

September 8-12, 2025 Edition

Following
The Year^(s) Of Jesus Part 192

Jesus Came To Bring Fire?

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner



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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday Reflection: This week we're going to spend some time talking about something unusual that Jesus says in Luke chapter 12. So rather than stringing you along let's just go ahead and read those very strange words:

I have come to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished. Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I have come to divide people against each other! From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against-or two in favor and three against. 'Father will be divided against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'" Luke 12:49-53 (NLT)

At first blush there doesn't seem to be anything gentle about this text. In fact it sounds stinking scary, right? And while there are some genuine things to be concerned about in this passage of scripture there is also a lot to be hopeful about and this week that's what we're going to try to see- how a lot of Jesus' words that sound scary to us are actually more gentle and lead to something more wonderful than we could ever imagine.

I don't know about you but when Jesus says stuff like this I can often feel like a little kid climbing on a massive war horse. There shouldn't be a toddler on a war horse, should there? I mean that sounds kind of dangerous. And if that's how I feel about I can't imagine how the toddler feels being on that horse that is WAY too big to feel safe on. I don't know if you ever saw the classic movie, *The Black Stallion*, but there was a similar theme in that movie. There's a little kid (I know not a toddler but still I think this example will work) who is shipwrecked on a south pacific island and the only other living survivor of the shipwreck is a huge Arabian stallion that was so dangerous nobody could ride him. Over time the horse and the boy develop a bond and there's a scene where the boy finally is able to climb up on the Black's back and ride a bit in the surf. At first the boy is very tentative holding on to the stallion's mane and looking quite nervous. There's a moment where the boy falls off and the stallion just loops around and comes back and picks him up and then they're off again. Eventually the boy becomes so comfortable that he lets go of the stallion's mane, closes his eyes and holds his arms out to the sides showing a level of trust and familiarity with the horse that would have seemed impossible to imagine before. And do you know what happens? The boy falls off again. So what does the stallion do? He loops around and picks the kid up again. And off they go again.

This is a great metaphor of what it's like living life with Jesus. At first it will seem completely unfamiliar and even scary. But as time goes on and our levels of trust and familiarity rise we will get more and more comfortable with walking with Jesus. But He will never lose that edge of unpredictability. There's this great moment in the *Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* where Mr. and Mrs. Beaver meet the 4 humans and they realize that these young children are the fulfillment of a prophecy. They figure the kids must know exactly who they are (the ones prophesied about) but in fact they do not. They seem to know nothing of Narnia's politics or issues. And at one point after Mr. Beaver has been talking about Aslan one of the children- Lucy- figures out that He's a lion. She mentions that Aslan doesn't sound very safe. "Safe? Who said anything about safe. Of course He isn't safe. But He's good. He's the King."

That's Jesus. He is good, but He isn't safe. Not by a long shot. He will get you to safety at the end of this life but while we walk with Him on this side of eternity He will constantly be taking us places that we think we can't handle on our own. And we're right. We can't handle it. Not on our own. But with Jesus on our side we can do so much more than we could have imagined. So let's finish today's reflection with one last scripture to think about:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)

Tuesday Reflection: Ok so just what is Jesus getting at here with all this talk about bringing fire and how He didn't come to bring peace but division? Well the first thing I want to look at is how Jesus' Kingdom is all consuming- at least it's supposed to be. There are two Greek words that I want to look at today that are both translated in similar ways but they have such massively different meanings it's crazy. The first is *daimonizomai*. It is translated as possessed but it's quite literally saying the person it's referencing is "demonized". With the demonized form of possession you are no longer in control. In that case possession is all consuming in that the demon/demons basically take over your life. You no longer have control over what you do, where you go or anything else. That's not what Jesus' Kingdom is like. Jesus' all consuming Kingdom is more like another Greek word that is also translated as possessed- *entheos* (pronounced in-thay-os). *Theos* is the Greek word for God (which is why theology is the study of God) so *entheos* basically means, infused (or possessed) by God. It's a MUCH more positive word than *daimonizomai* and has a completely different meaning. Yes, *entheos* technically means "possessed" but it's not close to the same kind of possession as being demonized. With demonic possession you're no longer in control. You have zero say in your life anymore (unless Jesus happened to be around and then you were in a very good spot). But with *entheos* possession you are still in control. So how does that work?

I'm glad you asked. I love bumper sticker wars. I don't remember the last time I saw a really good bumper sticker war but I do remember one of the first I ever saw. It started with a bumper sticker that read, Jesus Is My Co-Pilot. Those became quite popular in the 70s and 80s- at least I saw them everywhere in Southern California when I was growing up. But I started to notice another bumper sticker not too long after. These new bumper stickers read, If Jesus Is Your Co-Pilot You Should Switch Seats. The obvious point being that you shouldn't be the pilot of your own life- Jesus should.

But Jesus won't kick you out of the pilot's seat and start flying the plane Himself. He doesn't want to take over your life in a way where you have no more control over your own life. That would make us all robots and He is not interested in a bunch of robots. So what is He interested in and what role does He want to play for us? I think Jesus' role is more like that of a navigator than either a pilot or a co-pilot. He tells us where to go and it's up to us whether we actually turn the plane of our lives in the direction He's advising us to go in. Being infused with God or filled with God (*entheos*) means we have made room in the cockpit of our lives and invited Jesus to come in, sit down, make Himself comfortable. Then staying infused with God means doing our best to follow the flight path that He's plotted out for us. That's what I mean by Jesus' Kingdom is all consuming. It's a voluntary exposing of our lives to the refining fire of Jesus' love:

I have come to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! Luke 12:49 (NLT)

Seems to me like a strange thing for Jesus to say. I mean, that doesn't sound pleasant, does it? Is Jesus saying He's come to burn us up? No, He isn't. How can I be so sure? Because over in Matthew chapter 18 Jesus talks about the world being "made new".

Jesus replied, "I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne... everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. Matthew 19:28-29 (NLT)

The word He uses there (palengenesia) was a Greek idea of the world being made new. In the Greek concept the universe is in a constant downward spiral and that eventually it will get so bad that the earth and the universe will explode into flames that destroy and consume everything. The old is completely gone. Then a new universe is created. Completely new. Not the old made new (which is Jesus' idea of the palengenesia) but the new with absolutely no relation to what existed before. We read in the Bible that Jesus' palengenesia will indeed be accompanied by fire. But Jesus' fire isn't destructive to anything but sin and brokenness and heartbreak and weakness along with every other part of our existence that is broken. Jesus' fire is a refining fire that only burns up what's making us spiritually and physically sick- things that would lead to our ultimate eternal death (and if Jesus didn't do anything that's exactly what our destiny would be- the Greek idea of the palengenesia). But Jesus did do something.

He has opened the door and paid our debt so that when His palengenesia hits we won't be destroyed- we'll be refined. We'll talk more about what it means that Jesus' Kingdom is all consuming but for today maybe let's spend some time reflecting on what Jesus meant when He said that He came to set the world on fire.

Wednesday Reflection: Yesterday we began looking at something very strange Jesus said towards the end of Luke chapter 12:

I have come to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! Luke 12:49 (NLT)

What does that mean?!?! Well we began unpacking that yesterday so let's keep going. Fire is something that seems all consuming. Maybe you've noticed. But it is. Well it is with some things. For instance my pants. For as long as I can remember I figured that if I had pants on (and I usually did when I was out and about) I didn't need a napkin because I could just wipe my hands on my pants. In high school I was in a small class during my 4th period that had less than 10 kids in it. One day our teacher decided to walk us all over to a little fast food joint about a quarter mile from the school- Pup n Taco is what it was called. They specialized in hot dogs (hence the pup) and Mexican food (hence the taco). It was a very strange place that eventually was bought out by Taco Bell who then dropped the pup to focus solely on the taco.

Anyways the girl that I had a huge crush on was in that class. I knew she was WAY out of my league but at our school you couldn't bring anyone to our school functions that didn't go to our school so you couldn't invite anyone that wasn't a part of Ontario Christian High School. I ended up going WAY out on a limb and asking her to the Junior Senior banquet our senior year. She turned me down (but she was very nice about it). So she was there at Pup n Taco

when my teacher when to hand me a stack of napkins because he could see I was making a bit of a mess of things. I said, "oh no, Mr. Smith. I don't need napkins. I have my pants." He looked at me for a second, shook his head while smiling and said to the rest of the class (did I mention that I was the only guy in that class?) and said, "you hear that ladies. If Ed asks you out you better be prepared for him to wipe his hands on his pants all evening." Inside I wanted to crawl under the table and disappear. But then the girl who I had such a huge crush on saved the day- she said, "yeah but if his date ends up with messy hands and no napkin she'll be glad she's with him. In fact if I didn't have a boyfriend I'd be happy to go out with him."

She saved my bacon and even if she was embellishing the truth that she would go out with me if she didn't have a boyfriend (the guy was a junior at UCLA- I mean come on how am I supposed to compete with that?) I'll always remember her fondly for letting me down easy when I asked her out and then coming to the rescue when I was on the precipice of complete and utter humiliation. I mean she could have totally destroyed me by mentioning that I had asked her out and boy did she dodge a bullet by not going out with no-napkin-pants-wiper-guy.

That's a REALLY long and almost pointless story just to get to this point- my pants can get pretty dirty pretty quickly (yes I still often find myself wiping my hands on my pants out of habit even though it's not a conscious decision anymore) and when they get dirty they need to be cleaned. What is the best thing to use to clean pants? Is it fire? Not unless you want them so clean they disappear. For pants fire leads to the Greek idea of the palengensia (if you don't know what I'm talking about go back and read yesterday's reflection and you'll be all caught up). In other words for pants, fire destroys and completely consumes but doesn't really clean. No you need water and soap to clean pants. Fire won't do. But for gold and other kinds of metals fire purifies. It gets rid of all the impurities and leaves only what is really valuable and useful. And that's what Jesus' refining fire will do to you when He brings His own version of The Palengenesia.

Jesus replied, "I assure you that when the world is made new (or "when the palengenesia comes") and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne... everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. Matthew 19:28-29 (NLT)

His fire will clean you and me right up. It will consume what is evil, broken and toxic within us and leave the refined beauty that gets covered up by all the brokenness and heartache of this world. And that's what I mean by Jesus' Kingdom is all consuming. Yes it's supposed to infuse us and fill us with Jesus and His Kingdom but when it infuses us it will begin within us a purification process of refining that will leave you more beautiful and useful than you could possibly imagine. And why does Jesus say that He wishes the world was already burning? I think He's saying He can't wait for the redemption that will begin within us when we join His Kingdom and that will be fully realized on the day that He returns with His refining fire to set everything right. Tomorrow we'll continue looking at what Jesus' Kingdom is like but for today maybe you and I could spend some time reflecting on why Jesus' refining fire will purify us instead of just burning us up.

Thursday Reflection: The second thing I want to look at this week when it comes to Jesus' Kingdom is that His Kingdom is costly. And I don't just mean it's costly for us:

I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished. 12:50 (NLT)

No Jesus' Kingdom isn't just costly for us (it will cost us everything even though He will give us back most of what we give Him and He'll only keep what's not good for us)- it was costly for Him as well. It cost Him everything. The crazy thing is, He willingly paid whatever it was going to cost to redeem us. But what exactly is this baptism of suffering He's talking about that is weighing on Him so heavily? I always thought it was just the physical suffering that He knew He was going to have to endure. Have you ever seen *The Passion Of The Christ*. What Jesus went through physically for you and for me is nothing short of horrific.

But it's not what He was most worried about.

So what was He most worried about? Well we see it in His prayer in the Gethsemane:

He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." Mark 14:34-36 (NLT)

Did you see what He was worried about? The cup. He prayed three different times that God would let the cup of suffering be taken away from Him. He asked for that cup to be removed by God but He knew that it was not possible. The only way to redeem His children and His creation was through the cup. So what's this cup Jesus is so concerned about? Well the Jewish people of the first century knew exactly what that cup was- they called it the cup of desolation:

Your cup is filled to the brim with distress and desolation... You will drain that cup of terror to the very bottom. Ezekiel 23:33-34 (NLT)

We talk about this cup every year around Good Friday. The Jews were very familiar with this enigmatic cup. The cup of desolation was present at every Passover feast. It wasn't part of the original custom but it was added sometime after Ezekiel wrote about the cup of desolation. If you've ever heard me talk about Jesus in the Passover you've heard me talk about the 5 cups of Passover. During a passover feast the Jewish people poured out 5 cups of wine. The first cup that they drank was the cup of the Cup Of Thanksgiving. The second was the Cup Of Plagues. The third was the Cup Of Redemption and the fourth was the Cup Of Protection. Every year the Jews would drink from all four of these symbolic cups. But there was another cup that nobody drank from during Passover. They filled it up at the beginning of the meal and put it at Elijah's place at the table. Elijah didn't actually come to these feasts but the Jews believed one day he would return just before the Messiah and when He did they wanted to be ready to welcome him so at every Passover meal (including those held to this very day) they set a place for Elijah and that's where they put the fifth cup- the Cup Of Desolation. Who decided to start doing this? The rabbis suggested it. The idea killed two

birds with one stone. First it kept everyone's awareness on the possible immediacy of the Messiah's coming. But second, the rabbis weren't sure who was supposed to drink from the Cup Of Desolation. Why not? Because Ezekiel 23 seemed to suggest that we would have to drink from that Cup Of Desolation and drain it to the very bottom. But Isaiah kind of muddied the waters a bit:

See, I have taken the terrible cup from your hands. You will drink no more of my fury.
Isaiah 51:22 (NLT)

This really confused the rabbis. Were we supposed to be the ones who drained the fifth cup or was someone else going to drain it since God says He's taken that cup from our hands? The rabbis just couldn't be sure so they decided to put that cup at every Passover meal at Elijah's place figuring that when Elijah finally showed up he would tell them who was supposed to drink from that cup. But then Jesus comes along and it turns out He's the One Who will drain that cup. And it was stressing Him out to the point that He was sweating drops of blood. You know it's interesting, I always thought it was the physical torture and humiliation that Jesus knew He was going to go through on His way to the cross and then on the cross itself. That would be enough to make me sweat drops like blood. But during the physical torture Jesus barely says a word. He never complains about the physical pain He had to be experiencing. But that cup bothered Him. And yet He still went through with it. Why? So you and I would never have to drink from that cup ourselves. Thank you for that, Jesus.

Do you see what I mean that the Kingdom is costly? When we see what Jesus endured in the days leading up to the cross and then on the cross itself it's easy to see just how costly this Kingdom was for Him to open up to us. But what does this Kingdom cost us? Well, nothing. And everything. Both at the same time. Jesus' grace is free but it isn't cheap. It cost Him everything and now He asks us to understand how much it's going to cost us. Like I said, it costs us nothing. And everything. He's constantly talking about it in the gospels:

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me." Luke 9:23 (NLT)

What does it mean to take up your cross? Well in the first century the cross wasn't a symbol of hope and self sacrifice yet. In the Roman Empire a cross meant only humiliation, pain and death. When you see someone today wearing a cross it's not that unusual. It's become a symbol of hope and new life. But not before Jesus' death. So I have a feeling what the disciples heard Jesus saying was, "if any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, die to yourself and follow me. I have a feeling they had no idea what that meant but they found out. And all of them but one gave themselves wholeheartedly to that concept. See what I mean- Jesus' Kingdom is costly. And at the same time it's free. It demonstrates to each of us that our identity is not just our own anymore- it's all wrapped up with Jesus' identity.

It also demonstrates obedience- that even when the going gets rough we don't stop moving forward and do our best to always follow the navigation plan of our Navigator Jesus. And it demonstrates what our mission on this earth is (until Jesus brings His pelengenesia)- to live not for our own kingdoms (lower case "I") but instead to choose Jesus' Kingdom every single

day of our lives. Because if Jesus isn't going to force us to take up our cross every day then we have to make that choice over and over again.

So yeah, Jesus' Kingdom is costly. It will cost you everything (He gives us back most of what we give Him and only keeps from us what's not going to be good for us) but remember this: it cost Jesus everything first. Maybe that will take some of the sting out of taking up our own crosses every day and doing our best to follow after our crucified King. A King who allowed Himself to go through that horrific cup so that His children would never have to experience it.

Friday Reflection: Wow! Sorry. I didn't realize how long Thursday's reflection was. I imagine you did notice. But fear not- today we look at how Jesus' Kingdom is divisive and with this concept we'll be done for this week:

Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." Luke 12:51-53 (NLT)

That's weird, isn't it? Why would the Prince Of Peace say that He didn't come to bring peace but division? I mean I don't know about you but what's the deal with all those Christmas songs about peace on earth and goodwill towards man? What's wrong with Jesus that He keeps saying such seemingly contradictory things about Himself?

Nothing's wrong with Him. And while it may sound harsh there is a very real truth that jumps off the page here- following Jesus can and will lead to divisions in many of your relationships. Why? Because Jesus doesn't care about your relationships? No. Rather it's because Jesus just naturally creates a dividing line between us and some of the people in our lives. Jesus doesn't want to cause division in your relationships but most of the time He will. And I can confirm that's true.

When I left behind drug and alcohol abuse my family was thrilled. But my friends? Not so much. They didn't really like it at all. And over the first month or so of my recovery I lost just about every friend I had. Not all of them- I still have a few friends from my childhood but the vast majority of them bailed not long after Jesus came into my life. Why is that? Well it wasn't because I was annoying about how I talked about Him to other people. I've always believed evangelism (spreading my faith) was something that I was really only supposed to do in response to questions I was asked:

Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have, but answer in a gentle way and with respect. 1 Peter 3:15-16 (NLT)

Somewhere in the last 2,000 years since Peter wrote these words many of us Christians seem to have lost the gentleness and respect factor. But I've always tried not to rub Jesus in people's faces because in my experience it gets the opposite result of what evangelism is supposed to be accomplishing. So my go-to method has always been to live a life that makes it obvious to anyone who's paying attention that I'm a follower of this God-man named

Jesus. Then when they get curious about why I've made the choices I've made in my life regarding Jesus I have been invited to evangelize them (whether they realize this or not ;o)

But even when I'm sharing the reason for my hope I really try not to make Jesus seem unattractive and unappealing. I don't know if I always succeed but it's always my goal. So anyway, when I left drug and alcohol abuse behind me it turns out I made a lot of my friends very uncomfortable. Not because of how I talked about Jesus but because I was no longer on the same path as they were and they really felt that. It was really difficult. It was the most lonely time of my life. Thank God my family was all onboard or I'd have been in real trouble. Within 6 months I had moved up to Portland to live with my sister and her husband, Connie and Jeff. They let me live in their basement and it was there not too long after that I met Judy. She was the first new friend I had really made since getting sober. But that's another story for another time.

All that to say Jesus' Kingdom is divisive. It often makes those who are not a part of His Kingdom very uncomfortable. And many have wondered if it's worth it. I mean look at how much we're being asked to give up? Have we lost the people who Jesus' Kingdom divided us from for good? I used to think the answer to that question was "yes". That we lost an awful lot here on this earth for the Kingdom but it was somehow going to be ok because what we experienced when we got to Heaven would be so awesomely amazing that it'll be like the things we lost won't even matter anymore.

But I don't think that's what Jesus is saying anymore. Luke chapter 19 (where we've been camped out for about a month's worth of lessons in the chronological story of Jesus' life) has been an eye opening chapter for me. It's one of the reasons I'm so pleased with this series doing a slow crawl through the life of Jesus in the chronological order in which it took place (the gospels never claim to be written in strict chronological order with the possible exception of Luke but even then I don't think it was set in stone that Luke didn't jump around a bit). And as we've gone through Luke chapter 12 so many things I never noticed before are jumping off the pages at me. When older preachers used to tell me that the longer they did this the more the text of the scriptures were opened up to them I wasn't sure how to take it. I mean, hadn't they read the Bible when they were young? How come they didn't figure it out then? But now I see they were right. And the more I study these gospels in the chronological order in which they occurred the more God seems to delight in pulling the curtain back a little more and opening my mind to things I never saw before.

When Judy and I talk about how we each take in information she uses a metaphor that makes a lot of sense to me. She says I take in information like a bricklayer building a wall. Each brick is its own piece of information and I take each brick, look it over and then place it in the wall of my knowledge (so to speak). But she takes in information more like someone spinning a kaleidoscope. The difference in these two approaches is that the brick layer just adds new info to his or her wall and each new piece of info by itself doesn't really change the wall all that much. As Pink Floyd would say, all in all it's just another brick in the wall. But with the kaleidoscope each piece of new information changes everything. Because if you're looking at the world through a kaleidoscope then you are seeing the world through whatever lens that kaleidoscope is showing you at the moment. But add one piece of new information

and the kaleidoscope spins and give you a completely new view of reality. I think it must be exhausting to live that way but it seems to work for her.

Yes I'm more of a bricklayer but every once in a while I have a kaleidoscope moment where a new piece of information is handed to me that is so impactful that it rocks my whole world view. And Luke chapter 19 has done that for me. Jesus says so many things that on the surface seem to be harsh and scary but in reality when you look under the surface of things you see they are actually beautiful and hope inspiring. I took so long explaining how I take in information I couldn't remember how I got here and had to scroll up and see but now I'm back on track (and we're almost done). I used to think that Jesus was saying if I sacrificed everything here then even though I'd lose a ton of stuff and people who were very important to me that when I got to Heaven I wouldn't even mind what I had lost. But is that true? Can you think of anything you've lost in this world that if you didn't get it back on the other side of eternity it would REALLY bother you? I know I can. I used to think those things or people were lost to me forever but I don't think so anymore. Because I don't know how He's going to accomplish it but He promises that anything of true value that we lose here we will get it back on the other side of eternity:

Then Peter began to speak up. "We've given up everything to follow you," he said. "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property- along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life. Mark 10:29-30 (NLT)

Like I said, I have zero idea how He's going to accomplish this (well I have an inkling but that's all it is) but the things that Jesus says like this give me great hope that nothing is truly lost forever. Some people have argued with me that He's not saying you'll get your mom or kids or siblings back if you lost them on this side of eternity but I have no idea how He could possibly do that without refining the very people we thought we had lost and driving every bit of evil and pain out of them and returning to us an infinitely better version of the very people we thought we had lost. I know that raises more questions than it answers but I'm starting to think that's what this means. And if that is what Jesus was saying (and boy I REALLY hope He is saying this) then no matter how He accomplishes it I can't tell you how happy that makes me.

Jesus. Is. Awesome.