

# THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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## The Stars

Louis Garbi

From the earliest part of my youth, I was fascinated with outer space. I loved the books my mother would bring from the library. There were pictures of vast and lonely landscapes, beautiful vistas of stars and colorful planets, all swathed and surrounded by the void. As I grew into reading, I enjoyed (and still do) science fiction and things dealing with the bizarre and unknown. I liked *Science Fiction Theater* and *The Twilight Zone*. When *Star Trek* premiered, I couldn't get enough. The vastness of the expanse with its seeming infinite variations tugs at my longing to know.

*Star Trek* and its many iterations represent the dream of humanism. It is a vain hope for the ascension of mankind in a universe without God. It plays on mankind's capacity to explore, discover, invent, and expand. It is entertaining. On the other hand, the reality of God and His creation beckon us to realms far beyond the dreams of mankind.

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? (Psalm 8:3-4).*

First, think of God the Creator and sustainer of all. Think of One who has unlimited awareness. Not a sparrow dies without Him knowing. The hairs of our heads are numbered.

*You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, [Sheol] behold, You are there (Psalms 139:5-8).*

The greatness of God's power is amply stated throughout the Bible.

*Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance? (Isaiah 40:12).*

God said of Himself, "*Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, They stand up together*" (Isaiah 48:13). From these verses we ascertain there is not a cave on the farthest shore of space which He does not know. Nor is there a place in the eternal glory or in the region of death of which He is not aware.

God Almighty!

Concerning our place, the psalmist asked, "*What is man that you are mindful of him?*" It causes us to consider God has a plan for us.

*For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?" (Hebrews 2:5-6).*

The Spirit of God reiterated this scripture from Psalms so we might know how far His plan extends – "*the world to come.*"

*"You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works*

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*of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet" (Hebrews 2:7-8).*

In this case "*all things*" is without limitation. It points to our potential.

*But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:8-10).*

"*Many sons to glory*": the fulfillment is in the world of God's glory, thus "*all things*" are under the feet of God's children. This promise is reflected when Jesus said: "*Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5), which is to say, the ultimate outcome of God's eternal purpose on this planet belongs to the meek. This is beyond imagination.

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him,*

*continued on the next page...*

*for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:1-3).*

What does it mean to be like Him and to see Him as He is? Here is one indication: our fulfillment will be to share understanding and appreciation on the level with God. Undoubtedly, there is more to it than that. This is stated in Romans:

*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together (Romans 8:16-17).*

However, being a joint-heir with Christ depends on our hope. According to the scripture, hope in Him purifies us to be pure "as He is pure."

Hope in God comes because we value His promises with a higher estimation of anything that might be attained in this world. This is how "faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1). Likewise, faith is "the evidence of things not seen" through the actions of those who embrace the promises of God. Do we want the beauty of His promises more than our small dreams? If so, we prioritize our affairs accordingly. Avoiding sin is only a part of it.

*Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:12-14).*

Sometimes we hear that through the research and explorations of science we see greater and more wondrous displays of what God has done. This may be so. However, the appreciation for God's handiwork is no different for the faithful today than that of our brethren, who from ancient times simply opened their eyes to the power of God.

*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard (Psalm 19:1-3).*

The awe we experience through beholding this vast creation and our desire to comprehend it reflects our desire to ascend. The whole of what God has done is designed to be placed at our feet. In other words, it is all for our sakes here in this world.

*Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).*

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## Knowledge is Power

Tad Morris

If there's a will, there's a way, right? Not necessarily.

The apostle Paul identifies the limiting factor in our service to God. **Romans 7:18:** "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find." We want to change, but we don't. We want to be better, but we aren't. We want to fulfill our potential, but we can't. We want to conquer sin, but we don't know how. Sometimes you feel like you can't because you really can't. Not on your own. **Romans 8:7-8:** "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

We all know what this feels like. We win one battle and we lose the next three. We resolve to change only to be crushed by the lusts in our flesh. This is the spiritual war described in **1 Peter 2:11:** "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." When we lose these wars, we feel the defeat and guilt of failure. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (**Romans 7:24**).

The flesh is carnal and the human will is limited. There are no exceptions to this rule. No amount of effort, no amount of discipline, no amount of counseling, and no amount of encouragement can help us conquer our sins on our own. The sooner we accept this reality, the sooner we can get to work taking care of our problems.

### What's the solution? The Spirit of God.

The Spirit is the only way to completely conquer our sins. God changes us in ways we can't change on our own. **Romans 8:13:** "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." This is one of the great truths of the gospel. You don't have to change on your own! You don't have to do any of this on your own. Our transformed lives are the product of God working in us through his Spirit. Without the Spirit, our lives will not be transformed.

### How do we stir up the Spirit inside of us? The Spirit is in the Word.

If you're looking for something more dramatic or mystical, you'll be disappointed. There are no shortcuts or magic tricks. After receiving the Spirit through baptism (**Acts 2:38**), the essential process through which we are filled with the Spirit is Bible study – knowing and understanding the Word of God. The Spirit is in the Word: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (**2 Timothy 3:16**). Here's an analogy. The Spirit is like a

fire. This is the fire that enlivens our conscience and gives us power – God’s power – over our sins. If the Spirit is the fire, the Word is the fuel. Filling ourselves with the Word of God stirs up the fire inside of us.

The entire New Testament confirms this message, that we are transformed through the Spirit through our knowledge of Christ within the Word. **Colossians 3:10**: “*put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.*” A new man is created when we become a Christian, but what renews the new man? What is the continuing power of change? Knowledge. **Ephesians 6:17** agrees: “*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*”

This isn’t hypothetical. Has your knowledge of the Word ever helped you grow? Helped you make the right decision? Helped you win a battle over temptation? It helped Jesus. Three times he was tempted by Satan, and all three times he responded by quoting Scripture.

### What part of us is actually changed by the Spirit?

The Spirit changes the mind. As we fill ourselves with the Word, the Spirit changes the way we think. He changes our thoughts, he changes our priorities, and he changes our will.

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:5-6).*

This is one way in which the new law is different from the old law. Through the Spirit, the Word of God is incorporated into the mind:

*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Hebrews 8:10).*

When we receive the Spirit of God through the Word of God, our minds are transformed. **1 Corinthians 2:16**: “*For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.*”

What is the conclusion? Read the Bible, and don’t be ashamed to start small. If you’re like me, setting unreasonable Bible-study goals only leads to failure and guilt. So don’t be ashamed to begin by reading just a few minutes every day. Remember it’s not a race. Read slowly and methodically. Take time to understand every verse and every phrase. You might be surprised by what you’ve been missing.

*[You have] been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23).*

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## Glory to God!

The church in **Lawrence, KS** rejoiced on February 23 when **Henry Reno** was immersed for the remission of his sins. The congregation was overjoyed when **Lorraine Reichard**, formerly of **Ottawa, KS**, placed her membership with the church.

The church which meets on **Smart Road, Greenwood, MO** praised God when **Karen Leonard** and **Hollyn Achens** were buried with Christ in baptism.

*"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).*

## Here and There

The church in **Chariton, IA** has sold their meeting place at **15th and Roland**. For the foreseeable future, the church will meet in a rented facility. You may find them on Sunday mornings at 10:00 at **811 South Fourth Street, Chariton, IA, 50049**. Please contact your editor for more information.

## Special Meetings

The church in **Lawrence, KS** plans a special 69th anniversary weekend meeting May 2-3. Various speakers will begin their exhortations with, "I am a Christian who is \_\_\_\_\_," and complete the phrase by stating their profession/occupation and exhorting on how each affected the other. The May 2nd service will begin at 2 p.m. The church plans two services for Sunday May 3rd: 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

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The **Murray Road Church of Christ, Lee's Summit, MO** has scheduled their annual **Memorial Day Meeting** for **May 23-24, 2020**.

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As reported in previous issues, your editor received an update on arrangements for the **2020 Midwest Bible Campout**,



***Please check your expiration date!***

*Continued from page 3: "Special Meetings"*

**Eminence, MO.** Here are the 2020 call in dates:

1. March 3 -- Campsites with Electric, Sewer, and Water
2. March 5 -- Campsites with Electric and Water
3. March 9 -- Any remaining campsites

Discovery Ministries requires a \$50, non-refundable deposit per campsite. Campsites become available on Friday, June 26. Lodge rooms become available at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 27. This and all additional information can be found at the **Prince Road Church of Christ** website:

<http://princeroadchurchofchrist.org/campout/>

The church in **Kirkville, MO** continues to plan for their "20/20 Vision" meeting **July 25-August 2, 2020**. Please mark your calendars! There will be classes Monday through Friday with teachers **Rick Sparks, Mike Kirby, Tad Morris, Kevin Crittenden** and **John Morris**. Also, two VBS classes each week day with **Doug Twaddell**. And lots of singing, praying and Christian fellowship! More details to come!

Following our nine day meeting will be a "Restoration History" Tour, August 3-8. Join evangelists **Rick Sparks & Mike Kirby** and elder **Dan Green** for a tour of the early nineteenth century American Restoration Movement. Tour highlights will include visiting locations that were once home to restoration leaders such as: James Shannon, the Sommers, John Walker, T.M. Allen, Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell.

We will see famous restoration sites in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The locations that we plan to visit will include the Old Mud Meetinghouse, the Shaker Village, Cane Ridge, the home of Alexander Campbell, the Historical Society in Bethany, Butler University, Culver Stockton and Sand Creek.

For more details contact **Corey Salter**:

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[www.lsgrouptours.com/restoration-tour](http://www.lsgrouptours.com/restoration-tour).

## **2020 Meetings**

May 2-3.....	Lawrence, KS
May 23-24.....	Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO
June 13-14.....	Vandalia, IA
June 20-21.....	Excelsior Springs Youth Meeting
June 29-July 3.....	Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 25 - August 2.....	Kirkville, MO
September 5-6.....	Pleasant Hill, IA

*"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."*

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