

## The Vision of the Exalted Lamb Realized In The Life of Missionary James Fraser Among The Lisu People of China

### Revelation 5:8-10

#### Introduction:

- \* “A command has been given: ‘Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.’ It has not been obeyed. More than half the people in the world have never yet heard the Gospel. What are we to say to this? Surely it concerns us Christians very seriously. For we are the people who are responsible ...”  
“If our Master returned today to find millions of people un-evangelised, and looked as of course He would look, to us for an explanation, I cannot imagine what explanation we should have to give ... Of one thing I am certain – that most of the excuses we are accustomed to make with such good conscience now, we should be wholly ashamed of then.”

It was those words, written by a missionary in China, in a booklet entitled *Do Not Say*, that compelled James Fraser (1886-1938), an accomplished concert pianist and honors student in engineering, to flee England and run to China and give the rest of his life that the Lisu people might exalt the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, who redeemed us to God by His blood (v. 9).

- \* Revelation 7:9-10 gives us an incredible vision of heaven. There we read, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (NKJV). However, it is Revelation 5 that lays the foundation for this remarkable celebration and worship of those who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb” (Rev 7:15). And, it is men like James Fraser that God uses to see that every tribe and tongue and people and nation will be there to worship the exalted Lamb.
- \* After reading the little booklet *Do Not Say*, James Fraser could not escape the words of indictment that it contained. The year was 1906. He was 20 years old. The need of the nations was too great. The realities of eternity too overwhelming. Once when considering the lostness of the people God sent him to reach he said, “The whole plain ... is without the light of the Gospel. I believe God would be glorified by even one witness to His name amid the perishing thousands. It does seem a terrible thing that so few are offering for the mission field. I can’t help feeling that there is something wrong somewhere. Surely God must be wanting His people to go forward. Does not the Master’s last command still hold good?” (Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Behind the Ranges*, p. 44).
- \* It was this passion that sent James Fraser to China, after being rejected twice by the Mission Board, for 30 years of faithful, gospel ministry for King Jesus. As a matter of fact on his third attempt, perhaps anticipating another letter of rejection, he stated, “Well I am going there anyway because I know I’ve been sent by God” ( Eileen Crossman, *Mountain Rain*, 11). It was this passion that would sustain him through kidnapping, multiple robberies, leg ulcers, lice, rats, malaria, total exhaustion, and mental and spiritual depression that nearly drove him to suicide. As his daughter Eileen Crossman

would write in her biography about her father, “He was assailed by deep and treacherous doubts. Yea, *hath* God said? The question came to him again and again, as clearly as it came at the dawn of time. Your prayers are not being answered, are they? No one wants to hear your message. The few who first believed have gone back, haven’t they? You see, it doesn’t work. You should never have stayed in this area on such a fool’s errand. You’ve been in China five years and there’s not much so show for it, is there? You thought you were called to be a missionary. It was pure imagination. You’d better leave it all, go back and admit it was a big mistake. Day after day and night after night he wrestled with doubt and suicidal despair. Suicidal? Not once, but several times he stared over the dark ravine into the abyss. Why not end it all? The powers of darkness had him isolated; if they could get him now they could put an end to the work.” (*Mountain Rain*, 67-68).

- \* Yet, as Rev 12:11 so wonderfully says, he overcame the evil one by the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony and he did not love his life in the face of death. He persevered and the Lamb honored his faithfulness. What are the lessons God would have us learn from this text so faithfully displayed in the life of one of his superlative servants among the nations? I will highlight three.

#### **I. The prayers of the saints contribute to the redeeming of the nations. 5:8**

- Verse 8 is filled with drama. The Lamb who alone is worthy to approach the throne of God has stepped forward (v. 7) and taken the scroll which, when opened (6:1), unveils the remainder of the book of Revelation (chs. 6-22). As He takes the scroll from the hand of His Father who sits on heaven’s throne (4:1), worship explodes in heaven! First, the 4 living creatures, angelic beings, fall down in worship. Joining them are the 24 elders, representing the redeemed of all the ages. Dropping to their knees and placing their faces on the floor, they prepare to sing the new song of redemption of v. 9. But note, they hold in one hand a harp, an instrument of praise. And in the other, they hold bowls full of sweet smelling incense which John tells us “are the prayers of the saints.” Make sure you don’t miss this.
- I know sometimes when we pray we wonder if God hears. We wonder if they ever escape the ceiling just above our heads. James Fraser certainly struggled with this spiritual challenge, “I suppose we have most of us had such experiences. We have prayed and prayed and prayed and no answer has come. The heavens above us have been as brass. Yes, blessed brass, if it has taught us to sink a little more of this ever-present self of ours into the Cross of Christ” (*Mountain Rain*, 89). Believing prayer drives us down as they go up. And “Yes, He hears them,” and they are being collected in heaven as a pleasant aroma of worship. And, from the context, it would appear that prayers for the salvation of the nations are particularly the kind of prayers that please our God.
- It would not be a stretch to describe James Fraser as a “prayer missionary.” Born in England in 1886, he was one of 6 children from a broken home. He would not marry his wife Roxie until the age of 43 and then die at age 52. For years his godly mother prayed that at least one of her children would become a missionary. God heard and answered that prayer! In fact, his mother wrote, “I could not pour out the ointment on [Jesus] blessed feet as Mary did, but I gave Him my boy.” (Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Behind the Ranges*, p. 27). James would gladly say his missionary call was the result

of his mother's prayers. God heard, He hears the prayers of godly mothers and fathers for their children.

- But it was the prayers that engulfed his missionary ministry, both at home in England and on the field in China, that so characterized his work.
- Of his burden for the lost: I was very much led out in prayer for these people, right from the beginning. Something seemed to draw me to them, and the desire of my heart grew until it became a burden that God would give us hundreds of converts among the Lisu of our western district" (Taylor, 32-33).
- In a letter to a friend requesting prayer partners: "Solid, lasting missionary work is done on our knees. What I covet more than anything else is earnest, believing prayer, and I write to ask you to continue to put up much prayer for me and the work here" (Taylor, 58). "I will not labor the point. You will see from what I am saying that I am not asking you just to give us 'help' in prayer as a sort of sideline, but I am trying to roll the main responsibility of the prayer warfare on you. I want you to take the burden of these people upon your shoulders. I want you to wrestle with God for them" (*Prayer of Faith*, 11).
- On the necessity and power of prayer: "I am feeling more and more that it is, after all, just the prayers of God's people that call down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in it or not. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God who gives the increase; and this increase can be brought down from heaven by believing prayer ... We are, as it were, God's agents – used by him to do his work, not ours. We do our part, and then can only look to him, with others, for his blessing. If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field. I believe it will only be known on the last day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home. And this, surely, is the heart of the problem." (*The Prayer of Faith*, p. 7).  
"If I am sure of anything it is that your prayers have made a very real difference to my life and service." (*Mountain Rain*, 129).
- In spiritual warfare: "One of the temptations in the spirit-warfare is when your body begins to flag, to say, 'I must give up', instead of casting yourself upon 'God that raised the dead' and can quicken the mortal body to endure and triumph in and through all things.  
Eph 6:10. Oh how we need STRENGTH, for often we can hardly hold our ground! In every battle there are crucial spots. Get near and stay near to your Divine Chief until He turns and points them out. And at those points face and force the fight. And though the conflict be keen, though defeat seems certain, though the battle should continue for hours, for days, for months, even for years, yet hold on, HOLD ON; for to such Jer 1:19 is written: 'They shall fight against thee but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee to deliver thee.'  
The aim of Satanic power is to cut off communication with God. To accomplish this aim he deludes the soul with a sense of defeat, covers him with a thick cloud of darkness, depresses and oppresses the spirit, which in turn hinders prayer and leads to unbelief – thus destroying all power (instead of seeing Heb 11:1)." (*Mountain Rain*, 111).
- "Seem distinctly led (he wrote) to fight against 'principalities and powers' for Middle Village. Have faith for the conversion of that place, and pray as a kind of bugle-call

for the hosts of heaven to come down and fight for me against the powers of darkness holding these two old men who are hindering their villages and perhaps three others from turning to Christ. Have a good time of fighting prayer, then sleep in much peace of mind." (*Mountain Rain*, 143).

- "The whole cause of my defeat these two days is weakness of spirit. Under these conditions, any test you take fails to work. The spirit must be continually maintained in strength by unceasing prayer, especially against the powers of darkness. All I have learned of other aspects of the victory-life is useless without this." (*Mountain Rain*, 145).
- It was this kind of prayer-life that kept him going when seriously ill, kidnapped, robbed, depressed, nearly drowning in a monsoon mudslide which did take the life of the horse he was riding, and working day after day among a demon-worshipping people seeing little or no results.
- It was a prayer-life of faith in the God who answers prayer that could keep him in the fight and lead him to write this in his journal after a day's travel in a fierce blizzard: "You arrive at the end of the day cold, hungry and tired, not to find a nice clean room waiting for you, a warm bath, a warm fire, a smile of welcome and a nice meal! No, you, splash along the slushy street from dismal inn to dismal inn ... and you get suspicious stares. Finally you practically force your way into an inn. It is pitch dark; the floor is a mess; there is no furniture but a mud platform, no light, no warmth ... You and your muleteer make a meal of plain boiled rice. But next morning you get out again into your blue skies and snow mountains and forget all your previous night's troubles." (*Mountain Rain*, 198).
- The prayers of the saints contribute to the redeeming of the nations. God hears those prayers. They are not wasted.

## II. The blood of Christ has purchased salvation of the nations.     **5:9**

- Verse 9 contains one of the great songs of redemption. It is called a "new" song, meaning a new kind of song made possible by the slaughtered Lamb now standing strong as seen in v. 6. He and he alone is worthy (a word used 4 times in ch. 5 [v. 2, 4, 9, 12]) to take the scroll from God the Father who sits upon the throne. Why? Four reasons are given.
  - 1) You were slain (v. 9).
  - 2) You redeemed us to God by your blood (v. 9).
  - 3) You have made us kings and priest to our God (v. 10).
  - 4) Those you have redeemed will reign with you on the earth (v. 10).
- Redeemed by His blood! Not a happy thought among liberal theologians. Nothing more than foolishness to those perishing. A dead Galilean Jew nailed to a cross, bleeding all over the place is the means whereby God redeems the nations? Are you kidding me? Are you serious? That is the view of Delores Williams of Union Theological Seminary in New York: "I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all. I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff" (Re-Imagining Conference; Minneapolis, 1993). Virginia Mollenkott says the death of Jesus was nothing less than the ultimate in child abuse. God is an abusive parent and Jesus an obedient and abused child. Rt. Rev. Jeffrey John of the Church of England calls a bloody atonement "repulsive" and "insane". In fact, listen to his exact words for just a moment: "The explanation I was given went something like

this. God was very angry with us for our sins, and because he is a just God, our sin had to be punished. But instead of punishing us he sent his Son, Jesus, as a substitute to suffer and die in our place. The blood of Jesus paid the price of our sins, and because of him God stopped being angry with us. In other words, Jesus took the rap, and we got forgiven, provided we said we believed in him. Well, I don't know about you, but even at the age of ten I thought this explanation was pretty repulsive as well as nonsensical. What sort of God was this, getting so angry with the world and the people he created, and then, to calm himself down, demanding the blood of his own Son? And anyway, why should God forgive us through punishing somebody else? It was worse than illogical, it was insane. It made God sound like a psychopath. If any human being behaved like that we'd say they were a monster. Well I haven't changed my mind since. That explanation of the cross doesn't work, though sadly it's one that's still all too often preached. It just doesn't make sense to talk about a nice Jesus down here, placating the wrath of a nasty, angry Father God in heaven." (Quoted in "Is the Apostolic Preaching of the Cross Insane?" by Al Mohler, 4-6-07; Blog Article).

- Tragically a growing number of so-called evangelicals could be added to these 3, but praise God, James Fraser would not be one of them. Here are his thoughts about his Lord's cross.
- Gaining victory in spiritual warfare: "I read [*The Overcomer*] over and over ... What it showed me was the deliverance from the power of the evil one comes through definite resistance on the grounds of the cross."
- Preaching the Gospel: "I first went through the Acts of the Apostles and some other passages, comparing them with a view to finding out the actual Gospel we are bidden to preach ... The result was very instructive to me. I had never imagined the Gospel was so simple. Why, Peter and Paul both preached the Gospel in words which would not take one minute to say! And I found out that there are just four things which seem to be essential in preaching the Gospel.
  - 1) The crucifixion of Jesus Christ – no theological explanation needed.
  - 2) The resurrection of Jesus Christ – most important of all. The Gospel was never preached without this being brought in.
  - 3) Exhortation to hearers to repent of their sins.
  - 4) Promise to all who believe on Jesus Christ that they will receive remission of their sins.

Beyond these four points others are mentioned occasionally, but they are not many ... In teaching Christians, it is quite another matter. To them we are to declare 'the whole counsel of God', as far as they can receive it. But the Gospel as preached to the unsaved is as simple as it could be. I should not care to take the responsibility of preaching 'another Gospel.' (*Mountain Rain*, 20).

- The power of the cross: "... the ground of the cross was what brought me light. For I found that it worked. I felt like a man perishing of thirst, to whom some beautiful, clear cold water had begun to flow." (*Mountain Rain*, 69).  
"I have no confidence in anything but the Gospel of Calvary to uplift these needy people." (*Mountain Rain*, 104).

“Quite conscience of Mother’s prayers I am sure she is praying for me. Splendid time of prayer alone in my room enabled to get to the cross and remain there. Have peace and rest of spirit.” (*Mountain Rain*, 146).

“Very definitely and decidedly take my stand on 1 John 1:7 – Jesus Christ my Cleanser from all sin. Full of peace and blessing all the rest of the day.” (*Mountain Rain*, 146).

“The Gospel of a broken heart begins the ministry of bleeding hearts. As soon as we cease to bleed we cease to bless. We must bleed if we would be ministers of the Saving Blood.” (*Mountain Rain*, 147).

### III. **The redeemed serve as a kingdom of priests in reaching the nations. 5:10**

- The exalted Lamb redeemed us to reign with Him. He has “made us kings” or “a kingdom.” As Romans 8:16-17 teaches, “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.”
- The exalted Lamb also redeemed us to serve Him. We are, each and every one of us “priests to our God.” Priest represents God to man among the nations, having come from His presence saved and sanctified by precious blood, the blood of the exalted Lamb.
- James Fraser was a marvelous priest of God to man. Without question the keys were a life immersed in prayer, fasting and other spiritual disciplines. Just one month before his untimely death at the age of 52 he wrote, “I often think that it is the very, very few who are prepared, by rigorous self-discipline (not a very popular thing nowadays), for a lifetime of great usefulness ...” (*Mountain Rain*, 232).
- On one occasion James found a man dying on the side of the road apparently ignored by others. He picked him up and carried him on his back for 6 miles to get him help. It was this sacrificial act of service that God would use to bring a Burmese man named Chang to Christ. (*Mountain Rain*, 72-72). Some called him strange and eccentric! I call him Christ-like!
- Why did he serve like this? Let him speak for himself: “It is all IF and WHEN, I believe the devil is fond of those conjunctions ... The plain truth is that the Scriptures never teach us to wait for opportunities of service, but to serve in just the things that lie next to our hands ... The Lord bids us work, watch and pray; but Satan suggests, wait until a good opportunity for working, watching and praying presents itself – and needless to say, this opportunity is always in the future ... Since the things that lie in our immediate path have been ordered of God, who shall say that one kind of work is more important and sacred than another? I believe it is no more necessary to be faithful (one says it reverently) in preaching the Gospel than in washing up dishes. It is not for us, in any case, to choose our work. And if God has chosen it for us, hadn’t we better go straight ahead and do it, without waiting for anything greater, better or ‘nobler’?” (*Mountain Rain*, 18-19).
- It was this “state of mind” and heart that kept him going when on a particular Sunday, January 16, “Not a single one to Service in the morning ...” January 18, “Abraham was called out by God and went in blind faith; when he got to the land of promise, he found nothing but a famine – much like me with the Lisu, these two years.” February 3, “Depressed after defeat this morning, from which no real recovery all day ...

- February 4, “No meal until 2 p.m. Thoroughly depressed about the state of work in Tantsah. No one to count upon in matters demanding an earnest spirit ... The evil one seems to have the upper hand in me today ...” (*Mountain Rain*, 106-107).
- But James Fraser pressed on in prayer and in service. February 5, “Yesterday’s attack of depression and defeat almost got over, but not quite. Such times are not easy to recover from, I find ... The majority of Christians have gone in for whisky-drinking ... The outlook here in Tantsah at present seems less hopeful than at any time since I first set foot in the place. I am not, however, taking the black, despondent view I took yesterday ... the opposition will not be overcome by reasoning or by pleading, but by (chiefly) steady, persistent prayer. The men need not be dealt with (it is a heart-breaking job, trying to deal with a Lisu possessed by a spirit of fear) but the powers of darkness need to be fought. I am now setting my face like a flint: if the work seems to fain, then pray; if services etc., fall flat, then pray *still more*; if months slip by with little or no result, then *pray still more and get others to help you*. Sunday, February 6 ... B. and Va announce they will become Christians, if their parents will allow them ... Four young men say they will follow Christ, whatever happens ... Tuesday, February 8, Mo La P turns Christian in the morning. Gu Va and T, all at his house ... Full of joy and praise. (*Mountain Rain*, 108).
  - Service as a kingdom of priest in the drama of redemption is not always easy. It can be discouraging and even depressing. But, it will be fruitful and rewarding if we will persevere and stay at it. It may be 5 plus years before we see the fruit of our labor. Like Carey and Judson, it may be 7! But rest assured, the Father hears the prayers of His children and He sees their labor of love for the Exalted Lamb and the souls of the nations. To participate in this wonderful drama of redemption entails a wonderful certainty: I will not look back at the end of my days and lament, “I lived a wasted life!”

### Conclusion:

- James Fraser’s death came suddenly and unexpectedly. Neither his family nor the Lisu people were prepared for the homegoing of this great man of God. His daughter records his death with these words: “‘You know, Roxie’, James said one day up in the hills, even when I’ve gone, I don’t think my work in Yunnan will be finished.’ She was startled a few days later when he said, ‘Mr. Payne is passing through in two weeks’ time. I have some money here for him. If anything happens to me, you’ll know where it is.’ ‘But I don’t understand’ [she said] - [He responded] ‘I just thought I’d let you know.’ He talked a lot these days about the children’s future and about the baby expected [their 3<sup>rd</sup>] before the end of the year. It was September already: the event was not too far off. On Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, James had a headache. He finished answering some important letters and then played the little organ for a while before going to bed. By the next morning his headache was severe. He sent runners at once to get someone to be with Roxie. James had gone down with malignant cerebral malaria. There was no appropriate medicine in Paoshan. It was not long before he lost consciousness, and for two days the fever intensified; by Saturday evening he was strangely quiet. It was a long night for Roxie: James in and out of delirium, the Chinese doctor and nurses hurrying up and down the stairs, the child crying in the darkness. When the sun rose on September 25<sup>th</sup> 1938, James had gone. It was a shock to his colleagues. He was only 52 and seemed strong and healthy: they found the news hard to believe. But for Roxie the whole world

was reeling. Isobel Kuhn wrote to her three days later: ‘The very thought of you makes my hand tremble so and the tears come so that I do not know how I can write. The Lisu have just walked in with their unbelievable message ... Times like this are when we just have to bare our face to the tempest and go on without seeing clearly, without understanding, without anything but naked faith.’ (*Mountain Rain*, 234-35).

- How do we summarize a man that Stuart Simpson, an actor who portrayed James Fraser in the short documentary *Breakthrough*, called “one of the most successful Christian missionaries in East Asia in modern times!”, A man of whom his biographer said, “the young man handed over not the latch key but the master key of his whole being.” (Taylor, p. 23).
- It would be 5 plus years before what is called “the breakthrough” would occur, but within 4 months 600 Lisu representing 129 families turned to Christ. Revival broke out spreading from mountain village to mountain village. By 1918, ten years into the work, 60,000 believers had been baptized. What an awesome God we serve!
- Today there are an estimated 300,000 Lisu Christians in Western China, and thousands more in Myanmar and Thailand.
- Before his death James Fraser devised the first written script for the Lisu people. It was officially recognized by the Chinese government in 1992. He would lead the way in translating the New Testament into Lisu.
- Yet it is his humility, servant spirit, and dependence on God that made him so useful to the Exalted Lamb.
  - Before they married Roxie, his bride to be said, “never once did he tell me the way he had been used among the Lisu” (*Mountain Rain*, 204).
  - Friend Isobel Kuhn, describing the testimony of Fraser following his sudden and untimely death at 52 from cerebral malaria in 1938 said: “he never disappointed us in the sharing ... he was our missionary ideal, a continual rebuke, challenge and stimulus to maintain at any cost the apostolic methods of missionary work. His brilliant gifts, united with unfailing humility and a sympathy mother-like in tenderness and thoughtfulness, made him our refuge at all times of perplexity and need” (*Mountain Rain*, 236).
- From the OMF website November 2005:
 

“On September 25, 1938, while in Baoshan Yunnan, China, James Fraser dies at the age of 52. Due to land erosion, West Yunnan’s Christian church decided to move the grave from the mountain slopes of Baoshan to this location, renewing the headstone on behalf of the Lisu church as a way of expressing their cherished memory of J.O. Fraser. Fraser’s life has reaped a large harvest although many tears had first to be sown through his labours.

The Lisu church at Baoshan plans to commemorate J.O. Fraser every seven years at a special Easter service in the new Bible training center they have started there. Another memorial to J.O. Fraser has been erected by Lisu believers in Weixi County in far northwestern Yunnan. Inscribed in Lisu, Chinese and English the English reads: “IN LOVING MEMORY JAMES O. FRASER 1886-1938. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. WITH DEEPEST LOVE REMEMBER YOU ALWAYS – THE LISU CHURCH.”
- At the beginning of the book *Mountain Rain*, a biography of James Fraser, written by his daughter Eileen Crossman, the story is told of how James was able on one occasion to out



run for hours a Kachin tribesman intent on murdering him (pg. 1-2). James was comforted by the truth, as was Lottie Moon and Jim Elliott, “a Christian is immortal till his work is done” (p. 3). Then toward the end of the book (p. 237), following her father’s death, Eileen tells us this: “A man came to visit [my mother] before she sailed. He was a Kachin Christian and badly wanted to meet her. Years before, he said, he had run many miles to kill James Fraser, but James out ran him. Sometime later he heard the message of Jesus Christ; he had believed and became his disciple.”

- To hear of such a wonderful conversion would not have surprised James Fraser after 30 years of service in China. He had come to well understand who we are and what we do, and who God is and how He works!
- “On the human side, evangelistic work on the mission field is like a man going about in a dark, damp valley with a lighted match in his hand, seeking to ignite anything ignitable. But things are damp through and through and will not burn, however much he tries. In other cases, God’s wind and sunshine have prepared beforehand. The valley is dry in places, and when the lighted match is applied – here a shrub, there a tree, here a few sticks, there a heap of leaves take fire and give light and warmth long after the kindling match and its bearer have passed on. And this is what God wants to see, and what he will inquire of us: little patches of fire burning all over the world.” (*The Prayer of Faith*, 30).
- Brothers and sisters, “we are to light those little patches of fire around the world, knowing we are indeed immortal till our work is done.” The Exalted Lamb, He guarantees it!