half years]” (Daniel 7:21–22, 25).

Yes, the Great Tribulation is going to be a trying time, but God will turn it to our good and help us come through it victoriously. Concerning that time, Daniel writes: “The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many” (Daniel 11:32–33).

The Great Tribulation will also be a time when many people will turn to the Lord, as those who know their God and understand what’s happening will manifest great powers and win to God’s eternal kingdom many of those who are disaffected with the Antichrist and his regime. The Tribulation trumpets will signal judgments on the *wicked*—not the *just*, who will be under God’s seal of protection during this time.

“These [the great multitude standing before the throne of God and Jesus] are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation” (Revelation 7:14). In other words, they were there during it. God will deliver His own *out* of trouble, not *from* it! •

# THE EASTER PROPHECIES

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN JESUS' LAST DAYS ON EARTH, AND HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

**Triumphal entry in Jerusalem on a donkey**

Zechariah 9:9  
Mark 11:7-8  
John 12:13-15

**Betrayed by a friend**

Psalm 41:9  
Mark 14:10, 43-45

**Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver**

Zechariah 11:12  
Matthew 26:15

**Betrayal money returned for a potter's field**

Zechariah 11:13  
Matthew 27:3-10

**Judas's position to be taken by another**

Psalm 109:7-8  
Acts 1:16-26

**Accused by false witnesses**

Psalm 27:12  
Matthew 26:60-61  
Mark 14:57

**Offers no defense**

Isaiah 53:7  
Matthew 26:62-63  
Matthew 27:12-14

**Struck and spat upon**

Isaiah 50:6  
Matthew 26:67  
Mark 14:65  
John 19:1-3

**Hated without reason**

Psalm 109:3-5  
John 15:24-25

**Soldiers divide His garments and gamble for His clothing**

Psalm 22:18  
Matthew 27:35

**Pierced through hands and feet**

Zechariah 12:10  
Luke 23:33  
John 20:27

**Executed with malefactors**

Isaiah 53:12  
Mark 15:27-28

**Agonized in thirst**

Psalm 22:15  
John 19:28

**Given gall and vinegar**

Psalm 69:21  
Matthew 27:34, 48  
John 19:29

**No bones broken**

Psalm 34:20  
John 19:32-36

**His side pierced**

Zechariah 12:10b  
John 19:34

**Deserted momentarily by God**

Psalm 22:1  
Matthew 27:46

**Vicarious sacrifice**

Isaiah 53:4-6, 12  
Matthew 8:16-17  
Romans 5:6-8  
1 Corinthians 15:3

**Buried with the rich**

Isaiah 53:9  
Matthew 27:57-60

**Deserted by His followers**

Zechariah 13:7  
Mark 14:27  
Matthew 26:56

**Resurrection**

Hosea 6:2  
Psalm 16:10  
Psalm 49:15  
Luke 24:6-7

**Other dead raised with Him**

Isaiah 26:19  
Matthew 27:52-53



**Ascension to Heaven**

Psalm 68:18  
Luke 24:50-51  
Acts 1:11  
Ephesians 4:7-10

**Christ at the right hand of the Father**

Psalm 110:1  
Mark 16:19  
Hebrews 1:2-3





FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# LIVE

## the Golden Rule

I ONCE TOLD MY FOLLOWERS, “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). So many problems would be solved if people would live by that simple rule. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is the smart thing to do. When you do it—even when it’s to your own hurt at first—it eventually comes back to you in the form of more love and other good things in your own life. When you build your life and character on treating people the way you want to be treated, it’s inevitable that they will return the favor by treating you with respect and kindness. But it starts with you.

You have opportunities every day to spread goodwill. You face choices every day in which you can either do what is best for yourself or best for someone else. Sometimes it can be difficult to do the right thing, especially when the person you’re dealing with hasn’t done right to you. You may not feel others deserve to be treated with love and kindness or that they are worth the sacrifice, but I didn’t say, “Do to others as they do to you.” My code for living is far above that normal perception of fairness. I want you to live on a higher plane. Anyone can be nice to those who are nice, but the person who can be nice to those who *aren’t* is the bigger person and more blessed by Me.