



The Messenger

Messenger Project Newsletter

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Messenger Notes

A demo soundtrack for *The Word* Christian rock opera was sent to **Dr. Peter Senkbeil**, head of the **Concordia University** Drama Department, who will be examining the music for continuity and offering his professional opinion of the work. We are blessed to have this opportunity to fine-tune the musical.

The **Camp Challenger** youth ministry date has been moved to May. This will give the **Community Bible Church** Worship Team more time to learn songs and put together a program.

Joie De Leon sang *Holy Is His Name* with the worship team during the January 23rd offering at Community Bible Church. Our next offering song will be February 27th.

Messenger has only a few more songs to mix before their long awaited CD will finally be completed. We will make a limited run for promotional purposes, and offer some for sale at our website. All of the new songs will be available free in mp3 format at our website, so the CDs will primarily be for collectors and/or donors to **Messenger Project**.

Messenger Project now offers merchandise at messengerproject.com. *Burnt Offering* CDs and t-shirts are currently available. Eventually, we will offer all of our CDs, plus an assortment of t-shirts. **Lionel** and **Joie De Leon** are visiting New Mexico in February and will be returning with a t-shirt silkscreen machine.

This month marks Messenger's eight year anniversary. God has graciously kept us moving forward and we praise and thank him for his abundant blessings. May the Lord Jesus direct our paths according to His will and may our music lead many to Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Slavery in the Bible

Exodus 21:20 allows the beating of slaves. Exodus 21:32 says that if a bull gores and kills a slave, its owner must be paid thirty shekels of silver (the same amount that Jesus was betrayed for). These verses (and others) seem to suggest that God ordains slavery. But when we examine scripture and study the history of slavery, we get a better understanding of God's reasons behind it.

In Exodus 2:23, Israelites were mistreated slaves who cried out to God. God heard their groaning, remembered his covenant with Abraham and freed them (through Moses). Israel is reminded 13 times in Scripture that God freed them from slavery. One of God's purposes for slavery was to set the scene for Israel's exodus to the Promised Land. An interesting historical note is that Israel was again forced into slavery under Nazi Germany. Both of these coerced slavery events were followed with the formation of a Jewish nation in the land of Israel. Slavery is a humbling experience that breaks down our body but forges our spirit. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." Possibly, God allowed slavery as a builder of character and as a demonstration of complete servitude. It is written that "a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him" (2 Peter 2:19). Slavery is a metaphor that teaches us lessons about life.

Israel received harsh treatment as slaves and was commanded not to mistreat slaves. Most slaves in Old Testament times were members of their master's household with the same rights as family (except inheritance). Killing a slave was punishable by death. Permanently injured slaves had to be set free. Mistreated slaves who ran away from their masters were allowed sanctuary and effective freedom.

Slaves were given a day of rest. Hebrew slaves were treated like hired workers and were freed after six years. Freed slaves were supplied with grain, wine and livestock.

In New Testament times, the good treatment of slaves was common, because slaves were considered valuable assets. Some slaves were given many privileges and comforts. Some masters treated their slaves with the same care and affection as their own children. Some slaves held responsible jobs like running shops, teaching and keeping accounts. Most slaves lived and worked in the house of their masters. But slaves had no legal rights and if a slave gave evidence in a trial, he was tortured first to make sure he was telling the truth.

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy, "We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for **slave traders** and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me." This passage shows us that slave traders are counted among sinners and implies that the practice of slavery is contrary to biblical teachings and principles.

Ownership of personal slaves was not a sin, perhaps because many slaves were volitional bondservants who received improved living conditions under their master's care. We are born slaves to sin but become willing bondservants when we accept Jesus into our life and follow him. Like Bob Dylan said in his song, "You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody." It is my greatest wish that we may all become willing servants to Christ, who frees us from the bondage of sin, that we may each receive our reward in heaven.