

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition we have an article submitted by Gerald Edson titled "Comfort Ye My People."

I would encourage you to go to <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info> as I continue to update the site. I have links to several specific features below. Let me know what you think, whether you have any suggestions, or any requests.

As always, I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN). Additionally, if you have a subject or a question that you would like to have covered in a future edition of TGNN, feel free to send me a note and I'll do my best to address it.

The primary criteria for inclusion of articles are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

If you have a testimony to share, please send that to me and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

You can view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

Or you can access other educational/informational/inspirational resources at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

You can find the current preaching schedule for the Springfield, Missouri Restoration Branch at https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources/Service_Schedule.php

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let me know. All responses to me will be treated confidentially unless you tell me otherwise.

COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough places plain; And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:1-5)

The coming of the Messiah should certainly be a comfort to any and all nations that are looking forward to that event. But is this passage of scripture foretelling the birth of Jesus, or is it describing the second coming of Jesus? The answer is that it possibly, and even probably, covers both events. We shall first look at the birth of Jesus and the events surrounding that occasion. The coming of Jesus was foretold from the days of Adam, and there are many scriptures that record these prophecies in both the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon. In the seventh chapter of Isaiah we have these words, spoken to King Ahaz of Judah,

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good. (Isaiah 7:14, 15)

This is one of the most often quoted scriptures that foretell the birth of Jesus. There are those “wise men” of today that question the virgin birth of Jesus, or even that he existed at all. There are also those who suggest that he lived, but was not the Only Begotten Son of God, and that he did not do the things recorded in the Gospels. Some of these “wise men” of our time go so far as to say that they believe the entire Bible is a lie. But it is the firm testimony of this writer that Jesus was born as narrated in the Gospels, that he is the Only Begotten Son of God, that the events of his earthly life described in the Gospels are true, and that he shall come again to fulfill, to the most exact detail, all promises that he made either by his own voice or through his servants, the prophets.

The house of Israel, as a result of disobedience, had been downtrodden for many years. They had also looked forward to the coming of the Messiah whom they thought would be their liberator from the bondage they had experienced for several centuries. Jesus was born into the world as the liberator from sin. He shall come again as liberator from both sin and political oppression.

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus by preaching and baptizing all who would come to him in humility and submit to the act of baptism. John and Jesus were related, probably as third cousins, as Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, the mother of John, are said to have been cousins. However, the term, cousin, may not have meant the same thing at that time as it does today. It seems that “cousin” sometimes meant any close relative.

There is no record that would indicate that Jesus and John ever met before the time that Jesus came to John to be baptized, but upon seeing Jesus approach their small group gathered on the banks of the Jordan River, John stated, **“Behold the lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world!”** (John 1:29) The only way John could have known that this was Jesus and that he was the promised Messiah was for the Lord to have revealed it to him. John said:

And I knew him; for he who sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me; Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. (John 1:32)

John prepared the way for the beginning of Jesus’ ministry by preaching to and baptizing those who were willing to receive the true gospel. Jesus came to John to be baptized. When John questioned whether he was worthy to baptize Jesus, Jesus responded with, **“Suffer me to be**

baptized of thee, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matt 3:43) If it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized to **“fulfill all righteousness,”** then it follows that all who would desire to **“fulfill all righteousness”** need to be baptized by one having authority as John had authority. How do we know from whom John received his authority to baptize? As previously quoted, John, himself, said:

And I knew him; *for he who sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me; Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.* (John 1:32, italics added)

It was God who called John to preach and to baptize. No other authority is acceptable. Back in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, he wrote:

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:4,5)

This segment of the prophecy has not as yet been fulfilled. Mountains and hills are often thought to reference large and small earthly governments or principalities, respectively. In the second chapter of Isaiah we have these words:

And it shall come to pass in the last days when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, . . .” (Isaiah 2:2)

This quotation seems to agree with the premise that mountains and hills refer to governments. In this context, all earthly governments will disintegrate either before or at the second coming of Jesus, when he sets up his righteous kingdom. There will be no greater or lesser persons, for all will be on a level field (**. . . the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain;**). Evil shall be eliminated, leaving only the righteous kingdom to rule the world.

And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine own elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare; an holy city, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion; a New Jerusalem. (Genesis 7:70)

His second coming will not be a secret, for everyone on the face of the earth shall know of his coming.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:5)

Those who make claim that Jesus is already on the earth but in disguised form must be mistaken. Jesus, himself, testified:

And if they shall say to you, See here! or, See there! Go not after them, nor follow them. *For as the light of the morning, that shineth out of the one part under heaven,*

and lighteneth to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day. (Luke 17:23- 24, italics added)

Furthermore, Isaiah's testimony is that it shall happen because the Lord has said it would happen, and that is all that is necessary for us to know. "... **the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.**" (Isaiah 40:5). If God's word was good enough for Isaiah, surely it must be good enough for us.

Animal sacrifice was still a part of the law in the days of Isaiah. This ceremony was a type and shadow of the great sacrifice that Jesus made when he gave his own mortal life as a sacrifice for the sins of all who will repent and be subject to his commandments. Isaiah points out that the animal sacrifices could not redeem anyone, only the sacrifice of Jesus can do that.

And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. (Isaiah 40:16)

No quantity of animals offered for sacrifice can redeem the human race. The law of animal sacrifice was only to act as a pointer to the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.

And then the angel spake, saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth; (Genesis 4:7)

Jesus came to provide the way to redemption.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people *from* their sins." (Matthew 2:4, italics added)

In the Book of Mormon, one of the crafty lawyers in the days of Alma attempted to twist these words, and thereby trip-up Amulek.

And Zeezrom said again, Shall he save his people *in* their sins? (Alma 8:87, italics added)

But Amulek could not be shaken from the truth. He responded:

I say unto you he shall not, for it is impossible for him to deny his word. (Alma 8:88)

By changing the single preposition, "from", to "in", Zeezrom had hoped to destroy the ministry of Alma and Amulek. He was thwarted in this attempt. Jesus **cannot** save us "**in our sins,**" but he **can** save us "**from our sins.**" Our lives would be miserable and pointless if it were not for the fact that Jesus came into the world to be our sacrifice, to save us **from** our sins. The words of the hymn say:

Sad were the life we must part with tomorrow

If tears were our birthright and death were our end;

But Jesus hath cheered the dark valley of sorrow;

We'll rise from the dead and immortal ascend.

Of course, the promise is contingent upon our repentance and full obedience. God has said so, and that is good enough for me.