

## The MARK & The MIND

(continued from front page)

and is usually connected with the number 666. "Leaders" may be trying to remove the "shock" by slowly easing people into the system with the ID chip, etc. "for our security," and "to combat identity fraud!"

**GOD Himself has a mark** that He puts upon those people who truly love and obey Him. I call it **The Mark of the BEST!** We can see it pictured for us in the book of the Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel, chapter 9. There, God tells His angels to place a mark upon those "who sigh and cry for the abominations that are done" there in the city. It was the same city in which Jesus Himself sighed and cried (Luke 19:41), but for the most part, Christ's loving tears went unheeded. His unparalleled love, actions, compassion and words did not succeed in softening hearts of stone, enlightening and redirecting wills of iron, nor warming attitudes and prejudices of ice-cold religious formalism.

I believe that the "sighing and crying" about "the abominations" (see above) was not merely a moaning nor a wailing, nor a shouting in condemnation and complaint. I believe that this sighing and crying was *and is NOW* to be done in the same spirit as we see demonstrated by Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus is called "**the True and Faithful Witness,**" and He lives up to that title by never treating sin lightly or superficially. Yet, He always deals with the sin and the sinner in a manner unique to that person and always in a manner to rescue them. The only way Jesus covers-up a person's sins is to provide forgiveness and newness of life...and *that* "covering for sin" was provided by His death and resurrection. Furthermore, that covering for sin is the *only* covering and remedy for sin which

God foretold through the Old Testament prophets during the long centuries before Christ's earthly life and ministry. God is *not* silent about this!

To be accepted by God and acceptable to God, we must come to Him *HIS Way*, not by our self-made, self-customised way. **The mark in Ezekiel 9 is a God-ordered and God-approved mark.** The mark was only placed on certain people by reason of their inward spiritual condition which resulted in their outward spiritual action of "sighing and crying" regarding sin. I said that these marked people resembled Jesus Christ in that He, too, sighed and cried over sin. Jesus knew that sin would be the sole cause of the destruction of God's people. God knows that sin is the only thing that will truly destroy any human being. As a result, God has planned that we may be able to have this mark on us...this attitude within...this mentality that motivates. **HOW?**

**Jesus Himself tells us HOW** in that incredible prayer recorded in John 17. He prayed to the Father that all His followers would have an additional spiritual experience that would then grant them such a unity with God and each other that the end result would be that many in the world around us would then take seriously that God *did indeed* send His Son into the world to save all who come to Him! Jesus lived, spoke and ministered with the mind of God the Father. Likewise, He makes it possible, through His sacrificial death and resurrection that we, too, may have this mind, unified with Himself and the Father in order to properly represent God in this world and be the saving influence we are intended (by God and Christ) to be. (See more about this in the red below!) God's Holy Spirit is like God's Postman, to deliver this package to our heart and mind, and it is done by "recorded delivery!" You know when you get the "package!" **You will be marked!**

**"LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU!"** That urgent instruction is in **Philippians 2** in the Bible. Read it. That great chapter blends the birth and the death of Christ into one awesome portrait of glory, power and blessing to us all. There we see the Pre-existent Christ (Who is no fairytale personage!) taking upon Himself human form, and then taking that already-humbling experience to its furthest limit... not only to die, but to die the most shameful death as the worst of criminals. But once again, **ALL OF THIS** had *already* been foretold centuries before. God's saving act was *then* accomplished for us **FULLY!** Yet, that chapter tells us that **WE** are to have that same mind of Christ...of humility, obedience to the Father, and of the saving love of mankind.

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### The MARK and The MIND

Gabriel Mancino



**Whatever your favourite food is, I'm certain you would not prefer a mere shop-window replica to a fresh original!** The same is true for Christian symbolism that abounds *leading up to* and *during* Easter and Christmas. God wants us all to enjoy the true *substance*, rather than merely settle for *shadows* and *symbols*.

**Some churches observe "Lent," a 40 day period before Easter, which starts on "Ash Wednesday."** A Cross symbol (see above) is then manually placed with ash paste on the forehead of a professing follower of Jesus Christ. That ashen cross is supposed to **mark** the commencement of this solemn period, when "believers" are to practise some extra-special form of repentance and self-denial.

I appreciate the Bible words which are sometimes used during this "ash" ceremony: "Remember, O man, that you

are dust, and unto dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). **That reminds us that our bodies won't last forever.** Of course, the Bible also says that one part of our "being" *WILL* last forever, and that our greatest priority is to get it ready for eternity! Another "Ash Wednesday" Bible verse is Jesus' words, "*Repent (turn away from sin) and believe the Gospel*" (Mark 1:15). The "Gospel" refers to the Good News of God's spiritual and eternal (yet very genuine and real!) rescue of man through Christ. This loving rescue was foretold throughout the thousands of years of Old Testament history, and "*the time had fully come,*" as the wording of the sentence in Mark 1:15 above says at its beginning.

There *are* **other religions** that practise the putting of some **mark** or symbol on their foreheads. Shockingly, the Bible says there is coming a time that will involve "The Anti-Christ," a false Christ-Messiah who will come (perhaps soon) and cause a **mark** to be put on peoples' forehead or on their hand, without which no one will be able to buy or sell (see Rev. 13:16, 17; 14:9-11; 16:1,2; 19:20). This is often called "**The Mark of the Beast,**"

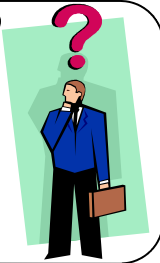
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**HAPPY EASTER! "The Lord is risen, indeed!" (Luke 24:34)**

**"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself...And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me" (Luke 24:27). "Abraham said to him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them"...And he said unto him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.' " (Luke 16:29,31)**

# "MASSAH" Its Meaning AND Its Master!

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said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' " Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' " (Matt. 4: 5-7).

The Devil is not the last person to try using the Bible against itself or against those who love God and seek to follow Him. Satan is "the author of confusion," and there are those today that are well-practised in his methods.

I especially want us to look at Jesus' reply, which is a quotation from God's words to Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 6:16, which says, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah." So, what happened at "Massah?" Simply put, the people that Moses led out of Egyptian slavery and was taking to the land that God had promised to them 400 years before, were *NOW* tempted to doubt and unbelief **because of the lack of water**. God had worked miracles in their behalf already, but they had short memories and hard hearts. There at Massah, they tempted the LORD by crying out, "***Is the Lord among us, or not?***" (Exodus 17:1-7).

That question, which "put God to the test," was *really* "coined" by Adam and Eve. To *them*, the devil was more worthy to believe— God was either a liar or a lie. Today's globally-popularised atheism is simply *their* over-ripe "fruit!" Adam failed Satan's test, but "the *second* Adam" (Christ) defeated Satan, and provided assurance of victory for us all! The two verses *before* Deut. 6:16 actually tell the people that **God IS among them!** In the Wilderness Temptation, Jesus showed us that this is so very true! Jesus *IS* called "Emmanuel," which means "**God with us!**" (Isa.7:14; Matt. 1:23). **HE is Massah's Master!**

Satan is a veteran at bullying and deceiving people, but *THIS* day he met his match...no, *his Master!* "Lent" (the 40 day period before Easter) reminds us of this confrontation. Lent is intended to be a pattern for self-discipline, etc., and is to remind us of Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, tempted of the devil.

Rather than look at what *the churches* do at this time, let's look at the event itself, as recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. I gave a few very short lessons from this last month, but I want to focus on another point separately... and it IS important! You may recall that Satan presented his challenging "temptation" to Christ as a three-step attack. Let's look at only the second one. I told you last month that on this second "temptation," Satan copied Jesus by quoting Scripture from the Old Testament! **Oh, what an orthodox devil!** But let's consider Jesus' Scriptural reply to Satan's Bible quoting.

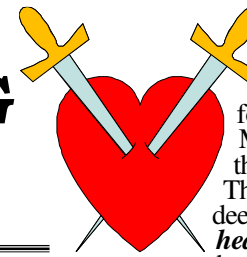
Perhaps I should point out that after two "temptations" in which Satan started with "*IF You are the Son of God,*" the devil dropped that tactic. It was useless, for Jesus *knew* who He was, and it was not up for debate.

**So let's look at the "Middle Movement"** in this "Song of Christ's Wilderness Triumph." That second "temptation" is recorded as follows: "*Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and*

**MORE ABOUT MASSAH:** We MUST remember the involvement of God's Holy Spirit just *before* & just *after* this "wilderness temptation," as seen in Jesus' baptism, entrance & exit from the wilderness, and His calling of disciples and quoting of the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue. All of it...all of it... so clearly shouts to us the love and compassion and interest of Christ in showing, in human life, God's intense passion to seek and to save lost sinners wherever they are! That Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit of God to live such a life and do such a work is sufficient proof that we need the same! If we say we have God's Spirit, yet fail to seek the lost, we are lying. **So, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" Yes! Yes! Yes!**

# MARY'S PIERCING PAIN

Gabriel L. Mancino



this! Don't think that God has no agony, nor think that He does not care about *ours*...about *yours*!

Let's return to Simeon's words, for they point us to the true nature of Mary's greatest pain, that far surpassed the pain of childbirth the week before. The pain to which Simeon refers was a deep spiritual pain which was "***heart in heart***" with the heart of God, and with the heart of Jesus, her son and our Saviour.

**Eight short days** after Jesus' birth, He was taken to the Temple by His parents for the Jewish covenant ritual of circumcision, which God first gave to Abraham (Gen. 17:9-12).

You will notice in **the box at the bottom of the opposite page** an emphasis on the work of God's Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. That same Holy Spirit is needed in each of our lives. As we see the great involvement of "the Holy Ghost" in the brief period in Jesus' life that I referred to in the opposite article, so now in *this* article we see *that same Spirit* at work in the life of a godly old man named **Simeon**. **See his story—TRUE, though brief—in Luke 2:25-35.**

Note the involvement of God's Spirit in these few sentences: "*And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel [the promised Messiah], and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's [Messiah] Christ. So he came by the Spirit...*" This same type of living of life *may be* and *must be* ours if we are walking with and serving God.

However, I want to focus on some words of Simeon to Jesus' mother, Mary. Among his words to her are these: "***(Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also).***" Those words are in brackets, but they are a passionate prophecy of pain. Sure, life has its agonies, even if people are not religious, **but THIS pain is far different**. It is a pain to which God is the Central Participant. Oh, that we could see

To "redeem" means to rescue...to save. In this context and throughout the Bible, it refers to our rescue from our most paramount danger and problem—sin. To provide this rescue Christ came and died and rose again in victory over this chief triune-enemy: sin, death and hell.

The words of God's prophet, Isaiah, are considered the classic prophesy of **the Suffering Saviour** (in chapter 53). There we find God the Father's view of His Son's victorious, rescuing death for us all. [See God's *response* to the Cross in Phil.2, and what *our response* to it should be!] A price needed to be paid for sin's penalty, and God's ancient word foretold long, long ago that the Messiah's death would provide the only price acceptable to the Father.

Isaiah describes God's assessment of Christ's sacrificial death: "*He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities*" (verse 11). **This was Christ's experience of "Good Friday" and the Cross.** The word "travail" refers to the labour of childbirth. How appropriate, for by *this* means, Jesus provided the Way for the New Birth of all people who would ever open their hearts, confess their sins and throw themselves in believing humility upon the mercy of this Great Saviour! **This was Christ's joy! (Heb.12:2).**

**Yes, Mary had pain...**Jesus had pain, and so do all true followers of Christ and of God who bear the marks and pains of this kind of glorious childbirth!

**THE SOLDIER PIERCED JESUS WITH THE SPEAR.** Simeon told Mary that a sword would pierce through her own soul, too! In a sense, the soldier pierced Christ *AND* His mother. Isaiah 53 (see above), mentions much of Christ's physical suffering, in keeping with Mel Gibson's movie. But Isaiah also mentions "*the travail of His SOUL!*" St. Paul spoke often in these very terms of being in spiritual childbirth for those in various cities to whom he had shared the Good News of God's salvation through Christ. For example, see 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19; Philemon 10. May God help us to bear this painful mark of God's ownership, that HE may bear children by us!

**Forgive the small print, yet please study and enjoy it, AND share with others.**

We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.