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“Seasons of Refreshing”

“Therefore, repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19 NASB).

The opening verses of the third chapter of Acts records the healing of a man lame from birth by the Apostles Peter and John. This miracle made such an outstanding impression upon the people when they saw this man walking, leaping and praising God, for they knew he had been lame previously all his life. In the words of verse 10, “they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him.”

Peter goes on explaining how this miracle came about, and the logical procedure for those to follow who had brought about the death of Jesus, whose resurrection to the Father’s right hand had been the means of manifesting God’s power in such a remarkable manner as to cure this lame man instantly.

“Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:12-18 NASB).

Verse 19 reads from the Diaglott, “Reform, therefore, and turn, that your sins may be blotted out; so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” The meaning of the Greek

translated “blotted out” is — “to smear out, that is, obliterate.” And the words “from the presence of the Lord,” carry the thought of — “out from the face of, as a mark of favour” — that is from Jehovah, whose favour is indicated by the figure of His face turned towards us because our sins are covered by the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

The question may be asked, when did the Apostles Peter and John expect those to whom they spoke to truly repent and become converted based on faith in the sacrifice of Christ and then be worthy to receive seasons of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah? Would it not be there and then? Would not those who truly repented have the opportunity and privilege to become Christians right away?

And by walking faithfully in the steps of Christ, have the hope of the heavenly reward? Is not that why the Apostle exhorted them to repent, and has not that been the object of the Gospel being preached all the Gospel Age, to take out a people for God’s name from the world of mankind?

It seems obvious that the preaching of the Apostles was to convert those to whom they spoke there and then repent and be converted, turn again, and

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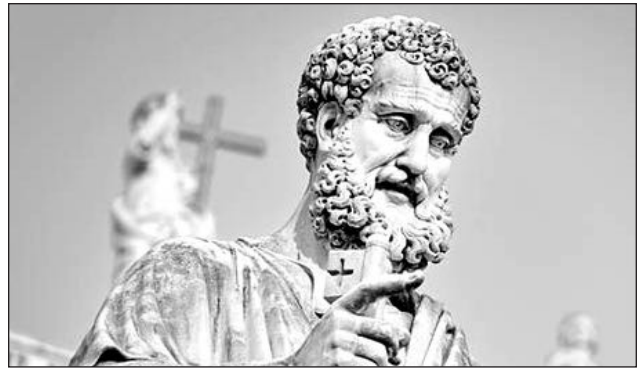
have seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. That seems to be the point in the teaching of Peter and John, and the reason for the miracle, to impress upon the people that here were God's true witnesses. For many it has been usual to link verse 19 of our chapter with verses 20 and 21, making the three verses apply to our Lord's second advent and "times of restitution of all things" throughout the Millennial Age. Understood that way, the "seasons of refreshing" and "times of restitution" would be the same period, and both would apply to the Kingdom Age. Wouldn't it be strange if Peter was implying that after true repentance and conversion based on faith in Christ's sacrifice, those to whom he spoke must wait about 2,000 years to receive seasons of refreshing in the day of the general resurrection, when the times of restitution for the earthly kingdom were operating? It surely would be strange if that were true.

On the other hand, it may be asked why Peter followed verse 19 with the promise that God would send Jesus Christ at His second advent, and then there would then be times of restitution of all things. Peter no doubt was following through with the wonderful plan of God. In addition to bestowing seasons of refreshing there and then to those worthy of His blessing, God had a Plan which would ultimately embrace all mankind.

It is a well-known fact, too, that when people are feeling after and learning the Truth as we know it, to read of God's plan of times of restitution for all mankind very often is the means of convincing such people that God really loves all the human family. They say, if God has such a gracious plan for the restitution or restoration of mankind from death through the sacrifice of Jesus, we wish to serve God now. We wish to use our lives in the service of such a God. Very often the understanding of restitution clinches in the minds of people that they really wish to serve God now — they are willing to sacrifice for God who so loved the world as to redeem all humanity and give them an opportunity of everlasting life in due time.

Very likely some who heard Peter speak thought the same way about God and yielded their lives in sacrifice after repentance and conversion, and had their sins covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness and received seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord for the remainder of their lives on earth and had good hopes of attaining the heavenly reward by proving faithful unto death.

There is a similar meaning to the passage in Acts 2: 36-39. Here Peter, speaking previously to our text in the third chapter, says "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your



The Apostle Peter

sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" (Acts 2:36-39 NASB). Doesn't it seem that the same exhortation of chapter 2 is applicable in chapter 3? Repent and be converted, acknowledge the Lord as the true Saviour, consecrate your life to His service, and seasons of refreshing shall come out from the presence, from the face of Jehovah.

We have received refreshing from the presence of the Lord. We have not had to wait for the times of restitution, and why should those to whom Peter spoke be required to wait 2,000 years for the kingdom age? Those who really repented, even though they crucified the Lord of glory, would be forgiven. And the Apostle declared that it was mainly in ignorance that they put the Lord to death; that would count in their favour and help them to repent and be converted, and they could have God's favour there and then.

How wonderful that God's plan works that way. We have received much refreshing since we repented and had forgiveness for sins through faith in the Redeemer and yielded our lives in His service. Most of us have had similar a experience to that described in Ephesians 2:1,2,4-6.

"And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" What a lovely privilege and favour is indicated here for those who really yield their lives to the Lord; and He is merciful to accept them on the basis of faith in Christ and raise them up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The same Greek word (*prosopon*) for "presence" in Acts 3:19 is found also in Hebrews 9:24. This is a verse telling us about our Lord's resurrection and ascension to heaven. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the

presence of God for us.” God had given His Son to be the Saviour; He had been faithful unto death and had ascended into heaven to appear in the presence of God for the Lord’s true people. This is the same word “presence” which indicated “out from the presence of the Lord” seasons of refreshing would come to those whom Peter exhorted to repent and be converted.

Aren’t we glad that Christ appeared in the presence of God for us, for the Church class of the Gospel Age! He has not yet appeared for the world of mankind in general. He will appear the second time for all mankind, but now, during the Gospel Age, he has appeared for us, the children of God. This is the great

Plan of God, that He is taking out a people for His name, those who delight to represent Christ name above every name, and by proving faithful unto death they may, by the Lord’s grace, inherit the heavenly kingdom with Him.

Surely, we thank God because He has invited us into His family, and our Lord has appeared in the presence of God on our behalf. May we, by the Lord’s grace, continue “looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Walking Through the Shadow of Death

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for Thou art with me” (Psalms 23:4).*

The expression “valley of the shadow of death” suggests danger and that there is the possibility of death. To walk through such a valley safely is possible only by keeping close to the Good Shepherd and listening attentively to his every directing word. We must also learn to depend upon his protecting care when danger is near as in reality the Christian is always in danger.

The world of mankind has been in the valley of the shadow of death ever since our first parents transgressed the divine law, and the sentence fell upon them, “Dying thou shalt die” (Genesis 2:17, margin). The valley has been so continuously dark that the entire period during which mankind has walked in it is described in the Bible as a nighttime.

It has been a night of weeping for the poor groaning creation. David speaks of it, saying that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” (Psalms 30:5). Mankind has utterly failed to dispel the darkness and gloom with which they have been surrounded with. Despite their best efforts they have continued to suffer and to die. David wrote that in God’s favor is life, and since man lost God’s favor, it is impossible to escape death except through a provision of grace whereby divine favor is restored.

It can be accomplished only through the provision made by the Creator. That is why it is well to seek the Lord, for he alone is able to lead one through the “valley” of death and darkness into light and life. “Seek him that ... turneth the shadow of death into morning.” (Amos 5:8) Joy will come to the sin-sick and dying world when the “valley of death” with all its darkness and gloom will be turned into “morning” through the rising of the “Sun of righteousness,” and there will dawn the glad new day of Christ’s kingdom!

By faith the followers of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, even now escape the great enemy death that continually stalks up and down in the “valley of the shadow

of death.” Through faith in the Redeemer they pass from death unto life, as death has no more dominion over them. Nevertheless they are still in the valley and surrounded by death. They are in the world, but not of it. As the world views these they are not different from others, for they “die like men” (Psalms 82:7). What the world does not know is that the Lord’s sheep die, not because they are under condemnation, but because they lay down their lives in sacrifice, walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

Death Still Threatens

The Lord’s people, the “sheep” of this Gospel age, having passed from death unto life, are still in danger of death—not Adamic death, but the second death. Even Jesus, the perfect One, who walked through the “valley” before us, sensed this danger. Near the close of his life of sacrifice, when the possibility of failure bore down upon Jesus, he “offered up ... strong cryings and tears,” and the apostle tells us that he was heard in that which he feared (Hebrews 5:7). He did not fear the Jews or the Roman soldiers or the cross. But he did fear that he may not have been wholly faithful to his vows of consecration, otherwise he would lose life altogether and go into oblivion. When Jesus was assured of victory, he was calm and satisfied.

As new creatures in Christ Jesus we stand in a similar position, but we have the advantage of enjoying the good offices of having Jesus as our “Advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1). We therefore do not have the same need of fear. As the Psalmist says, we “fear no evil,” for the Lord, the Good Shepherd, is with us, hence we are not endeavoring to find our way alone through the valley of darkness and death. As the great Shepherd of our souls, we can depend upon him to supply all our needs, even our need of forgiveness when we come short of the glory of God.

Our faith in the Good Shepherd’s care is based on

the assurance of his love for us as his sheep. Knowing of his great love that caused him to lay down his life for us, we can say with the apostle: “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38,39).

“I Will Fear No Evil”

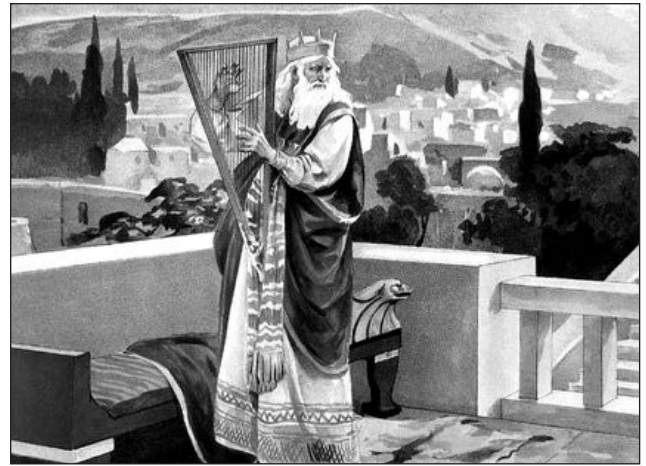
The apostle asks, “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1 Peter 3:13). This great fact of divine care has been true of the Lord’s people in every age, but it is manifested differently in the Gospel age when compared to the Jewish age. The natural house of Israel, dealt with by God under the terms of the Law Covenant, were cared for and blessed along material lines in proportion to the degree of their faithfulness. But material blessings are not promised to spiritual Israelites, the Lord’s “sheep” of this Gospel age.

When we take to ourselves the promise that no evil shall befall us, we must understand it to apply along spiritual lines. We need only to look unto Jesus, who is our Good Shepherd and our template as well. We are following in his footsteps, and we should not expect to fare better in “this present evil world” than he did (Galatians 1:4). The Heavenly Father permitted the cruel hand of persecution to come down upon Jesus, and it crushed him even unto death.

So it is now with those of us who are following the leadings of Jesus our Good Shepherd. No evil can befall us and no one can harm us. This does not mean that we will be spared from material loss or physical suffering. It does not mean that all men will think well of us and that we can go through life having everybody’s smile of approval upon us. Following the leadings of the Good Shepherd does not bring immunity from any of these things which the world and those of the world may construe to be “evil.”

As we walk through the “valley of the shadow of death” we will have similar experiences along material lines as those which are common to mankind in general. We will not be protected from pain, or persecution, or loss, simply because we are following the leadings of the Good Shepherd. Our outward man will indeed perish. We will “die like men.” None of the experiences, can do us harm but rather good. The reason for this is that while the outward man is perishing, we have the assurance that the “inward man” is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). And after all, this is the important consideration for us. Let the hardships come, if they will. Let the world, the flesh, and the devil combine to inflict hardships upon us, yet we will fear no evil, for no evil can befall us—that is, no evil that can touch the new creature.

We will die in the “valley of the shadow of death,” but by grace and power divine we will triumph over death. Being planted together in the likeness of



The Psalmist David

Jesus’ death, we will also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

We do not fear because we know that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17,18).

“Thou art with me”, oh what comfort there is found in this thought! The very thought of his presence dispels all fear, all anxiety. Knowing that he is near, we can focus entirely to the doing of his will and to the enjoyment of his sweet fellowship. We do not know what experiences await us each day. But if we follow closely where the Good Shepherd leads, he will be with us in our every time of need. And after all, this is all we need to know.

How comforting indeed is the assurance of the Lord’s presence with us while we are walking through this valley. The allurements of the world seem nothing when compared with the blessedness of his presence and fellowship. While traveling through the “valley of the shadow of death” many troubles are bound to assail us. Dangers will loom up at almost every step of the way. Our unbelieving friends will forsake us, and our foes may unite to harm us. But we will fear none of these things, knowing that our Good Shepherd who leads the way is ever near, a very present help in every time of need.

“Thy Rod and Thy Staff They Comfort Me” (Psalms 23:4)

In the 4th and 5th verses of the 23rd Psalm, David expresses a more intimate relationship with the divine Shepherd of Israel. Thus the psalm changes from a testimony to a prayer.

In David’s prayer to the Chief Shepherd he indicates that both the “rod” and the “staff” are sources of comfort. In Oriental lands a shepherd carries these two pieces of equipment. He uses the rod, or crook, to guide the sheep while leading them through narrow and dangerous passes. The staff is used to assist him

in driving off wild animals which attack the flock. It was also apparently used by the shepherd as a sort of walking stick, a support, as it were.

The Hebrew word translated “rod” is the same as the one used in the prophecy of Christ’s kingdom, where we read that the Lord will break the nations with a “rod of iron” (Psalms 2:9). The rod was used to keep the sheep in the right way, and to protect them from danger of not holding to the path along which the shepherd leads. That way the sheep are thereby forcibly guided back into the right way, sometimes by hooking the crook of the rod around their necks and gently lifting them back to the path, and sometimes around the hind legs to steer them aright, so the nations will be held in line by an inflexible law, a “rod of iron” (Revelation 2:27).

Transferring the lesson of this symbol to the Christian life we see in it a beautiful illustration of the disciplines of the Lord; the apostle assures us, that they are a special evidence of the Lord’s love — “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (or disciplines) (Hebrews 12:6). These are not punishments which the Good Shepherd administers when he is unhappy with us, but rather they are disciplinary in nature, designed to train or direct us to walk in the right way. It is because the Lord loves us that he uses such measures to keep us close to him. Indeed, in the symbol it was essential for the sheep to be very close to the shepherd in order for him to use the rod to keep them in the path of safety.

It was unpleasant for a sheep to feel the crook of the shepherd’s rod hooked around its neck. The sheep would have no choice as to the direction in which it walked. When David put himself in the position of the sheep, he realized that what seemed an unyielding attitude on the part of his God was in reality an evidence of His love. God loved David and would not permit him to continue along a straying path. David knew this, and explained, “Before I was afflicted I went astray” (Psalms 119:67).

Sometimes the chastenings of the Lord come upon us in the form of afflictions. In such experiences we might feel discouraged thinking that the Good Shepherd is angry with us and is administering punishment. But in reality, behind that frowning providence he hides the smiling face of his love. The affliction comes because of the Good Shepherd’s loving care, and it is designed by him to train us to walk more circumspectly, more within the bounds of the right way in which he is leading us day by day. Thereby learning our lessons day by day.

When a shepherd in the East leads his flock through dangerous mountain passes he frequently looks back to check his following flock. If he notices one of the sheep going too near the edge of the precipice, he gently draws it toward the other sheep and away from danger by applying the crook to its hind legs. David had this in mind when he wrote, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his

way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand” (Psalms 37:23,24).

The Staff

The shepherd’s staff was used to help him in protecting the sheep from an attacking enemy, and also as a support, like a walking stick. The “staff” of the Good Shepherd “comforts” us in both these respects. The enemies of the Christian do not attack in a physical sense, but the attacks are against our faith. This is the reason we can resist these enemies only by being “steadfast in the faith” (1 Peter 5:9). Nor can we successfully resist our adversaries alone, apart from the help and wisdom given us by the Good Shepherd. It is his “staff,” not ours, that wards off the attackers.

However, if we are to be protected by the Good Shepherd’s staff it is essential that we remain very close to him. If we do, we will be comforted by that staff. The attacks of our enemies along spiritual lines, are to be warded off, not by carnal weapons but by the Word of God. In reality, the Word of God is the staff which is provided to sustain and protect us. As the Word of God is the “green pastures” and “still waters” of the Psalm, so also is the “staff.” We can rest assured that we will be victorious over all our enemies as long as we use the means which he provides for our protection.

The “staff” is the Word of God. But it is necessary to depart from the strict interpretation of the symbol in order to fully appreciate the value of the lesson. Actually a sheep never takes the staff from the shepherd’s hand and wields it for its own protection, but the Christian thus uses the Word of God. The Good Shepherd provides the “staff” for us, but it is essential that we use it to combat our enemies, and to lean upon in our weakness.

We usually think of our enemies as the world, the flesh, and the devil and we are to use the Word of God in combating all of these. But there are other enemies of the Christian. We are also attacked by temptation, discouragement, pride, and by weariness. Against all of these the Word of God is the only sure form of protection.



Jesus guides his flock.

When Jesus was attacked by temptations instigated by the Adversary, the Word of God was his defense. “It is written,” was the Master’s reply to every subtle suggestion made to him. So it should be with us. Whether we are tempted to depart from the narrow way, or to believe a false doctrine, the enemy can always be beaten off by a “thus saith the Lord.” This is a “staff” that never fails.

Is discouragement threatening us? Let us again use the Word: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” it assures us (Hebrews 13:5). Upon this blessed promise we can lean, and be assured of strength to sustain us until we reach the end of the way. Again we turn to the Word and find it saying to us as Moses said of Asher, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25). With these and similar promises to reassure us, we can ward off discouragement and take our places among those who are following the Good Shepherd victoriously and in safety.

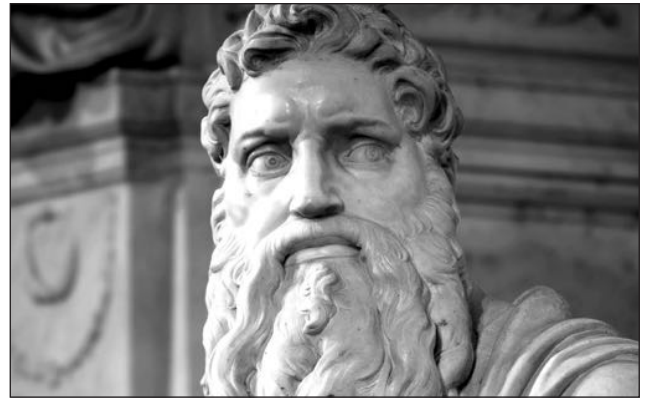
“They Comfort Me”

How wonderfully true it is that the “rod” and “staff” are sources of comfort to us. “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me” (Psalms 119:49,50). Yes, it is the “Word” of the Lord that comforts all of the Lord’s people in their times of need. The Good Shepherd permits us to have disciplinary experiences in the event the corrective instructions of the Word are not fully heeded. However these are allowed only because we may not at all times zealously follow the instructions of the Word.

The Word of God is sufficient for all our needs if we apply ourselves to its study and practice. Paul wrote, “All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). What a wonderful “rod” and “staff” the Lord has provided! How comforting to realize that all we need to guide, warn, and strengthen us as new creatures, is abundantly supplied in his Word!

The Old and New Testaments, serve to keep the sheep of the Gospel age in the pathway of righteousness and are such a source of comfort. Paul wrote, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). The particular “things” alluded to by the apostle as having been written for our comfort are the prophecies concerning the reproaches of Christ. It is a comfort to us to realize that we have the privilege of sharing in these reproaches as the bride of Christ, and that if we endure them faithfully we will receive a crown of life which fadeth not away.

As we look about us in the “valley of the shadow of death” we would be dismayed and discouraged if we



Moses, leader of Israel

did not have an understanding of why this “valley” is permitted. Having the assurance that in God’s due time its mists of darkness will be dispelled by the healing rays of the rising “Sun of righteousness.” We see so much about us that is wrong, and would be tempted to try, in our feeble way, to right these errors, but we know from the Scriptures that this is not our duty in the plan of God for us. Instead of wasting our time in moral and social reform efforts, the Good Shepherd urges us to remain in the narrow way of sacrifice. So that we may be prepared to share with him, the glorious work of actually restoring the world to perfection of health and life, and to give all the willing and obedient the joys of everlasting life. What a comfort it is to realize that this is the Lord’s way, hence it is the right way!

When the cares of life, with its sorrows and hardships tend to discourage us, how comforting it is to be reassured of the Good Shepherd’s love, as those reminders are so beautifully set forth in the “rod” and “staff” of his Word. We hear the divine Shepherd speaking tenderly to us, “I will never leave thee nor forsake,” and, feeling the strength of that promise, our courage is renewed and our hearts are comforted. We know that he who gave his life for the sheep will surely fulfill all his precious promises, trusting in him, we redouble our efforts to follow him as he leads us in “paths of righteousness.”

At times the way may seem unduly long. There are many hills to climb, many obstacles to surmount, and we may be longing for a rest. But we are reminded by the Word that the Good Shepherd’s plan is that we be faithful even unto death; that only by following him even all the way into death, we hope to be with him on Mount Zion. This is as a glorious hope set before us, a hope which when we contemplate it, fills our hearts with joy. It is this joy that enables us to continue on in the way of sacrifice.

The fruition of the Christian’s hope is realized at the second coming of Christ. The early church looked forward to this great event in the plan of God with eager anticipation. The hope of his coming was the mainspring of their Christian lives. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, saying that the Lord would descend from heaven “with a shout, with the voice of the

archangel, and with the trump of God.” He then adds, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). “These words” are indeed comforting to the Christian, especially now when the “shout” can be heard, and when the “voice” is causing the earth to melt, and when the “trump” is resounding its joyful notes of encouragement throughout the earth. But the world neither sees, nor heeds these indications of the new day of his presence.

Knowing that he is here we have this added incentive to follow the Good Shepherd faithfully even to the end. How we are indeed comforted by the knowledge of the Good Shepherd’s presence, in his parousia! This inspires our zeal in doing the Lord’s will, the knowledge of present truth serves to guide us in the way the Lord would have us walk. This also comforts us, for there is nothing more disconcerting and discouraging than uncertainty as to what is the Lord’s. The Lord’s people perish when they do not have sufficient knowledge to direct them in the right way. What could be more comforting than to realize that through present truth the Lord is guiding us in this wonderful time in which we are living. Surely we

should appreciate the “rod” and “staff” of the Lord’s Word now more than ever before.

It is indeed a wonderful time in which we are living, but it is also an “evil” day, a day when the enemies of God and of the truth are attacking the Lord’s sheep from every direction. Hence we surely need the protection of the “staff.” Only those who are protected by the truth of the Lord’s Word will be able to stand against the “wiles of the devil.” If through complacency, pride, self-will, or confidence in the arm of flesh, we do not look to the Good Shepherd for help, we will surely be overcome by our adversaries.

But, comforted by the “rod” and “staff” we are refreshed, our strength is renewed and we continue on, rejoicing in the assurance that the Good Shepherd will keep us from falling. He may permit affliction, but if we are properly exercised thereby we are drawn closer to him and can discern the pattern of his footsteps more clearly. As we hear his voice, our hearts leap for joy as we realize the great privilege that is offered to us of following the Good Shepherd, who as the Lamb of God laid down his life for us and for the whole world.

What Sense Does the World Make?

“All the rivers go to the sea, and the sea is not full. To the place that the rivers go, there they return to go” (Ecclesiastes 1:7. Theme and heading scriptures from Robert Alter translation. Other scriptures from Revised Version, Improved and Corrected, unless indicated otherwise).

The book of Ecclesiastes is both peculiar and fascinating. Had it not been discovered in the caves of Qumran amongst other Jewish Testament books, its authenticity may have been questioned. Its original name, *Qohelet*, and position as part of the Wisdom books, provide an insight into the writer and clues as to its purpose. *QoHeLet*, a name chosen by the Septuagint translators, means “the one who assembles.” It is likely that this assembler was King Solomon, who is identified in the opening verse as the “son of David.” Although the Authorized Version uses the moniker, “The Preacher,” *Qohelet* is more meaningful to an understanding of the book.

Its purpose is clear from the opening words, even in the King James Authorized Version: “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (verse 2). Vanity, from the Hebrew *hevel*, is a 17th century word which means “lacking value.” Robert Alter, in his translation, notes the following: “The form of the Hebrew *havel havalim* is a way of indicating a superlative or an extreme case. *Hevel*, ‘breath’ or ‘vapor,’ is something utterly insubstantial and transient.”

Have you stepped out on a cold day and noted, “I can see my breath!?” That seems to be the idea — one can “see” it but trying to touch it proves futile. There is also a futility of life when perceived from

purely an earthly perspective. Alter renders verse two, “Merest breath, said *Qohelet*, merest breath. All is mere breath.” This assessment of earthly life came after Solomon’s endless quest after earthy riches and earthly pleasure. All of it was meaningless.

Leo Tolstoy, the honored Russian writer, said it plainly: “The only absolute knowledge attainable by man is that life is meaningless.” Ernest Hemingway, the lauded American writer, often said that life was without meaning, and that the only edge one had over death is the choice of when, where and how it will end. Hemingway rose from his bed the early hours of July 2, 1962 and committed suicide. A popular 1970’s song echoed Solomon’s perspective in the titled lyrics: “dust in the wind, all we are is dust in the wind.”

Insightful authors such as Tolstoy and Hemingway saw life in its many facets from an earthbound perspective, especially in our world today. Most seek pleasure and have a constant need to be entertained. They are left at the end of their life with less than real joy. Many have tried to define life’s meaning in their work. A popular quip says, “No one on their deathbed ever said ‘I wish I had spent more time at the office’.” *Qohelet* contrasts this type of life, “life under the sun,” with “life under heaven.” As we shall see, only a heavenly perspective on life can bring one true riches and ultimate joy.



King Solomon

Four Questions

Qohelet asks four questions regarding life, that most popular commentaries call “questions without answers.” These questions are found somewhat buried in chapter six.

(1) “What has already been called by name and is known, as he is man and cannot deal with one more powerful than he” (Ecclesiastes 6:10). Translation: If God has determined what is to be, isn’t it foolish to wrestle with decisions in our life?

As evidenced by the fate of Tolstoy and Hemingway, many struggle to find real meaning in life. They try to find it through constant change in all areas of their lives. If we belong to God, we recognize that He knows the beginning from the end (Isaiah 46:9-11). We can rest in full assurance of faith that Jehovah has, in some cases, determined beforehand what he has planned for us. Consider a few examples from the Old Testament.

“And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction” (Genesis 16:11). Hagar was visited by an angel after Sarah’s jealousy resulted in expulsion from the family camp. She was reassured that Jehovah had not abandoned her, and that Ishmael would be the progenitor of a great people.

“And God said, No, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him” (Genesis 17:19). Abraham mourned the expulsion of Hagar because he thought that Ishmael would be his heir. Jehovah reassured him that Sarah would have a child who would carry the Abrahamic promise to the next generation.

And he cried against the altar by the word of Jehovah, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith Jehovah: Behold, a son shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he sacrifice the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall they burn upon thee (1 Kings 13:2). Josiah was chosen — 320 years before he was even born — to lead a great reformation in Israel!

Zechariah and Elizabeth received news aforetime that their son, yet to be born, would announce the coming of Messiah. John became the forerunner of the Messiah, preparing the Jewish nation to watch for the Messiah (Luke 1:13). Mary received the news that she would bear the Messiah when she was not yet wed to Joseph.

If we are concerned about our lot in life, we must think about how God has overruled things in the past, and maybe has put us in a certain place, at a certain time, for a certain work. It is our task to find and engage in that work. Any boundaries that the Lord puts on us are a favor. If we had absolute freedom to choose our own path once we have given our lives to God, we would be an absolute failure. None of us has the wisdom to out-think our God. We see the stop sign at the corner; God sees the highway ahead. Let us remember the words of Romans 8:28, “And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose.”

(2) “For there are many words that increase mere breath; what is the advantage for man?” (Ecclesiastes 6:11), Translation: The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does it profit anyone?

In the musical play, *My Fair Lady*, Eliza Doolittle, after having been trained in proper English speech, proclaims, “Words, words, words, I’m so sick of words!” Today, her proclamation stands vindicated. We are witness to twenty-four-hour-a-day convoluted political, economic, and social rhetoric. Every speech, every action is analyzed; the analysis is analyzed; then opinions are written about the analysis. It is much talk with little comfort, and even less concern for truth in what is said.

However, we find God’s truth in scripture is pithy, meaningful and never-changing. Consider the simple words found in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.” One sentence here conveys the entire Divine Plan. Solomon wrote elsewhere, “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19). This is a word of caution in our own study of the Word, and of other material available to us at this end of the age. In our class studies, we can spend endless hours in discussions over individual word meanings in both scripture and harvest writings. We can create and debate meaningless “what-if” scenarios. We do well to speak few words full of meaning.

For of these are they ... ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:6, 7). An additional problem of our day is information overload. We can research an issue or a question endlessly. The more information we find, the more difficult it becomes to process it and reach a conclusion. When our mind reaches the threshold

of our brain's ability to process new information, the value of that information declines and we may even become paralyzed in coming to a conclusion. It is human nature to be attracted to the widest selection of options. Consider that the modern grocery store stocks over 39,000 items, while the average shopper just buys 260 items regularly.

As Christians, we are to build our knowledge of truth by searching, studying, and considering. There is a point at which we must accept that we have researched enough. We must decisively put it in our minds and move forward to the next level of development. Consider the following quote from Reprint 3156, "Living by Every Word Out of the Mouth of God."

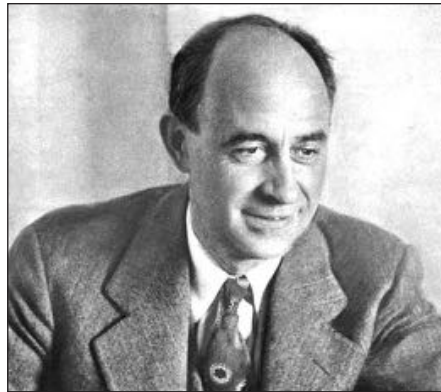
"The truth thus acquired, step-by-step, becomes a sanctifying power bringing forth in our lives its blessed fruits of righteousness, peace, joy in the holy Spirit, love, meekness, faith, patience and every virtue and every grace, which time and cultivation will ripen to a glorious maturity...and this is scripturally called 'growing in grace and knowledge.' Unless each item of knowledge be received into a good and honest heart, and bring forth its measure of obedience and righteousness (grace) we will not be prepared for the next step of knowledge, and would be thus stopped, possibly turned back."

(3) "For who knows what is good for man in life, in his days of mere breath, for he spends them like a shadow" (Ecclesiastes 6:12a)? Can we determine the wisest course in anything?

In September, 2020, the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research in Western Australia announced that, after searching 10-million-star systems with the world's most sophisticated telescope, it had found no signs of alien technology! Astronomers had used the Murchison Widefield Array (MWA) telescope, costing \$51 million (U.S.) to explore hundreds of times more broadly than any previous search for extraterrestrial life. (This author visited the site of the telescope while on a trip through the outback with other Bible Students. It is also used for other purposes). The study, detailed in Publications of the Astronomical Society of Australia, observed the sky around the Vela constellation for 17 hours.

Over 70 years ago, Physicist Enrico Fermi summed up the fruitless search for other life in the universe this way: "If most stars have planets, and alien civilizations could be billions of years older than humans,' and if the galaxy could be explored and colonized within only about a million Earth years (even at sub-light speed) ... where is everybody?"

The increase in knowledge around DNA research has led to efforts in Silicon Valley, California to "hack



Enrico Fermi

the code of life" through biotech research. Billions of dollars are being poured into the development of a human genome database. Especially important to the database are the genomes of supercentenarians. Dr. Joon Yun, a Silicon Valley, California hedge fund manager has offered a one-million-dollar (U.S.) prize for anyone successfully increasing the life span of mice by fifty percent.

A noble, yet fruitless search for world peace has been in process for over 100 years. The League of Nations began in 1920 following World War I's Paris Peace Conference. It was the first international organization with the principal mission to maintain world peace, prevent wars through collective security and disarmament, and settle international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. It lasted 26 years, toppled by the effects of World War II, giving way to the United Nations.

"To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" are among the first words of the United Nations Charter. Peace-keeping efforts, while laudable, have not eradicated armed conflicts. Globally, the absolute number of war deaths has been declining since the U.N. founding. And yet, conflict and violence are currently on the rise, with many conflicts today waged between non-state actors such as political militias, criminal, and international terrorist groups.

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25). No matter how hard man tries, and how many efforts prove fruitless, he cannot reverse the process of death nor stop people from killing themselves. Only an understanding of the permission of evil provides sense for a world gone mad. Those who recognize this doctrine understand that Jehovah is overseeing the affairs of the Church and preparing man for the long-term benefits of the kingdom on earth. Efforts to extend life by even one day are futile without a knowledge of the future plans God has for man. Everlasting life will come not from progress in science, or the resolution of conflicts, but from obedience to the Millennial law in Christ's kingdom.

(4) "Who can tell man what will be after him under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 6:12b)? Can anyone predict what is coming next?

Let us consider some of the modern predictions regarding the fate of the earth:

- "Dr. S. Dillon Ripley (Zoologist), believes that in 25 years, somewhere between 75 and 80 percent of all the species of living animals will be extinct." — Smithsonian Institute, 1970

- "Population will inevitably and completely outstrip whatever small increases in the food supplies we make. The death rate will increase until at least 100-200 million people per year will be starving to

death during the next ten years.” — Paul Ehrlich, *Mademoiselle*, April 1970

- “Demographers agree almost unanimously on the following grim timetable: by 1975 widespread famines will begin in India; these will spread by 1990 to include all of India, Pakistan, China and the Near East, Africa. By the year 2000, South and Central America will exist under famine conditions...the entire world, with the exception of Western Europe, North America, and Australia, will be in famine.” — Peter Gunter, 1970

- “Scientists have solid experimental and theoretical evidence to support ... in a decade, urban dwellers will have to wear gas masks to survive air pollution ... by 1985 air pollution will have reduced the amount of sunlight reaching earth by one half.” — Life Magazine, January 1970

- In 1970, Harrison Brown, NASA scientist published a chart in Scientific American showing that the earth would run out of copper shortly after the year 2000. Lead, zinc, tin, gold and silver would be gone before 1990.

Jehovah does not provide all the details about the future. The information available at any point in time is sufficient to redirect some preservation efforts, but predicting the future precisely is impossible. Even during the past 100-plus years of the Bible Student movement, at least four dates have been confidently predicted for the completion of the Church and the final resolution of the earth in Armageddon. Even Pastor Russell recognized that he had seen things incorrectly regarding the precise time of the glorification of the New Creation (*The Time is At Hand*, page xi).

This should be a lesson for us especially as we see scriptures regarding the end of the Gospel Age being fulfilled — Israel’s restoration, the decline of morality, fewer responses to the call of consecration. Predicting the time things will occur in the future is risky, even when we base it on what is perceived to

be indisputable evidence. There is only one certainty regarding the end of this age: the fashion of our present evil world will dissolve at some point in the future, and by the Hand of the only authority whose word can be absolutely trusted!

Admonitions for the Consecrated

As consecrated children of God, let us have faith that Jehovah is in complete control. He knows the answers, but protects us from knowing the end from the beginning for our own benefit. As the apostle Paul says, “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:9-12).

We do not need to wrestle over answers to Solomon’s questions. Life is Jehovah’s gift. Our wisest decision is to submit to His care and allow Him to prepare us for an eternal relationship with Him and His son. Let us not imitate the world’s search for endless information and fruitless pursuits. Let us use life’s experiences as stepping stones to mold our character. Let us keep focused on Jehovah’s grand purpose: A kingdom of righteousness will bring blessings and eternal life to all who respond and obey.

Jehovah is fashioning each of us into an image of His son. We must submit our will and allow Him to free the New Creature that dwells within. There is a reason for our lives. There is a reason for our pain and suffering. There is a reason for our joy. “Everything has a season, and a time for every matter under the heavens” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Solomon wrote these words in contrast to life on earth for those without purpose. Let us look up, and live our life with a view from “under the heavens.” To God be the glory for ever and ever!

Antitrinitarians

Bernardino Ochino

(1487-1564)

For many students Martin Luther stands out as one that went against the Roman Catholic church when he nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church which started the reformation in Germany.

There were many other less known individuals who declared dissent/unhappiness against the authority of this powerful corrupt church and her many false doctrines. They formed themselves into separate

groups for religious worship.

One of the earliest groups were the Waldenses who started around the 12th Century, who condemned the Catholic clergy as being unworthy of holding religious office, and that people should have the right to read the Bible. As men started to think for themselves, testing the false teachings of the Great Harlot by reading the scriptures. One of these teachings was the doctrine of the trinity which they found as false

and had no backing in the Bible.

Bernardino Ochino

Bernardino (1487-1564) was born in Siena, Tuscany, Italy. In his youth he asked himself the question “What must I do to be saved?” He thought that the answer to his question was to enter a convent, a religious order to be close to God. He chose the Convent of Osservanza on the outskirts of Siena. He thought that by works of austerity and self-denial that he would be able to gain a heavenly goal.

After a period of years, in approximately 1534, he concluded that this order of Friars did not satisfy his spiritual needs. He left and joined a new established order The Capuchins where he rose to the position of Vicar General. During the time that he spent in the False Roman Church he came to realise that she was not the true offspring of Christ and the Apostles but was in fact part of the Anti-Christ and that the Popes were also anti-Christ teaching false doctrines and claiming to be “the earthly representative of Christ.”

Questioning the False Doctrines

It was during this time of questioning many of the false doctrines of Babylon the Great that he met Peter Martyr, a Calvinist that did not believe in the doctrine of Transubstantiation and John Valdez, a Catholic Theologian who had doubts about the Trinity. This meeting changed his views entirely, so much so as to come to the attention of the NUNCIO the Papal Ambassador who summoned him to appear before the religious court of six cardinals. On the advice of Peter Martyr, he departed Italy in 1545 which saved his life.

The Continued Journey

Bernardino travelled to Venice and then on to Basel in Switzerland, then moving to Germany and then to the relative safety of Protestant England where he intended to spend the rest of his life preaching to the Italian Protestants living in London. The untimely death of King Edward VI, a protestant, in 1553, brought Queen Mary to the throne, a staunch Catholic who so persecuted the protestants that she earned the name “Blood Mary.” Once again, Bernardino, along with the Italian Protestants, had to flee.

He arrived in Geneva on the 28th of October 1553, the day after Servetus, an antitrinitarian, was martyred, being burnt at the stake. Calvin had exposed Servetus’ beliefs and called for his death. As a result, he did not tarry in Geneva but traveled to Poland in 1559 to meet with others who had similar opinions on most things.



Bernardino Ochino

The Meeting in Poland

The meeting included Peter Statorius, John Thenaud, Francis Lismaninus and George Blandrata. They all had doubts about the Trinity and during the meeting Bernardino also took up this belief that the doctrine of the Trinity was in error and formed no part of the Christian faith. There was one God, the Father, one son from the Father and the Holy Spirit. At the time it appears that they stated, “that we still have many things yet to learn.”

Bernardino returned to Switzerland where he is again in trouble because of his beliefs. This time from the Protestants the majority

who taught the Doctrine of the Trinity. Because he had written several Dialogues against the Trinity, thus putting him at odds with both the Catholic Church as well as the nominal Protestants Churches as they both viewed this as blasphemy and a crime. (We see that many of the reformers still retained some of the false teachings of the Apostate Catholic Church). Once again, he was forced to flee from persecution but still, he was pursued by his religious enemies.

He Sought Refuge

Bernardino sought refuge in Poland, preaching to a congregation of Italians in Krakow, however due to the Pope’s influence he was asked to leave Poland. He started to travel towards Moravia in Czechoslovakia. He was now elderly nearing 77, a good age at that time. The Plague was present in Europe, and he was sick, tired and nearly worn out when he passed through the Polish town of Pinczow. Here he was able to find an old Unitarian friend Jerome Phikovius. He helped him find shelter, rest and everything that this poor sick old man needed. After short stay Bernardino went on his way to Moravia, unfortunately he passed away in the town of Slavkov in Czechoslovakia.

His Legacy

During his lifetime he inspired many other to search the scriptures to find the truth about the false teachings of the Catholic Church especially in regard to the Trinity. He was highly esteemed as a pious man, full of zeal for the truth. When he preached from the pulpit everyone was amazed at his knowledge and his zeal for the truth.

Date of the Memorial

Thursday, 14 April, 2022

(14 Nisan) after 6:00 pm

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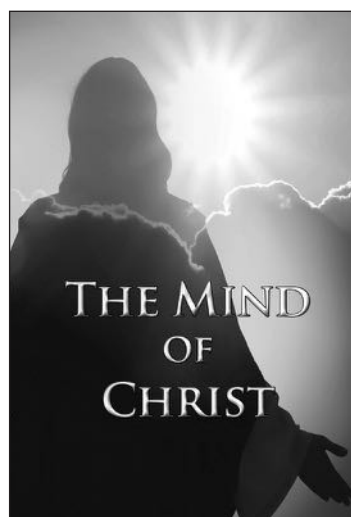
Online Convention, January 22-23, 2022

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It's The Chords that Count

"Dr. F. B. Meyer related a beautiful story of a little girl staying at a summer hotel. She was of that trying age when small fingers are beginning to find their way about the piano, striking as many wrong notes as right ones, and not particularly sensitive to the anguish such attempts are capable of inflicting on others. A brilliant musician was stopping at the hotel. He took in the situation and sat down beside the small musician who thumped out her tunes. He began to accompany her with the most exquisite improvisation. Each note of hers only gave him a new motif for chords of surpassing beauty, whilst the drawing room, crowded with people, breathlessly listened. The performance over, the great musician took the child by the hand and introduced her as the one to whom they were indebted for the music. Her efforts had led to his magnificent accompaniment, but his part in the performance had led to a deep impression. It is the Lord's presence with the Christian that makes the difference. "Apart from Him we can do nothing" acceptable. If we achieve, it is because He works with us and through us. To Him be the glory! (John 15:5 Philippians 2:13). *Quiet Hour Stories*, Keith L. Brooks



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Abundance of Grace

We will also consider the passage, “For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Christ Jesus, hath abounded unto many” (Romans 5:15).

In this text the Apostle evidently does not mean to be understood as saying that the full abundance of grace had then reached the many, because that would be an untruth. It is now over 1800 years since the Apostle’s Day, and the abundance of grace has not yet reached the majority of men. So, we must understand Him to mean that this abundance of grace that is in Christ according to the Father’s plan and arrangement and purpose, is yet to reach the many. The world is yet in its sins, and Israel is yet in its sins and will not be recovered until after the Church shall have been glorified, as the Apostle says (Romans 11:27), “For this is my Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Grace Not Actual but Abounded Through Promise

Since this grace has not yet gone to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles in general, the only way in which it has abounded is through the promise of God that the death of Christ will yet be efficacious for all. Therefore, speaking from this true prophetic standpoint, it is plain to be seen how Jesus is the Saviour of the world, although He has not yet finished the work of saving the Church and will not be the Saviour of the world in the full sense until the end of the Millennial Age. Some He will never save, because they will refuse the grace of God; and yet He is, according to the Scriptures, the Saviour of all men — the Saviour of the world.

A Saviour in Prospect

He was the Saviour of the world, according to the Scriptures, when He was born. The message of the angels was, “Unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” He was a Saviour in the prospective sense — not because of what He was then, as a babe, and not merely because of what He has yet accomplished, but because, according to God’s promise, of what He will effect up to the time when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. “He is a Saviour and a great one” “able to save unto the uttermost all that will come unto the Father through Him” (Isaiah 19:20, Hebrews 7:25). He is now saving us in a partial sense, by hope, because we have come unto the Father through Him, according to the arrangement of this Gospel Age. He will yet save us in the fullest sense in the “First Resurrection.” The saving of the world will then begin, when He shall awaken them from death; but they will not be fully

saved, will not attain full restitution nor gain eternal life, except as they shall exercise faith and obedience. He opens the door. He makes the way. He provides all the arrangements by which they may know and obey.

The whole earth is a part of the purchased possession and will be filled with the glory of God. And if any knee will then refuse to bow and any tongue refuse to confess and any fail to accept of the favour of God, there will be nothing further for him. He will be doing “despite to the spirit of grace” and will die the “Second Death” (Hebrews 10:29, Jude 12, Z1910-199).

JESUS DID NOT FORFEIT HUMAN LIFE

A forfeited life is not a sacrificed life. If our Lord had forfeited His life — it would not have been a sacrifice. A life that is forfeited is a life that is taken away for some just cause or reason; but His was taken without a Cause, He suffered. As to how He suffered and why He suffered the Scriptures are quite distinct in telling us — “He presented Himself without blemish unto God.” That is to say, He purposed to do God’s will; He bowed to God’s will; He consecrated His whole life to the doing of God’s will. To test His loyalty and obedience to the full, God required that He should be obedient, submissive, “unto death, even the death of the cross.” His life was not taken from Him, either by God or by men; as He Himself declared, He could have called for Divine aid, according to Divine arrangement, and more than twelve legions of angels would have protected His life: “No man taketh away my life; I lay it down of myself.” So, then, in this matter of Jesus’ sacrifice, it was neither that man took away His life, nor that God demanded it, but God gave Him the opportunity of demonstrating His loyalty. This involved a sacrifice in that it put Him into the place where, to do what God desired to have done, meant a giving up of all His earthly rights and privileges.

Application of Merit Not Made in Advance

When He came to the time of His death He did not make application of ‘His merit in advance’, saying, “I do this for such a purpose and such a thing, and I apply whatever merit there is in my obedience to such a purpose.” He did nothing of the kind. There was no such application made. When we speak of Christ’s death as the Ransom-Price for the sins of the whole world; when we say that “He gave Himself a Ransom for all,” we are taking into consideration other features of the Divine arrangement by which it will be possible for the Lord Jesus to apply the merit of that sacrifice on behalf of the world of mankind as their Ransom-Price. This will be accomplished in its due time (1 Timothy

2:5,6). It was not accomplished when He died but was to be accomplished subsequently.

The Father Pleased to More Than Fulfil His Promise

After our Lord had manifested His obedience even unto death, the Father was well pleased to fulfil to Him all and more than He had ever intimated or promised. Hence, He raised Him from the dead — not in the same condition in which He was previously — a man — but in the glorious condition of the divine nature, far above angels, principalities and power and every name that is named.” It would have been possible for the Father to restore our Lord Jesus to the earthly nature; but that would not have been, as we understand it, in keeping with His promise that there would be a special reward for this special obedience — “the joy that was set before Him.”

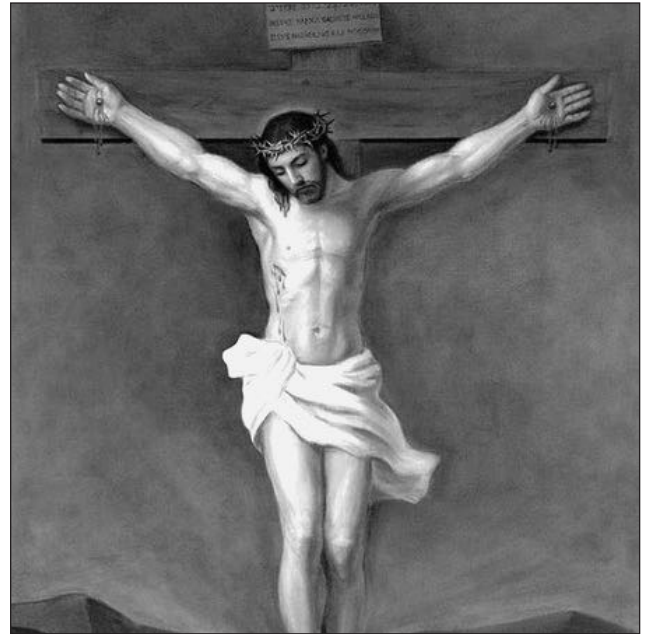
Jesus Had the Right to the Earthly Nature

When our Lord Jesus, therefore, was raised from the dead by the Father on the third day, to this glorious nature which He now possesses — so much better than the earthly condition — He had a right also to the earthly nature. He would not, of course, have thought of exchanging the higher condition for the earthly condition; and especially since such a change would frustrate the entire plan of God. To explain: Suppose

our Lord Jesus, having been raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, to the divine nature, had said, “Father, I greatly appreciate your kindness and favour towards me in thus highly exalting me; but now I prefer the human nature.” If we could imagine His saying such a thing, we cannot see but that He would have had the right to it, as He had never forfeited His human life. He merely laid it down. He submitted Himself in obedience to God, and if in His resurrection He had preferred the earthly nature, it would have been entirely proper that He have it back again. But to have taken it back would have been to undo all the work He had started out to do. He would thus have given away the heavenly nature, which was far more desirable, and respecting which He Himself said, “Father, glorify me with the glory that I had with Thee before the world was.” He would in this way have ignored not only His own expressed preference in the matter, but also the Divine Plan, order, and arrangement, as it was God’s will that He should have this high nature and that He should also have the right to earthly life, the earthly nature, that He might bestow the earthly nature, with all its rights and privileges as the “Ransom,” or Corresponding Price, for Adam’s forfeited life and all of its earthly privileges.

Imputing His Merit Now to Those Who Covenant to Sacrifice It

Actually, our Lord has not yet ransomed all, but He gave Himself, in the sense of performing the sacrifice, more than 1800 years ago. But He has not yet applied the merit as the Ransom-Price for all the world. What is He doing with the Ransom-Price all this time? The Ransom-Price was placed into the hands of the Father.



Jesus yielded himself in death

When Jesus died, He said, “Into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” The Lord Jesus, therefore, as the Great Messiah, has the right to all those things which He intends to bestow upon the whole world of mankind — Adam and all his race. He will give them all the opportunity of becoming people of God. What is He doing with the merit in the meantime? He is imputing it to any individual from amongst Adam’s race who desires to come into full relationship with the Father, on conditions that such an individual follow in His footsteps and lay down his earthly life as He laid His down. To each one of this kind who comes to Him, the Lord imputes His merit at the moment he makes his consecration to sacrifice, and this imputation of the Lord’s merit makes him acceptable with the Father who begets him as a new creature. Thenceforth such are new creatures, and their earthly life is given up as Jesus’ life was given up in sacrifice. All of these, therefore, who are now invited to come under this special arrangement through the use of the merit of Christ’s death, come under the imputation of that merit, not the bestowment of it.

Illustration of Imputing and Applying Merit

There is a difference between imputing the merit and bestowing it. For instance, if we hand you \$100, we bestow \$100 upon you, passing it directly to you but if we endorse your note for \$100, we are imputing to you \$100. In the case of the Church, it is an imputation; there is actually no passing of the merit over. What our Lord has to give is the right to human life, the human privileges which were Adam’s originally, and which he lost — all that he had. That right to human life our Lord has to give away, but He is not giving it away now. He is keeping it to give to the world in due time. He is now merely imputing to us the merit, or that which corresponds to the endorsement of our contract with the heavenly Father, if we desire to enter into such a contract.

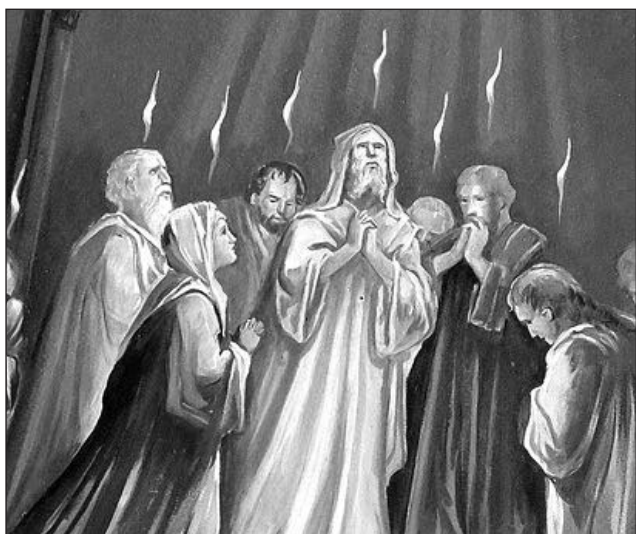
THE WORLD WILL RETAIN THE EARTHLY LIFE-RIGHTS PURCHASED FOR THEM

Coming back to the statement made foregoing, that this merit is to be given on behalf of the world, we should qualify it and say that the merit is not to be given to the whole world, but merely, as the Scriptures outline, “For all the people.” “The people,” however, are not the entire world, but all who come into covenant relationship with God during

the period of the great Mediatorial Kingdom. They are the only people for whom the merit will be applied. Whoever will reject this opportunity and refuse to become one of the people, rejects all the opportunities that are to be granted and does not, therefore, receive restitution to human life. Such are not made perfect. They do not get human rights at all. They will receive an awakening from death, but this will not be Restitution. This will be merely the first step from which they may, if they choose, take the further steps leading to the Restitution blessings. “It will come to pass that the soul that will not obey” that Great Mediator, that Great Prophet, Priest and King, that great “Prophet like unto Moses raised up from amongst your brethren” — and of which Jesus is the Head and the Church of this Gospel Age are His Members — “the soul that will not obey that Prophet shall be destroyed from amongst the people” (Acts 3:19-21).

The Soul That Will Not Hear That Prophet

This is in harmony with the Scripture to the effect that “he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,” continues on him; he never gets out from under the wrath of God. He had the opportunity; he was brought to a knowledge of the truth; he was brought to the place where it was his privilege to come under the arrangement of the New Covenant blessings which will be extended to all through Israel. But if he fails to make use of that opportunity and to become one of God’s people, then he does not get out from under the wrath at all. He dies under the original wrath without becoming one of the restored ones (Z1910- 206).



Pentecost

WHAT DID JESUS’ DEATH EFFECT?

The question may be raised, “What did Jesus accomplish by the offering of Himself, begun at Jordan and finished at Calvary? Did He purchase the world? How did He redeem the Church?” No. What did He do? He secured the price, the ransom-price, sufficient whenever applied, to effect the cancellation of the sins of the whole world, but He had not yet applied it. Neither the world nor the Church was as yet released from Divine condemnation or brought into full fellowship with God. Although there were five hundred brethren, who had accepted Christ and become His followers, the Father had not yet accepted these. They had offered themselves in consecration to walk in the footsteps of Jesus; they had taken up their cross to follow Him; they had been justified to fellowship with God, even as Abraham, but they had not been justified to sonship and life. Hence, they could not have earthly or restitution life. Neither could they present their bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, because they were still sinners from the Divine standpoint. No appropriation of Jesus’ merit had yet been made in their case.

When Jesus ascended up on high, forty days after His resurrection, He commanded representatives of these, about 120, to tarry at Jerusalem in the upper room until they should be endued with power from on high — until the Father should recognise them — until the Father should accept the sacrifice which they had already made. But first Jesus, as their Advocate, should appear in the presence of God for them, and make such imputation of His merit to them as to cover their blemishes, and permit Divine justice to accept them as “living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God.”

Pentecost Marked Acceptance of Jesus’ Sacrifice

We remember that it was on the fiftieth day that the holy Spirit came upon the waiting ones. That was the first intimation to them that the Redeemer had been acceptable to the Father, and that He had imputed to them His merit, and that the sacrifice which they had already made was acceptable to the Father in the Beloved One, and that they were no longer merely justified to friendship, but had come into the position of sons, into covenant relationship with the Father. Thus, it is written of the Jews, “He came unto his own, but his own received him not; but to as many as received him, to them gave the power (privilege) to become sons of God, even to them that believed on his name,” which were begotten not of man nor of the will of the flesh, but of God — begotten of the holy Spirit. Thus, they became sons of God, members of the anointed Body of the great Messiah, Prophet, Priest, Mediator, King, Judge, appointed for men, on their behalf to effect reconciliation between God and men during His’ Millennial reign.

Both Jews and Gentiles Called

Meantime the same work has been progressing throughout all these eighteen centuries. Others have been called, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles,

to be the followers of Jesus, His under-priests — the Church of the firstborns whose names are — written in heaven. As soon as this work shall have been accomplished, the great Mediator, the antitype of Moses (Acts 3:22,23), raised up from amongst his brethren, will be completed. Then the Mediatorial Kingdom will begin the blessing, uplifting and reconciling of the world. Meantime we thank God for the fact that “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Jesus as the perfect man, the fleshly seed of Abraham, might have accomplished considerably in the way of helping mankind. As one who committed no sin, whose life would have been secure to him, even though it required twelve legions of angels to protect him, he might have been a glorious earthly prince.

The Man Jesus Not Able to Accomplish Restitution

But even as a great ruler amongst men, he would not have been able to accomplish the Divine Purpose of blessing mankind with full uplifting out of sin and death conditions to life eternal. As the man Jesus he could not have accomplished restitution for the race because he would have needed his own human life and rights for himself. The man Jesus, therefore, could not have been “the Seed of Abraham” mentioned in the Abrahamic Covenant, that in the Seed of Abraham all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

To become this Seed, He must first attain to spirit being, just as the record shows He did. By virtue of His sacrifice of His earthly nature, and by virtue of God’s having raised Him from the dead to the heavenly plane as a reward for His obedience, He has His earthly rights to give to Justice as the ransom-price for what Adam lost. The Redeemer is the “Seed of Abraham” on the spirit plane, and during this Gospel Age He is finding His Bride and bringing her to the same spirit plane with Himself as His associates and joint-heir in all the great work of the Millennium — the blessing of all the families of the earth. Thus, it is written, “If ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed (spiritual) and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

Life Laid Down, Not Paid Over

Do we see clearly what Jesus sacrificed, what He laid down? He gave Himself, He submitted Himself to whatever might be the Father’s will, but He did not forfeit His earthly life by committing sin so that it should be taken from Him. Neither did He barter or exchange it for the heavenly nature. He merely submitted or laid down His earthly rights, in harmony with His own words, “I have power to lay down my life and to receive it again; authority to say this I have obtained from my Father.” No man took it from Him, in the sense that no man had that power, since God had promised that “he that keepeth the law shall live by it.” Therefore, our Lord’s life would have been protected had He not voluntarily submitted and laid it down.

Laid Down Life That He Might Receive It

He laid it down that He might receive it again. He laid

it down in the Father’s hands, saying: “Into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” Then Jesus’ rights to earthly life, earthly protection, earthly honour and glory, earthly dominion and power all belonged to Him as a New Creature when He arose from the dead. He had lost and forfeited none of His earthly rights. Those earthly rights are the basis of all the blessings of God through Him to Adam and all of his race. Jesus had nothing else to give away. He needs nothing else; because, in the merit of this sacrifice there is a corresponding price for the first Adam, and a sufficiency for all.

Jesus Does Not Give Church His Earthly Rights

However, Jesus does not give the Church His earthly nature, and earthly rights, but keeps these to give to the world during the Millennium. Indeed, our calling is a heavenly one, and we should feel somewhat disappointed if instead of the heavenly we should receive the earthly or restitution blessing. But since Jesus does not give us these restitution blessings, and since He has no other merit to give to us or to anybody, what does He do for the Church? What is our hope in Christ? What is the philosophy of it?

Merit in Hands of Justice Unappropriated

The answer is that this merit which shortly is to be appropriated as the ransom-price for the sins of the whole world, was already in the hands of Divine Justice, unappropriated, when our Lord ascended up on high, there to appear in the presence of God for us, the household of faith — to present our cause to the Father. As our Advocate He declares to the Father that we are anxious to become members of the elect Church, His Bride, His Body. In harmony with the Divine arrangement, He appropriates a share of His merit to us, so that our sacrifices might be acceptable to God.

Responsibility of New Creature

Thus, instead of giving us the restitution blessings, which are for the world, our Redeemer, our Advocate, imputes to us of His righteousness, and on the strength of it the Father reckons us holy and acceptable, and immediately accepts our sacrifice. Thenceforth we are dead as human beings and our only standing in God’s sight is as “new creatures.” But we have this treasure in imperfect earthen vessels, in which the new creature cannot do all that it would. It is the new creature, however, that God is testing and proving — the new creature is on trial, not the flesh.

The new creature has no Original Sin, nor is it responsible for the Original Sin of the old creature, which was justified and accepted of God in sacrifice and therefore gone. The responsibility of the new creature is that it shall keep its heart in the love of God, in loyalty to Him. Correspondingly, of course, it will strive to keep the body, the flesh, in harmony with the Divine regulations. Its zeal and energy in controlling the flesh and bringing every thought, word and act into accord, as nearly as possible with the Divine will, shows the degree of its love and zeal.



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Written on the Heart

"You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3 NASB).

The word Epistle in the KJV has the thought of a written letter or written message such as the epistles written by Paul Peter James and John which we have available in our Bibles today. The epistles written by these Apostles have had a profound impact on the followers of Christ, Christians for over 2000 years.

However, when we come to "Epistle of Christ" we find that there is no such written letter or message. While Jesus was on earth, all his messages to the disciples and the public were in parables, sayings, and instructions by the spoken word. The first Epistle written by Paul to the Thessalonians was from about 50 AD, and the first Gospels around 70 AD.

So, the words "Epistle of Christ" cannot be taken literally but must be taken figuratively. The clue to this is shown in verse two "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men." We are to make sure that we are following the example set by Christ while he was on earth.

One of the most amazing examples that Jesus showed was at the Last Supper. The disciples had failed to take the task of washing Jesus and the disciples feet. Jesus taught them by his example "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:14-16 NASB).

Peter gives another example "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also **suffered** for you, leaving you an **example** for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being **reviled**, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to

Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:21-23 NASB).

Jesus while on earth showed compassion on the children (Matthew 19:13-14 NASB). Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." He showed compassion and not judgement on the sick, the blind, the lame, those who were oppressed, shunned by the religious leaders. We cannot heal the sick, the blind the lame but Paul reminds us "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:3-5 NASB).

To be an Epistle of Christ means that those who see us, both amongst the brethren and the world should know that we have been with Christ. When Peter and John were brought before the Council the Sadducees saw them as fishermen uneducated, but once they

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had spoken, we read “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13 NASB). Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12 NASB). Note, not to glorify God necessarily now, but in the age to come.

“Being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh” (2 Corinthians 3:3 ASV). Apostle Paul covers three ways that the Epistle of Christ could be written.

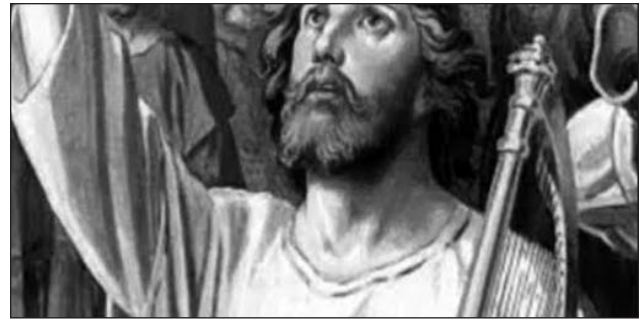
In Ink

Paul’s epistle would have been written on parchment or papyrus with a reed pen and carbon-based ink. These letters would then be passed around the Churches and often copied. The problem was the copies were not always 100% accurate and of course were subject to interpretation after the writer died.

Written in Stone

We are told “He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18 NASB). Being written in stone would give the words of the ten commandments longevity. However, they can be broken as happened when Moses saw the golden calf. We are then told “Now the LORD said to Moses, ‘Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered’ ” (Exodus 34:1 NASB).

Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB). From this verse we realise that all scripture is inspired by God regardless on how it is recorded.



David, the Psalmist

Written in our Hearts

In being written onto our hearts there has to be a change in our heart. The psalmist writes “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart” (Psalms 40:8 NASB). We must change our outlook from one of wanting to do the carnal things of the flesh, to become imitators of Christ. The Apostle writes “in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:22-23 NASB).

The more effort we put into learning God’s will, and put on Christ, the more the Epistle of Christ will be written in our hearts. It takes time to study, to learn more of what the Heavenly Father wants us to do, more about His plan for mankind. Although the words are written to natural Israel, the following can apply to us on the narrow way as we give our lives to Christ. “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezekiel 36:25-27 NASB).

This journey starts at our consecration and continues until our death. If we are faithful, we are promised the crown of life. On the journey we are given this promise “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8 NASB).

Are You Unleavened?

The amazing Apostle Paul makes an intriguing statement in 1 Corinthians 5:7, one we are all very familiar with. There he states for us to “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump as ye are UN-leavened. And — as you recall — he goes on to say: “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” As you read this each Memorial season, does it not seem to make you question: **Why** does the apostle draw our attention to the Memorial — in the context of what precedes this verse? Does it not seem a little strange that the topic has been on

“fornication” and a man having his “father’s wife”? **Why** is a sobering statement that is the theme text of our Sixth Volume Passover/Memorial study inserted here, in this context?

As we all know, sin is illustrated by “leaven” in the Bible. The Apostle was trying to point the Corinthian brethren, and really all Christians for the next 2000 years, that **anywhere**, but especially in the ecclesia or church arrangement, **sin** will corrupt. And it can be contagious. In this fifth chapter particularly, it was the sin of literal fornication; and apparently the

early church Corinthians did not see how corruptibly evil it was. Apparently they were so surrounded by fornication in their worldly environment of sensual life in Corinth, that they did not realize that its environmental osmosis was threatening the sanctification of the Church. Could our unholy culture be even worse today? This particular situation was even one of the most egregious, namely, a man fornicating with his father's wife — apparently a stepmother. To make it worse, the Corinthians were not taking proper measures to “save the sinner from the error of his way” and allowing him to still associate in the meetings without a proper repentance and demonstration of heart contrition. Could this contamination of sin infiltrate the brethren and set an unholy precedent? Could improper handling of the matter even split the ecclesia? Serious consequences threatened the cohesiveness of the Lord's mystical body unless the leaven was properly dealt with — for the main purpose of saving the sinner from the error of their way — and keeping the ecclesia sanctified from such worldly practices of immorality.

What is Sin?

But what **is** sin? How would you define it? Where did it begin? The Bible tells us that “**All** unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17). Psalms 19:8 says “the statutes of the Lord are right” and the “judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (see verses 7 through 12). So, would not you say that sin is disobedience to God's instructions, statutes, and commands? It therefore appears that the scriptures define sin as that which is “not right,” or opposed to God's commands; that which is scripturally specified by Jehovah as “not right” — iniquity. It fails the tests of justice or fairness and the royal law of love (Hebrews 1:9). How can a world, let alone a universe, operate peacefully and in harmony without total universal love and justice? To succeed in an ultimate universal and harmonic equilibrium, pervasive in tranquil peace and order, the primary rootage of these two principles must be totally operative at all times. Sin cannot exist now or ever for such peaceable results to be attained.

So where did sin originate? How can one go further back than the “mind” of Satan himself for its origin? How could something unrighteous come out of something originally created perfect? And how could sin have gone back further than being conceived in the mind of Satan? Was uncreated pride or perhaps jealousy the first sprout of sin's origin? (Isaiah 14:12-14). Could pride or jealousy be elements of sin that are hiding in our own hearts that need to be thoroughly purged by the sanctifying energy and healing balm of the holy scriptures? Thoroughly purged by holy substance of faith, love, and loyalty in Jehovah God (Hebrews 11:1). A being totally focused on glorifying and pleasing God can hardly fall into a trap of pride, jealousy, or selfishness. Darkness cannot come out of light, unless the light be turned off. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5-7).



Are we unleavened?

Other common denominators of sin are selfish lust or desire of any kind. Are not most moral offenses committed in the world ultimately traced to selfishness in some form or another? And could not selfishness be a tributary of pride? That is why the sin of pride — to whatever extent or proportion we allow it to lurk in the caverns of our heart — threatens and disables proportionately the co-laboring and workmanship of Jehovah's hands, to mold us as new creatures in Christ.

Manifestation of Sin

Sin can manifest itself in many forms, namely: idolatry, covetousness, anger, malice, selfishness, pride, evil surmising and evil speaking, witchcraft, strife, heresies, murders, false witness, lying, and more. Even exaggerations can be a form of lying, because we are “stretching the truth” to make our point. When we stretch the truth, we are actually in the territory of lying. Let us not be too quick to dismiss and pass over a careful introspective look in the holy laver of reflection, to determine whether you and I have any of these leavened elements hiding in our hearts as camouflaged enemies. Quickly find them and destroy them on sight. Our zealous efforts and intentions on doing so will determine, in part, our level of heavenly reward. Earnest efforts of intention go a long way with Jehovah, even with our imperfect results. Jesus said, “Be ye perfect [in perfecting your intentions] even as your Father in heaven is [actually] perfect.” Nothing short of these efforts is acceptable to God. Purity of heart is a primary base for building the faith superstructure required in sonship for Jehovah (James 3:17). Yes, dear brethren, it is a high standard, requiring painstaking effort. But attached to it is a very high reward — the highest reward that will probably ever be offered. It is the best bargain imaginable (Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:4, 2 Peter 1:4).

When we celebrate the memorial of our precious Lord's death, we are appropriating by faith the immeasurable value of his meritorious blood for our own justification to be made “right” in the sight of God. In the divine eye we become “legally perfect,” in a reckoned sense, by the imputation of that merit. We are then made “holy” and can present

ourselves as acceptable unto God, through the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9, 12:1). The power in the written word of God, the energizing force for positive spiritual growth, gives us our fuel for the process of sanctification. We are not only purging ourselves of sin and introspectively searching the crevasses of our hearts at Memorial time, but we need to seriously do this every single day throughout the whole year and throughout our whole lives as Christian sons. It is a “life and death” struggle for existence. Either we are born in the Spirit eventually, or we will never exist at all, ever! We are never coming back to life in the Kingdom on earth because we gave up our human life rights at consecration (1 John 3:1).

We have an entire human race to morally change in the processes of human restoration in the glorious kingdom of God, someday. In the billions of awakened humanity, the elements of sin will be pervasive and need to be purged thoroughly from the human race as quickly as possible in each individual. We, the spirit-minded Christian sons of God, if faithful, will be the tools of transformation, with our King, Christ Jesus, because of the totality of experiences in the composite Body of “the Lamb’s wife.” That has enormous value to Jehovah, as well as for human restoration in its totality, and God’s ultimate purpose and goal.

The Highway of Holiness

How can we teach humanity the arduous processes of change as they walk up the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35), if we do not understand the difficulties of transformational change ourselves? We are a people for a purpose, God’s divine purpose, sacrificing and crucifying our flesh, mortifying sin entrenched in the depths of our being, purging ourselves, so we can be meet for the Master’s use as “the second Eve” of “the second Adam” in uplifting and blessing **all** the families of the earth. But again, **how** can we teach others what we ourselves have not learned? If we are not sanctified individually and collectively, through internalizing God’s instructions in righteousness and a resolution to love God with **all** our heart, mind, soul, and strength — then how will we ever be equipped to help Christ bring people back to human perfection? If we are not completely submissive to the divine disciplines and tailor made experiences of supervised instruction, how can we be successful candidates for the processes of mankind’s at-one ment? (Not atonement. That was Jesus Christ alone. But bringing “at-one-ment” of the human race to God.)

Therefore, I submit, that what the Apostle Paul was pointing us to in part, was that the purging processes from sin are essential goals to worship and serve God, individually and collectively, with a very sincere and resolute heart — with the internalization of the Truth and its powerful effects for positive change. A heart so committed cannot intelligently associate and have any communion with someone who is out of accord with that spirit of sanctification — that spirit of oneness, that breaks the bread of communion and



The Memorial emblems represent the blood and body of Jesus.

drinks from the cup of the symbolic body and blood of Jesus Christ. We cannot help but associate with fornicators, idolaters, drunkards and the like in the workplace, at school, in the neighborhood, or even in a family — where we **have** to — for a season of time and temporal purpose. But we do not and should not associate with anyone who claims the name of Christ that practices such things. Proper steps like those given in Matthew 18 for the purposes of rehabilitation of the sinner are mandatory from the commandment of Jesus. Jesus said, “If you love me, **keep** my commandments” (John 14:15).

In this 1 Corinthians 5 context, this same spirit of divine devotion to Jehovah and our Lord Jesus wants nothing to do with idolatry in **any** form. Not just stone or wood idols, but idols of self, or of others, idols of material things, jobs, sports, families, or selfish human desires of any form, that would compete for our time, attention, and adoration of Jehovah, the ultimate source for a perfect life and righteous happiness — and a truly meaningful purpose. Without taking another careful look at the “laver,” we might not even realize we have hidden idols in our camel’s saddlebag, like Rachel did. Remember? (Genesis 31:34).

Dearly beloved in Christ, let us make prayerfully sure that we do things in a proper and holy way in the eyes of God. Let us show Him our loyalty to the Truth and our incredible love for Him and the precious son that He adores; by “keeping the holy commandments” that we are given. All of them. Let us faithfully serve our merciful and loving heavenly Father in “sincerity and truth,” purging daily any leaven that stealthily lurks in our hearts or minds, that we may shine forth with the precious light of Truth we have been given, and emit a fragrant odor of Christ Jesus in our lives (2 Corinthians 2:14-15, Diaglott). Let us internalize the Truth, so we do not just understand it, but soak ourselves in it, so that it absorbs into and penetrates every fiber of our transformed being, with rich fruitage of the spirit and the principles of righteousness. Again, let us do this throughout the whole year, evaluating and scrutinizing daily, but especially at our Memorial season. As determined Christian soldiers may we fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, with the energizing power and love of the Truth that God has so graciously given us; that we might all be to the praise of His divine glory. Amen.

Obedient to the Heavenly Vision

*“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision”
(Acts 26:19).*

These words were part of Paul’s answer to charges that had been made against him by the Jews. God had given Paul a vision of understanding, the significance of which to the apostle was that the remaining days of his life were to be spent in the service of Christ whom, previously, he had persecuted and whose followers he had put to death. The far-reaching implications of Paul’s vision of truth involve a relationship to the Lord which illustrates what God’s promises have meant to His faithful servants throughout the ages.

Paul had been a student of the Old Testament Scriptures. He had been zealous of the faith of his fathers. He would have had clearly in mind the many incidents of the past in which God favored His ancient prophets with special visions that were calculated to change the entire course of their lives. Being thus acquainted with the way God selects and authorizes his special servants to lay down their lives for him, Paul knew instantly when he was struck down on the road to Damascus that God was calling him to a great service. It was in response to this that he lifted his heart and voice to the Lord, saying, “What wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

Later, Paul understood from the words he received from Ananias that the Lord intended this vision to have more than a passing effect in his life. He knew its meaning went beyond merely refraining from further persecutions of those who followed Jesus of Nazareth. It revealed that not only was he wrong in persecuting these disciples of the Master, but also that he was being called to be a “chosen vessel” to bear God’s “name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:6-17).

Paul’s Vision

The vision given to Paul in Acts 9 is only a partial rendering of his commission from the Lord. Only in his testimony before King Agrippa do we find the full account of the vision given at his conversion. Beginning with Acts 26:16, we read these words of the risen Lord spoken to Saul, “Rise, and stand upon thy feet.” This statement we find in the Acts 9 account. The rest of the vision that Paul relates to Agrippa is not recorded in Acts 9. Paul then states the rest of the words of the Lord spoken to him on that momentous day: “I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to

God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:16-18 NASB). What a vision, what a commission, was given to Paul by God through the risen Lord!

Paul might well have responded to the heavenly vision merely with a feeling of appreciation that God had called his attention to his wrongdoing, ceased from his wrong course, and returned to his normal life as a devout follower of the Jewish law. In the ordinary affairs of his life, he might have had many opportunities to tell others of how marvelously God had dealt with him and of how merciful he had been in sparing him from further humiliation because of his wrong course of persecuting Christians. He may have borne witness that Jesus was indeed the Christ. However, Paul knew that the vision meant more than this to him. He realized that God, through the vision, was calling him to devote the remainder of his life to serving the interests of the one he had previously persecuted.

Paul was most likely well acquainted with Isaiah’s account of the vision with which God had favored him. This is recorded in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, accounting how that vision unfolded to Isaiah. He heard God saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah understood this to be a personal question addressed to him, and he responded saying, “Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8). Paul recognized that the vision the risen Lord gave him on the road to Damascus contained an implication of the same question, and, in a similar spirit of devotion to God, he responded: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

Isaiah’s Vision

Although there is a prophetic application to the vision given to Isaiah, as indicated by John 12:41 and its surrounding context, our consideration of it here will be from Isaiah’s perspective at the time the vision was given. The substance of the vision was that it presented to him a mental picture of God’s glory, as the prophet says, “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). We are not to suppose that Isaiah saw God literally, because the Scriptures explain that no man can see God and live. It was, as the prophet indicates, a vision descriptive of certain characteristics possessed by God. By various means God has similarly revealed himself to all those whom He has invited into His service. These revelations have not always come while the individual was in a trance, or in some other miraculous way. Nevertheless, by some method God

has always made known His will and plan when calling those He desires to take into His confidence and use in His service.

Isaiah in vision saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, “high and lifted up.” Those to whom God has truly revealed Himself have always “seen” him in this manner. Those who claim to worship God but depict him as a cruel deity or a triune God are not His. God’s position has always been “upon the throne,” just as Isaiah observed, and those who have a correct understanding of Him have been made to realize that He is a God whom they delight to worship, and in whose service they are glad to spend their life.

Not only did Isaiah see the Lord “high and lifted up,” but also, “his train filled the temple.” The word “train” signifies clothing, or robe, and seems to place particular emphasis on the glorious and holy character of God. The prophet saw that the Lord’s holy presence and influence, and His honor and great glory, permeated and hallowed everything within the temple. This, in turn, would impress upon Isaiah’s mind the fact that if he were to become fully associated with this most glorious being, it could mean nothing else than that God and His divine will was to influence and dominate His every thought and word and deed. There was to be no place for anything else in the prophet’s life but God. Brethren, the same must be true of us. “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16 NASB).

So there could be no doubt in Isaiah’s mind as to the position of God, the following verses dispel any doubts. “Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:2-3 NASB). The words of the seraphim, “Holy, holy, holy,” indicate that the prophet saw them as representative of God’s character attributes, all of which demonstrate His holiness. Isaiah knew that, at the time he saw this vision, the “whole earth” was far from being filled with these holy qualities that would reflect the glory of the Lord. The prophet saw that the time was yet to come for the blessing of all mankind.

Isaiah continues, “The foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:4-5 NASB). Isaiah compares the power and holiness of God compared to his, and the people around him, wretched state. How was he able in this state to proclaim the holiness and perfect plan of God?



Isaiah the prophet

Isaiah’s Commission

The vision continues, “Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven” (Isaiah 6:6-7 NASB). God knew of his unclean state but made provision by which his lips could be cleansed. What wondrous grace is here manifested!

It reveals God’s ability to use those who are imperfect by making provision whereby they can serve Him in spite of the handicap of Adamic sin. Isaiah now knew that his service would be acceptable to God, and so, when the question came, “whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Isaiah could answer with confidence, “Here am I. Send me!”

Isaiah received his instructions, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’ Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed” (Isaiah 6:9-10 NASB). There appears to have been little bright prospect for Isaiah as he entered divine service. He was not to expect that most of the people would rally to the cause. He was to expect, rather, that from the human viewpoint, his entire ministry might well seem to end in utter failure. He was to continue this service irrespective of whether or not the people responded to his message. He even enquired, “Lord, how long?” And He answered, “Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people and the land is utterly desolate” (Isaiah 6:11 NASB). In verse 13 he is told that a tenth portion would remain but that even this part would go through great tribulation. The holy seed would survive like a living stump that survives even when the rest is destroyed.

Paul Receives His Commission

Paul’s vision came to him under different circumstances from those in which the Lord revealed Himself to Isaiah. In principle, the import of the vision was the same. Paul received a glimpse of the divine character that previously had not been apparent to him. The vision to which Paul later said he was not disobedient, did not all come to him on the road to Damascus. It began there and continued throughout his Christian walk. It was the effect of this greater understanding that later caused the apostle to write, as recorded, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? ... For of him, and through him, and to

him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

Paul’s sense of his unworthiness to enter the divine service was deeply impressed upon him by the details of the vision in which God called him to be an ambassador. In all good conscience, he had been persecuting the church of Christ. Being an ardent Jew, he would, of course, have been enthusiastic about the promised Messiah, but now it was revealed to him that he was, in fact, opposing that very purpose. In persecuting the followers of Christ, he had been persecuting Christ himself, the long-awaited Messiah. He had been in direct opposition to the purpose of God as it was then being worked out in the hearts and lives of his people. What humility this would engender in Paul’s character!

Tracing the experiences of the Apostle Paul, we cannot help but be impressed with the truthfulness of his words spoken to King Agrippa in which he explained that he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision. From the time that he received the Lord’s vision on the road to Damascus, until his sacrificial work was completed in Rome, Paul’s every talent was devoted to the work of glorifying God. This work led to suffering, privation, imprisonment, stripes, hunger, weariness, persecution, and finally death, yet he never wavered in his determination to be obedient to the heavenly vision. (2 Corinthians 6:4-10; 11:23-31).

Others Who Had Visions in the Bible

The “visions” which came to those such as Isaiah, Paul, and others are not to be identified merely by the special miraculous circumstances that may have accompanied these experiences. Rather, the import in all of these was the understanding of some portion of the divine character and plan that God desired to make known at certain times to various of his servants. It is thrilling to note in the Scriptures the accounts of the understanding that God provided to his people from the days of Abel down to Paul, Peter, John, and others of the apostles. In addition, and of great significance to us, is the understanding of truth through the enlightenment of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, with which the Lord has favored his people since Pentecost, down even to our day now.

Abel was granted sufficient insight into the will of God to exercise his faith by bringing a flesh and blood offering to the Creator. Enoch saw enough of the divine character and plan to enable him to prophesy that the Lord would eventually come to execute judgments in the earth. Enoch was faithful to this vision, the record being that he pleased God. Noah was given understanding, particularly concerning events then due. In the faithful carrying out of his part in the divine arrangement for that time, he cooperated with God in furnishing us valuable information pertaining to the prophetic signs of the time with which this present evil world is coming to a close.

Abraham was given insight into God’s character seeing the divine purpose to bless all the families of the earth. God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and continued to reveal many things in connection with His plan which was to be carried out through Israel as types and shadows of greater things to come. These and many others were taken into divine confidence and used to further record the heavenly purposes which, when understood, reveal the true character of God.

When Jesus came at his first advent, he was favored with understanding surpassing anything that had previously been experienced. Matthew 3:16 says, “The heavens were opened unto him.” To him the knowledge of the divine arrangement was opened wide, and, because of this, he certainly must have seen, as none other had ever seen, the glory of God. This was the inspiration of his life. “For the joy that was thereby set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 12:2).

The faithful apostles were favored with an understanding of heavenly truths through the enlightening power of God’s Holy Spirit. Not all of them in the same way, or circumstances. Nevertheless, they all saw the glory of God as it was revealed in the divine plan of salvation, and they were obedient to that vision.

Visions Fulfilled

In the present “harvest” period, at the end of the Gospel age, a glorious vision of understanding has been made available to God’s people through the Scriptures. We have the blessed privilege of joining Isaiah, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts.” Jesus promised in Matthew 24:45, 46 that when he returned, he would serve his people “meat in due season.” In fulfillment of this promise, a “faithful and wise servant” was used to draw together from the Scriptures the doctrine and principles that constitute the foundation of our faith.

In one sense, there is nothing new in the truths that have been revealed during this harvest period, because they are all based upon the testimony of the Scriptures. However, our present understanding is more glorious than any that has ever been given to God’s people previously. This should not surprise us, however, because in its entirety is included the significance and glory of all previous knowledge provided to God’s faithful servants.

In our symbolic spiritual vision we find the true meaning of that which was revealed to, and spoken by the mouth of, all God’s holy prophets since the world began — the glorious hope of the “restitution of all things,” which is now so near at hand (Acts 3:20, 21).

The knowledge of God that we are blessed with reveals His glorious character to us. We see that our Heavenly Father is a God of love. We observe His marvelous and infinite wisdom and see His true

justice and righteousness, and how they work in harmony with His great love. Finally, we understand the necessity of divine power for the carrying out of God's loving designs for the blessing of all the families of the earth. Indeed, our vision of truth harmonizes and expands upon all the insights that previously have been given to the people of God. Thus we can have full confidence in the Word of God, that everything spoken will not return unto him "void," but will accomplish all His righteous purposes and prosper in them (Isaiah 55:11).

Are we obedient to the heavenly vision? God has

avored us with so much spiritual understanding, revealing to us His glorious character in a way that most have not understood nor appreciated. Is that vision of truth continuing to speak to us, as God revealed it to Isaiah and Paul? Is it still saying to us, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" If we still hear that question being re-echoed in our hearts, are we continuing to respond in the words of Isaiah, "Here am I; send me?" If the Gospel message of truth is continuing to mean this to us, are we taking advantage of the opportunities of service which divine providence is setting before us?

The Table of the Lord

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Psalms 23:5).

The "table" to which the Psalmist refers had been prepared for him by the Lord is well illustrated by the oriental shepherd's provision for his sheep. David continues the lesson of the Lord's care for His people by referring to another custom of the shepherd. That was of specially protecting a choice feeding ground from enemies of the sheep, thereby permitting them to graze contentedly and safely.

In that wild terrain where David tended his father's flocks, the sheep were never entirely safe from attack. Often in and around the choicest of the feeding grounds, deadly enemies of the sheep lurked in greater numbers than elsewhere. If the sheep were to benefit from these especially luscious green pastures, extra precaution and watchfulness had to be maintained by the alert shepherd and his assistants. Possibly David referred to this when, in the Shepherd Psalm, he addresses his Lord, saying, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" — that is, directly in the presence of enemies.

What a true illustration of the manner in which God has cared for all His sheep during the Gospel age, particularly those of us who are living at this end of this age. Rich, abundant, and nourishing indeed has been the spiritual food which our Good Shepherd has provided for us. Even though we are surrounded by enemies, His protecting care has enabled us to continue on feeding in peace and quietness. The "table" provided for us consists of all the precious truths of God's Word, His precious promises, His instructions, and the opportunity thus afforded of understanding His plans and purposes. It is these that we live on daily as new creatures in Christ Jesus. Yes, we live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

In a very special way, in fulfillment of His own promise, the Good Shepherd has, at this end of the age prepared a banquet laden table for His "sheep". They have been feasting at this "table" throughout the entire harvest period. This is in harmony with

Jesus' promise that when he returned he would gird himself and serve his people with "meat in due season" (Matthew 24:45). This "meat in due season" has been provided in such abundance. The "Good Shepherd" has indeed prepared a most wonderful "table" for us and in that abundant provision we so much do daily rejoice.

The Present Truth

We are prone to forget how wonderfully the Lord has blessed his people in this end of the age. There is a danger that the truth may become commonplace in our hearts and that we will no longer appreciate it as we should. If we are not sufficiently alert to our privileges it is possible for a spiritual lethargy to creep over us, causing us to become indifferent to the great value of the truth in our lives.

"Meat in due season" is what the Lord has promised to provide for his people. As the Good Shepherd he exactly knows just what his "sheep" need. He knew what was essential for the welfare of the early church. He knew what his people needed throughout the dark Middle Ages. During that dark and threatening time a special place was prepared for them in the "wilderness," where they were nourished for twelve hundred and sixty years (Revelation 12:6,14). Now, in the end of this age, the Good Shepherd is again abundantly providing for his sheep. How soul-satisfying indeed is the "table" he has prepared for us. Also how true it is that it has been prepared in the presence of our enemies!

The Lord's people need the sustenance of present day truth today if they are to remain alive as new creatures. The "weeds" of false doctrine have no power to sustain spiritual life. Erroneous conceptions of Christianity are failing, and those who have nothing better on which to feed are losing their faith in God and in His Word. Unbelief is sweeping over the earth like a tidal wave. The theories of nominal Christendom cannot stand up against it. Only those who know the

truth and who are daily feeding upon it are able to stand firm.

It is said that shepherds of the east, when preparing a “table” for the flock, made sure that no poisonous weeds were growing amidst the grass. How wonderfully this illustrates the Good Shepherd’s care for his sheep during these last days! When our Lord returned, he prepared this abundant table by supplying “meat in due season” for the household of faith. An important phase of his preparation was the removal of the poisonous doctrines of mystic Babylon, that his sheep might feed upon the pure truths of his Word without injury to them as new creatures.

As a result of the foretold falling away from the faith which occurred following the death of the apostles, practically every precious doctrine of the divine plan became totally distorted. Man’s fall into sin and death took on a new and strange meaning. Instead of death being the penalty for sin, it was taught that fallen man was to be eternally tortured in a hell of fire and brimstone! Instead of the hope of salvation meaning that man would have an opportunity of being restored to the paradise he had lost, it meant an escape from the necessity of being tortured forever.

The coming to earth of God’s beloved Son to be the Redeemer of the lost race was distorted to mean that God Himself became incarnate in flesh. The death of Jesus was misinterpreted to mean that God only appeared to die and suffered beyond what a man could physically endure. By some strange quirk of theology it was taught that while Jesus was divine when on earth, after his feigned death and resurrection he returned to heaven as a man, in a human body, scarred by the wounds received at Calvary.

The call and development of the church, which is shown in the Bible is to be a preparation for the later blessing of all the families of the earth, became merely a means of escaping eternal torture. The heavenly promises of the Bible, assuring each one who follows faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus, receives if faithful unto death, glory, honor, and immortality. Having the privilege of reigning with Jesus in his kingdom which will bless the world came to mean, that the only ones to be saved were those who would go to heaven instead of to eternal torture when they died.

The true understanding of the manner and purpose of Christ’s second coming was also totally lost, with the result that his return became associated with what was often thought of as the “crack of doom.” Misconceptions of our Lord’s return included the much feared burning up of the earth and a twenty-four hour judgment day. These are but some examples of the crude notions and weird superstitions which, through the centuries, had replaced the pure doctrines of the Word of God. All of these might very well be classified



God's sheep are well fed.

as “doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1), for surely they represent the cunning mind of the adversary, the arch deceiver of mankind.

Returning to the shepherd and sheep illustration, we might think of all these misconceptions of God’s plan as poisonous weeds which through the centuries had grown up in the feeding grounds of the “sheep.” We can see that in preparing a table of meat in due season for his people in this end period of the Gospel Age, it was essential for the returned

Lord to remove these weeds, so that the pure food of his Word might flourish for the benefit of his people. The thoroughness with which he has done this can be testified to by all who rejoice in the present truth.

Where outright miracles are not required, the Lord used a human messenger in preparing the present truth and laying it out on a table for his people — “that servant” who was “wise” because he humbly followed the directions of God’s Word, and “faithful” to the full extent of actually laying down his life in the service of the Lord, the truth, and the brethren (Matthew 24:45). The monumental library of truth, *Studies in the Scriptures*, stands today as a true banquet of truth for the spiritual nourishment of those who are endeavoring faithfully to follow the Good Shepherd.

Today, through the loving provision of the Good Shepherd, the Lord’s people are able to discern between the nourishing spiritual food of the Scriptures and the errors which through the centuries became associated with the truth. Oh, what a great source of rejoicing this has been to all the consecrated! Instead of marking the end of all hope for the unconverted, the second coming of Christ signals the ushering in of a time of blessing for “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3), the “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

In light of the glorious hope of restitution for mankind, the ransom work of Jesus takes on a depth of meaning that previously was impossible to discern. We now see that the death of Jesus as man’s Redeemer guarantees an opportunity of life for all mankind, the dead as well as the living, and that a provision has been made through the great Mediator of Christ and the church, for the merit and efficacy of the ransom to be testified to all “in due time” (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

With these basic truths of the divine plan freed of the entangling errors which prevented the Lord’s people from discerning their beauty, other features of the plan fell so readily into place like a jig saw puzzle. Each in its own way revealing the glorious attributes of the divine character in a way that increased the faith and hope and love of all, who were privileged thus to feast at the table which the returned Lord had prepared for his “sheep.”

The fall of man, the giving of the Law to the typical house of Israel, the manner and purpose of God's dealings with the fleshly house of Israel, the first advent of Jesus and its manner and purpose, the call of the church and her exaltation to joint-heirship with Jesus in the heavenly phase of the kingdom. In fact, all the doctrines of the divine plan, can now be seen clearly and the truth-hungry "sheep" of the Lord's pasture can feast abundantly upon them in quietness and in assurance.

Our Enemies

This bountiful provision of spiritual food is spread for the Lord's sheep, the Psalmist declares, even in the presence of enemies. How true that is of the experiences of the Lord's people who, while in the world, are not of it. We are surrounded on every side by enemies, enemies that would rob us of the right to enjoy the blessings of the Lord's table, if permitted, and would destroy us as new creatures. Chief among these enemies is Satan, or as the apostle describes him, "your adversary the devil" (1 Peter 5:8).

The devil is a wily foe. His attacks are stealthy and subtle. He endeavors to make the sheep believe he is their friend. Operating through human agencies, he suggests that there is far better food than that which is to be found at the Lord's table. He tries to convince the sheep that poisonous weeds of error are far better for them than the wholesome grass of pure doctrines found within the outline of the divine plan of the ages.

Satan is too clever to suggest openly to the Lord's people that false doctrines are better for them than the truth. His method is to raise doubts in their minds concerning the truth. He appeals to their pride, telling them that they should allow those who do not believe the truth to air their unbelief among them. They are told that they should be "broad-minded," and be willing to give others "the benefit of the doubt."

Those who have been genuinely feasting at the abundant table which the returned Lord prepared for them do not have doubts, and regret that some who seemingly rejoiced in the bounties of this rich spread of truth are now doubting various doctrines. Christian love does not allow that the doubters should be given the privilege of promulgating their unbelief among the sheep. If we follow the instructions of the Good Shepherd, we will be safeguarded against all of these various and insidious attacks of the enemy Satan.

The world is another enemy of the Lord's sheep. The world holds out its allurements to the sheep to attract their attention, their time, and influences them to leave the luscious green pastures of truth and seek satisfaction elsewhere. There are certain obligations which we all have towards those in the world, time and interest in material things come within the category of what Jesus described as the "care" of this world and "the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22). In these and other ways the influences of the world are at enmity with the new creation. Here again the Good



Jesus, our teacher

Shepherd protects us if we but heed his instructions and have faith in his promises.

The Lord's sheep have enemies within as well as without. One of the most formidable enemies we have is our own fallen flesh. The "table" of rich spiritual food which the Good Shepherd prepares for us is for the benefit of the new creature and seldom does the flesh find this diet entirely satisfactory. As the flesh is often in rebellion against the truth because the truth, the "meat in due season," induces those who feed upon it to offer themselves in sacrifice to God, but the flesh shrinks from the thought of sacrifice.

Satan knows how the flesh feels about sacrifice, so he works through our flesh in his efforts to draw us away from the Lord's table. In practically every instance the various viewpoints which are being offered to the Lord's sheep as substitutes for present day truth offer escape from the necessity of sacrifice, either in whole or in part.

A doubting Christian is not a sacrificing Christian, so when through the fleshly mind Satan succeeds in putting doubts in our hearts concerning a doctrine of the truth, the result is that we lose our desire to lay down our lives in sacrifice as witnesses of the truth. The flesh reasons, why should one sacrifice his life for something which he is not sure is the truth? Thereby the flesh finds satisfaction in doubts.

Through the mind of the flesh, Satan has a ready substitute to offer the new creature, a different conception of the Christian life. It is the idea that the true Christian life consists merely of uprightness and morality, and a sense of joy and satisfaction that the Lord is near and will care for all our needs. With this substitute is mingled the false theory that it is really unimportant what we believe with respect to this or that doctrine of the divine plan.

This is not a new deception as it has been used through the entire age. The whole Protestant world has been put to sleep by it. This appeals to the flesh, for in addition to sidestepping the responsibility of sacrifice, except the giving up of sinful things, it tends to put one in a favorable light even in the eyes of the world. Honesty, kindness, and patience are qualities which are appreciated by all right-thinking people. Every Christian should possess these qualities, but they alone they do not constitute one a Christian.

The true Christian life is one of sacrifice, by following in the footsteps of the pattern and template of our dear Lord Jesus. We cannot even begin to follow in his steps until we have cleansed our flesh from sin, and are to the very best of our ability endeavoring to live a morally upright life. Jesus was always perfect. His sacrifice was not that of sinful things, but of his perfect human life. Through the merit of his sacrifice the Lord reckons perfection to us, and upon this basis we can offer our bodies a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) to him, just as Jesus did. The practical outworking of this means the use of our time, our strength, our talents, and our means, in the divine service.

The glorious doctrines of the divine plan reveal this privilege of sacrifice, inspiring us to lay down our lives. As we continue to feed upon the truth, we are strengthened to continue following in the footsteps of Jesus. But if we become weary in well doing, the flesh, with the aid of Satan, is quick to offer a substitute plan, an easier way to follow, a way of less responsibility and sacrifice. If we are not on the alert, we will find ourselves listening sympathetically to his subtleties. The fleshly mind can be quick to agree with the Adversary and will reason that, after all, the Lord does not want us to be extremists. It is all right to bear witness for the truth when it is convenient to do so and when we are sure there is a

hearing ear. But this is only incidental as it is wrong to suppose that God wants us to lay down our lives as his ambassadors, the Adversary tells us.

Again the Good Shepherd comes to our protection if we but give our full consecrated attention to him. We know that he wants us to be upright and pure in thought, word, intention, and deed. In addition to this we note his description of those who qualify to live and reign with him, that of these it is said that they “were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God” (Revelation 20:4). We know from this and many other revealing passages of the Bible that the Good Shepherd has prepared the table of truth in order that we might know the divine plan and be inspired and strengthened to take our place in it as sacrificing followers of him who gave all in order that we might have life.

So, we continue to feed at the Lord’s table and are thereby strengthened to resist all the appealing allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which must be resisted by the new creature. The “table” the Good Shepherd has prepared is thus found to be so bountiful in all its provision of spiritual food, that food is luscious delicate and toothsome. It is so satisfying that all the enemies by which we are surrounded are unable to attract us away from it or to hinder us from continuing to rejoice in the Good Shepherd’s tender and loving care.

The Dawn Bible Student Association has Moved

The Dawn’s began moving the plant operations from New Jersey to Florida in the spring of 2020, though very cautiously due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2021, this transition continued, by the Lord’s grace and over-ruling providence, and with the assistance of many willing hands and hearts.

In the early part of the year, we resumed production of foreign language Dawn magazines, which had been necessary to put on hold for most of 2020 due to the pandemic. With much thanks to the Dawn workers, both remote and on-site, we are presently caught up with all eight language of Dawn magazine production.

In April, the Florida Dawn facility received two shipments of literature/materials from the Dawn Plant in East Rutherford, New Jersey. As a result of this, the transition of printing and operational matters pertaining the Dawn are now being completed at the Dawn Plant located in Longwood, Florida.

Most recently, the Dawn began reprinting booklets that have been in short supply or temporarily out of stock. In November, the dawn printed and had bound a new softcover

book, *The Mind of Christ*. This book consists of a series of 24 articles which appeared in The Dawn magazine in 2013 and 2014.

(More information about the Dawn’s operations is available on Australian Bible Students website, www.australianbiblestudents.org/events/news)

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Correction

The text number to order the book "Mind of Christ" was wrong. It should be: +614 291 72606.

A Cloud of Smoke

A sailor was the only survivor of an unfortunate foundering of a vessel near an uncharted and desolate island. The only way to reach the island was by swimming; but one had to be a very good and strong swimmer to reach the shore. All others, save this one sailor, who attempted swimming the distance were lost.

On the island, from sticks, reeds, stones, etc., he built for himself a little shelter to protect him from the inclemencies of the weather. Much of his time was spent in experimenting with the wild vegetation for food; and in searching out the island for some other human beings. In some way, he had gotten a little fire started to keep himself fairly comfortable when the nights were cold; but he had to keep it burning continuously. On first reaching the island, he had taken his wet shirt and fastened it to the top of a very tall tree atop a high, in the hope that some vessel passing might see it and come to rescue him.

Day after day, he kept searching all over the island. One morning as he climbed a hill, he saw a cloud of smoke rising heavenward. He began to feel reasonably sure that this was evidence that there was another human on the island. Both his heart and his pace quickened, but on reaching the top of the hill and looking down he saw that it was his own little shack with all of his earthly belongings that had burned away.

Slowly, and disappointedly, he wended his way back to the shoreline. There he sat down in the sand, with his head in his hands, he gazed out upon the restless sea, wondering if it were not better for him to walk out into it to drown himself. Surely, this would end all his misery. ... Suddenly he spied another column of smoke, but it was on the distant horizon. He watched it anxiously and hopefully, somewhat assured that it was a vessel come to rescue him. It was nearing the island; but suddenly it stopped in its approach, and his hopes again were shattered. However, in another moment he noticed that a small lifeboat was being put down along side of the vessel, and that a man in the rowboat was making for the shore where he stood. The man in the boat ceased rowing, and cupping his lips, shouted to the forlorn sailor, "We just saw your smoke signals, and have come to rescue you."

So too, the great salvation is not for us, until all of our earthly hopes and ambitions have been abandoned, for the greatest of all treasures — that great redemption in Christ Jesus!

"Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where our riches are" (Matthew 6:19-21 GNB).

The Bible Teachings (Part Eleven)

On the Covenants — Mediator — Ransom — Sin Offering — Atonement

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Past Sins — Daily Trespasses

The new creature needs not to apologise, nor ever to remember the weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh appertaining to the period preceding the sacrifice. By faith the new creature should remember that old things have passed away and all things have become new, for thus the Apostle declares, "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Our Advocate did a thorough work as respects the sins of our flesh; they are past and gone through the forbearance of God (Romans 3:25). The Father did a perfect work in reckoning us dead indeed to everything of the past, and in begetting us by the spirit as new creatures, sons of God. It is for our faith to grasp the situation and to enjoy it.

Fleshly Imperfections

However, as new creatures we are imperfect in that we have only the old body with its blemishes through which to serve the lord. Because of antagonism of the legally dead flesh "We cannot do the things which we would." What shall we do in respects to our failure to come up to all the requirements of the Lord because of our fleshly imperfections? Shall we say to ourselves and to each other, God knows that as new creatures these imperfect things of daily life are not willingly ours, and therefore we need not confess them?

Christ's Imputation Does Not Cover Future Blemishes

We answer that this would not be the proper course. The imputation of Christ's merit to our consecrated sacrifice merely covered the blemishes against us at that time but did not cover blemishes future. Hence, daily we should remember before the throne of heavenly grace the imperfections and blemishes of each day and hour and should ask Divine forgiveness for these through our great Redeemer. Thus, He taught us, "Pray ye, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." This would not relate to Original Sin, which could not thus be forgiven. It relates to our subsequent shortcomings, after we have become children of God through the begetting of the holy spirit. Thus, the Apostle writes, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

"Forgive Us Our Trespasses"

Our Advocate not only imputed His merit for our past sins, but He is still with the Father and has an abundance of merit. Our Advocate has merit sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world, and therefore to

cover all our blemishes. Hence, when we go to the Father through Him, we may realise that provision has already been made for the covering of our trespasses, but that we can obtain forgiveness only through prayer. God doubtless intended a great blessing in making this arrangement. He intended that each time we come to the throne of grace, we should earnestly repent of our imperfections, and earnestly promise Him that we will strive against them in the future. He would thus encourage us to earnestly seek to fortify our characters along the line of these weaknesses, that we might become stronger and stronger in the power of the lord and in His might and be strengthened unto every good work.

Earthborn Clouds

When thus we come to the lord to obtain mercy and to find grace to help in every time of need and promise continued and increased zeal in fighting the good fight, it puts us on our honour, as it were, and makes us more careful respecting our future course. If perchance we fail again along the same lines, we are properly abashed. Then comes an important testing to us. The suggestion comes that we should refrain from going to the lord in prayer; that we should feel too much humiliated to go to Him. If these suggestions be followed, the result will be alienation, coldness. The earthborn cloud will hide from us the heavenly Father's face. Even if we do not go off into greater outward sins, such a course would mean a loss of fellowship, which is very important to our growth in grace and knowledge.

"Without Spot or Wrinkle"

Every error, every slip, every mistake, is a spot upon our wedding garment and should be repented of and expunged. With great humility we should go to the tester that we might have such spots promptly cleansed away; as it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us (new creatures) from all sin." Thus, we are able to abide in His love. Those who neglect this matter may find themselves increasingly careless respecting the spotlessness of the robes, until perhaps, if they do not fall completely into the Second Death, they find their garments bedraggled and unfit for the wedding. The Bride must be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and the arrangement on her behalf by her Bridegroom is ample to this end. Those, therefore, who for any reason allow the spots to accumulate, and do not have them cleansed, will have a further test and be obliged to decide to return like the sow to her wallowing in the mire of sin, and thus come under the condemnation of the Second Death, or else, as members of the Great Company, they must wash

their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, in the great tribulation with which this age will end (Z1910, page 215).

RANSOM

Ransom — Difference Between Price of and Value of Its Application

Our Lord Jesus gave Himself a Ransom (corresponding price for all mankind) at the beginning of His ministry, at the moment of His consecration; He continued that giving throughout His public ministry for three and one-half years. He finished the sacrifice of Himself, the “man Christ Jesus” at Calvary. When the Father raised Him from the dead, He was the possessor, so to speak, of the value of His precious sacrifice, which He was at liberty to offer as He pleased. The making of the sacrifice was one thing and the applying of its merits was another thing. As, for instance: Mr. A is in trouble, requiring \$5000 for his relief. Mr. B has a property which he can sell for \$5000 — enough to pay A’s debt. When he sells the property A’s debt is not paid, but merely B now has the amount, the price, which he can give for A’s relief, if he will; and it is for him to elect how and when and where it shall be applied. Christ gave all that He had in order to purchase the world and the treasure which He saw therein — Adam and his family, sold under sin and death. When our Lord ascended up on high, He did something with the merit of His sacrifice which brought a blessing to a certain class (the household of faith). That He made reconciliation for their sins is the Apostolic statement, and the giving of the holy spirit at Pentecost was in demonstration of the fact. But it is equally clear that our Lord did not make an application of His blood to all mankind, because the holy spirit did not come upon all mankind, nor did any message come to them declaring the forgiveness of their sin.

Ransom — Value Not Yet Applied for the World

On the contrary, the subsequent Apostolic declaration was that “the whole world lieth in the wicked one,” and that only the Church, the household of faith, has “escaped the condemnation that is upon the world.” Furthermore, the Apostle’s declaration is not that our Lord appeared in the presence of God as our Mediator, nor as the world’s Mediator, but that He appeared in the presence of God as OUR Advocate — but not as the world’s Advocate. All this is very plain, if our minds and hearts are in condition to receive it; but of course it will not be clear, and is not to be understood nor to be clear under any other circumstances.

Gospel Church Separate from World

Just what Jesus did when He ascended upon high we are not more particularly informed by the Apostle; but he pointed us to the types, the Law. Looking there we note the various details of the typical atonement day of Israel, which foreshadowed:

(1) The forgiveness of sins for the HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH, under the Abrahamic Covenant with believers.



Jesus is our passover lamb, providing the Ransom.

(2) The subsequent forgiveness of the sins of all the remainder of the world by preparing for the sealing of the New (Law) Covenant with the blood of Christ.

This division separating the Gospel Church from the world was very distinct in the picture, and also distinct in the teachings of our Lord and the Apostles. Our Lord said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). He ordained them to go and bring forth fruit — permanent fruit, everlasting fruitage. The Apostle declares of our Lord, “He is a propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins (the Church’s) and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Here again a sharp line of distinction is drawn between the “elect” Church and its blessing, and the non-elect world and the blessing that will come to it in due time.

One Sacrifice in Two Parts

Looking into the type again (Leviticus 16) we see that there are two separate and distinct sacrifices, and that they were not offered to God upon the mercy-seat both at the same time —

(1) The blood of the bullock was first shed and first offered.

(2) The blood of the goat was subsequently offered.
Did Jesus Die Twice?

Our Lord did not die twice, and the two animals did not represent Him — except as Head and Body. Not only so, but the type distinctly tells us that the two offerings of the blood upon the mercy-seat were applicable to different classes, the first, applied to the tribe of Levi, included the priests. The second applied to all the remainder of the people of Israel. Will anyone claim that our Lord Jesus died twice, first for the antitypical Levites, and second for the remainder of mankind? Christ certainly died once for all. What, then, is the meaning of these two sacrifices and distinctly separate applications and separate acceptances and separate blessings?

Tabernacle Shadow's Testimony Regarding "Hidden Mystery"

This question is already answered in great detail in the little book entitled, "Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices," a fresh reading of which is commended to all, as an elaboration of the "hidden mystery" of the fellowship of the Church, the Royal Priesthood, with Jesus the great High Priest, in the sufferings, the sacrificings of this present time, and in the glorious work and blessings of the future. Remember, too, that this treatise was first published in 1880. Therein is shown that no man can redeem his brother, and that it is because all are sinners, all under the death sentence. It is shown also that our Lord's death, represented by that of the bullock, applied on behalf of the household of faith, justifies them freely from all sin and permits them to become "holy and acceptable sacrifices" (Romans 12:1). It is shown that the sacrificing was all done by the Lord, that our part ends in our presentation of ourselves living sacrifices, and that if we maintain this condition of self-denial our Lord counts us as New Creatures, members of His Body, and our flesh His flesh, and its sufferings and death His sufferings and death.

Sacrifice of THE Christ Progressive

Thus, the sacrifice of Christ, Head and Body, has progressed for over eighteen centuries. We believe that the consummation is near at hand. When the High Priest shall have accepted the last member of His Body, and shall have finished the sacrificing, He will apply, beyond the veil, the blood, His own blood — the blood of His members — on the mercy-seat, on behalf of all the people. Then will be due that which the Lord promised through the Prophet Joel — that He would pour out His "spirit upon all flesh," just as at the completion and offering of the first sacrifice He poured out His "spirit upon His servants and handmaidens" at Pentecost. Who that has spiritual eyesight cannot see this? And if we once saw it and it is now becoming dim to any of us, what is the remedy? All such should go immediately to the great Physician for eye salve. They should haste in fear lest complete blindness and outer darkness overtake them. Fasting, prayer and heart searching we earnestly recommend.



The Millennial Kingdom, brought by Christ, will be wonderful.

Jesus as a MAN was the Ransom

Note that it is not our lord in some pre-human condition who gave Himself a ransom for all, but the MAN Christ Jesus. His is a Ransom for all, in that through His sacrifice alone all mankind shall be rescued from the sentence of sin and death and given an opportunity to hear and accept the good tidings of eternal life. The Ransom is none the less for all mankind, because it was first applied to the Church. The water we drink is none the less from the sky because it comes to us through pipes and faucets.

Use of "Mediator" regarding "Covenants," "Mediator Between God and Men"

As already noted, we believe that wherever the word mediator is used in the Scriptures it relates to a covenant between parties who are alienated. God and the world are at enmity. God has condemned the world, because of sin. That condemnation still rests upon the world (except that small portion of it which has been justified by faith). The "world still lies in the Wicked One" — is still under condemnation. A Mediator was necessary — someone to go between and reconcile these alienated parties. Our lord Jesus came into the world to be the Saviour of the world as well as the Saviour of the Church. The work which Jesus did, His sacrifice, was in the Divine program with a view to His becoming the Mediator between God and mankind in general — the world, sinners. That purpose will be carried out, though it has not yet been done. It is proper to speak of our Lord Jesus as Mediator and to speak of the New (law) Covenant as though it were already mediated, because the matter is fully intimated, foretold, promised, by the Lord, who cannot lie, and is in process of accomplishment. God will make such a Covenant with the House of Judah and the House of Israel after these Gospel days (Hebrews 8:8-10). He will provide a Mediator, who will then, during the Millennium, mediate between God and man. It is, therefore, proper to speak of Him as such now-to speak of the things which are not yet as though they were. This in no degree contradicts the thought that this Mediator is growing day by day-adding members.

Delay in Mediatorial Work

Why should there be any delay? If the man Christ Jesus was the Mediator and the plan for a New Covenant was unalterably fixed in advance, why should it not be ratified at once? We answer again that this was one feature of the "Hidden Mystery"—"Christ in you, the hope-of glory" (Colossians 1:26, 27). It is a part of the Divine purpose that Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant (He whose merit furnishes the price and who shortly will apply that price for the sealing of the New (Law) Covenant) be the Head of the Church, which is His Body—"members in particular of the Body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27). In the Divine purpose the antitypical Isaac is to include the Church. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise"—the children of the Faith Covenant (Galatians 4:28). Jesus the Mediator, by Divine arrangement,

accepts members, who must be His joint-sacrificers, and by and by be His joint-heirs.

Church Not Included in Word “Men”

This Church class is not included in the “men” of our text — not included in the world. “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). “The world,” “men,” need the great Mediator to reconcile them to God. And the New Covenant and the Kingdom which it will inaugurate are Divine provisions which shall bring blessings for the world, for men, to chasten them, to break their hearts, to cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess to God’s glory. The Church, as the bride, not only shares in the sufferings of this present time, but also in that glorious work of reconciling “men,” “the world,” to God by the power and forces and influence of the Millennial Kingdom.

The class now accepted by the lord as separate from the world needs not the drastic measures of the Millennium to cause them to bow and to confess. They are a special class, who, in the midst of sin, love righteousness and hate iniquity. They are like their lord and Redeemer, of whom it is written, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness (holy spirit) above (Head-over) thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:9).

Works Enemies — Not Heart Enemies

But someone may inquire, does not the Apostle speak of some of the “household of faith” as having once been aliens, strangers, foreigners, from the commonwealth of Israel? Yes, so was Cornelius all of that as a Gentile, yet he revered God and gave much alms to the people. But as a Gentile he was naturally an alien from Israel’s privileges and blessings until, so far as the Gentiles were concerned, Christ made an end to the law Covenant, nailed it to His cross, and admitted Gentiles to His favour and to the still greater blessings of the original Covenant.

Church at Heart Never Opposed to Light and Truth

But does not the Apostle say that some who had become saints had been liars and abominable persons, “alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works,” and could the world be worse than this description? (Colossians 1:21). We answer, so far as works are concerned, and the divine standards, yes, “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,” both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 3:19). But such as at heart were not opposed to the light and Truth, had a different standing in the Divine estimation. Through ignorance and weaknesses, they were like the whole world, yet in other respects they were different and very differently estimated by the lord. These, because of their right-heartedness, were blessed in being drawn to Christ by the Father, that they might be justified by faith in the precious blood, and that they might be sanctified by a knowledge of the Truth, and that thus they might become associates in the sufferings of Christ and in His coming glory and

work. During this age only such are drawn, and only such received: “No man can come unto me,” except the Father which sent me, draw him (John 6:44). Of such “elect” St. Paul says, “If God be for us who can be against us.” “He who began a good work in us is able to complete it.” These needed the blood and could not be justified without the Redeemer’s sacrifice, but they do not need that He should mediate the New (law) Covenant for them, since they are acceptable under the better, the Faith Covenant, made with Abraham.

We see the difference in the present time: Some, under the influence of error, are terrified with fear of eternal torment, and may live outwardly according to high standards, loving sin, but fearing to practice it. When the Truth reaches such and their fears are dispelled, they have no special inclination toward piety. Others, on the contrary, hearing of the lord’s grace and wonderful providences, are drawn, constrained, to become followers of Jesus, even at a cost of sacrifice and temporal interests. This latter class need no mediator to whip them into harmony with the Divine laws. To the extent of their ability, they delight to do God’s will. This faith and its spirit of obedience God counts to them for righteousness. These, after justification by faith in His blood, are invited to become members of The Christ. A sufficient number of these will be found to complete the membership of His Body, and to fill up the sufferings of Christ, and to constitute the very “elect” members of the Mediator for the world.

Christ, Head and Body, the Antitypical Moses

Let us remember that Moses was the mediator of the law Covenant, which failed, not because of being a poor law, but merely because its mediator was incapable of doing for the people all that they needed. God purposes to give to that nation, and other nations through them, The Christ, the better Mediator under a New Covenant or Agreement, to be sealed with His blood — the merit of His sacrifice applied indirectly through the Church. Remember how St. Peter, after telling about the time of Restitution to be inaugurated at the Second Coming of Jesus, says, “For verily Moses said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren like unto me” (Acts 3:22). The Prophet like unto Moses began to be raised up in the person of our lord Jesus, the Head. The raising up process has continued throughout this age, and shortly will be completed. That antitypical Moses, Christ and the Church, Head and Body, is to mediate that New Covenant so long promised between God and Israel. That the Apostle is not speaking of anything yet accomplished is evident from the context, “It shall come to pass that the soul that will not obey that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from amongst the people” (Acts 3:23). All who do not obey Jesus during this Gospel Age are not destroyed; but, under the great Mediator between God and men, the antitypical Moses, who shall rule the world during the Millennium, the Scriptures will be fulfilled — all that will refuse divine favour under that New Covenant will be utterly destroyed (Z1909, page 61).



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“Thou Anointest My Head With Oil”

(Psalms 23:5)

The pouring of oil on the head seems rather unusual when shepherding sheep. However it was the common custom of oriental shepherds to pour oil on the heads of their sheep, particularly at the close of the day or when they were weary from travel. To the sheep it was a welcome and refreshing service rendered to them by the shepherd. In this custom we find another beautiful illustration of our Great Shepherd’s care for us and the blessings which he bestows upon us through Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

Oil is used in the Scriptures as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The anointing oil poured upon the heads of Israel’s high priests was a type of the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. The apostle says of him that he was “anointed with the oil of gladness above your companions” (Hebrews 1:9 NASB). The New Testament also speaks of the anointing which we have received of Christ, while John refers to it as an “anointing from the Holy One” (1 John 2:20 NASB). The term “anointing” suggests lubrication and smoothness, so in this also there is an allusion to oil as symbolizing the Holy Spirit and what it accomplishes in our lives.

In this lesson we might think of David as representing Christ and the church, in which case his head would represent Jesus, our head. The statement, “Thou anointest my head with oil,” indicates what is elsewhere clearly taught in the Bible, that the anointing of the Holy Spirit came first upon the Head of The Church (our Lord Jesus), and throughout the Gospel age it has been received by the various body members only by virtue of the fact that they are in him, as members of his body. We can therefore truly say to Jehovah, our Great Shepherd, “Thou anointest my Head,” that is, Christ Jesus. From him, who is now our Good Shepherd, that anointing has reached us. Oh how we do rejoice in the blessings that accrue through the anointing of the Holy Spirit thus received!

While the original anointing of the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, each member of his body receives of the same anointing. Symbolically speaking, this “oil of gladness” runs down from the Head and covers the entire body. One of the primary scriptural lessons associated with the “anointing” of the Spirit is that of the divine commission to serve. The prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-3 relates to this, indicating that the entire Bride of Christ is anointed to “preach good tidings,” and thus to bind up the broken hearted.

With this divine authority to represent our dear Heavenly Father on the earth comes also a wonderful assurance of divine acceptance and approval, and from this standpoint the anointing of the Holy Spirit illustrates the thought of comfort. Our Lord Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as a Comforter (*parakletos*) which he would send, a Comforter which would represent him, and through which he would be represented among his followers throughout the entire Gospel age. John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:7,13. This influence would be sustaining, helping, and comforting.

The Holy Spirit was indeed a great comfort to Jesus, our Head. When it came upon him at the time of his baptism, he heard a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”

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(Matthew 3:17). What greater comfort could be given to anyone than to be assured of divine sonship! This assurance afforded the Master strength for the trials through which he was called to pass. Forty days later, when Satan challenged the Master's sonship, Jesus could and did resist him with the words "it is written," for there was no doubt in his mind as to where he stood with his Heavenly Father. When the anointing of the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus it also enlightened him concerning his Father's plans and the part he was to have in that plan of salvation. We read that the "heavens were opened unto him" (Matthew 3:16).

Through the medium of the Holy Spirit Jesus was guided and strengthened for every step of the narrow way in which he walked. If he is our "Head," the same comforting blessings of the Holy Spirit which filled him with joy will be our daily portion. Jesus promised, in fact, that he would give his peace to his faithful followers (John 14:27). This peace is ours because of the many assurances of the Bible which give us confidence and courage despite the difficulties of the narrow way as we walk in the steps of the Master.

A very interesting summary of the blessings which accrue to us as consecrated, Spirit-anointed followers of Jesus, is presented in the 8th chapter of Romans. Opening the subject the apostle writes, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Notice that Apostle Paul is here speaking of those who are "in Christ Jesus." This means that Christ Jesus is their Head, the Head upon whom first was poured the anointing of the Holy Spirit. To such as have him as their Head, there is no condemnation from the Heavenly Father, "if" they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Here we find that there is a condition attached to its fulfillment, there is an "if" clause which must be disposed of by faithful obedience in order that the assurance of the promise may properly belong to us. To be assured that we stand approved before our Heavenly Father, that for us there is no condemnation, is indeed a rare blessing. We have learned by experience, by observation, and from the testimony of the Scriptures, that "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). We have learned also that God cannot look upon unrighteousness with any degree of tolerance. But the wondrous grace provided through Christ Jesus is that those who are in him, and are following the leadings of the Holy Spirit which has reached them through him, are not under condemnation! So the Heavenly Father looks upon us through the lenses of Christ's righteousness.

Later in the chapter, the apostle emphasizes this thought with even greater force, saying, "God is the one who justifies: Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:33,34). How precious the very thought that from God's standpoint there



Jesus, our teacher, and our justifier

is no condemnation, for it is He who, through the redemptive work of Christ, has justified us freely from all sin. What difference, then, does it make as to who else may assume to condemn us, whether the devil or his agents?

This condition of "no condemnation" also depends upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of a being filled and guided by that Spirit. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God," writes Apostle Paul (Romans 8:8). Then he explains that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell" in us. This means that we can please God if we have complied with the conditions, and those conditions are the full surrender of our own wills. It is in a way a symbolic beheading of ourselves and the acceptance of Christ as our Head, and then walking after the Spirit which we receive as a result of being "in him" (Revelation 20:4).

Life to Mortal Bodies

The Apostle writes further that "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). This life to our mortal bodies is an energizing of them for the service of the Lord. The fallen flesh by nature does not incline toward spiritual things and shrinks from being sacrificed in the service of the Lord and of the Lord's people. It is very hard to keep a live sacrifice on the altar. But through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, received through our Head, Christ Jesus, our bodies are stirred up, to serve the interests of the new creature. The flesh may become "weary in well doing," but if we continue to walk after the Spirit it will be revived, even as the sheep, when weary at the close of the day, were refreshed when the shepherd anointed their heads with oil.

He continues, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14 NASB). It was when Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit that he heard the reassuring message from his Heavenly Father, "This is my beloved Son."

And now, if we are “in Christ Jesus,” and if we walk after the Spirit by which he was anointed, we have that assurance that we also are “sons of God.” This Spirit which we have received, Apostle Paul explains, is not “a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but to a Spirit of adoption as sons that enables us to address our God as ‘Abba! Father!’” (Romans 8:15).

And “the Spirit Himself,” writes Apostle Paul, “testifies with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:16,17). How precious is this testimony, that the Spirit Himself testifies that we are the children of God! But note again the requirement, the stipulated condition: this blessed witness of the Spirit is ours only, “if indeed we suffer with him.”

Now the scriptural viewpoint of this can be more readily understood. The Apostle Peter explains that the operation of the Holy Spirit in the minds of the Old Testament prophets caused them to testify concerning “the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” Throughout his epistle Peter makes it plain that these foretold sufferings of Christ are participated in by his body members. It was this, then, that Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote that the Spirit Himself testifies or bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, “if indeed we suffer with him.” If we are in Christ Jesus, and partaking of his sufferings as a result of laying down our lives in divine service, then the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the prophetic writings of the Old Testament applies to us and assures us that, like Jesus, we are the children of God, and joint-heirs with him in the glorious kingdom of blessings which he establishes.

The Apostle Peter reminds us that the Holy Spirit, through the prophets, not only testified concerning the sufferings of Christ, but also of “the glories to follow” (1 Peter 1:11). In keeping with this testimony, Paul writes, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” — that is, the promised “glory that should follow” the suffering.

“The anxious longing of the creation,” Apostle Paul explains, “waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:18,19). We need only to reflect upon the many promises of kingdom glory that are to be found in the Old Testament, and to note the many promises of how that glory is to be manifested for the blessing of all the families of the earth, to make us long for the time to come when, together with all the divine sons of God, it will be our privilege to manifest the glory of God to the eternal joy of all nations.

“We Know” That “All Things”

Those of us who, through our consecration and the acceptance of God, have come into Christ, and are walking in accordance with the Holy Spirit by which he



Jesus is our shepherd.

was anointed, have the assurance that we have “been called according to his purpose” because we love the Lord sufficiently to have made a full consecration to do his will. Of those thus called, Paul writes that “all things” work together for their good (Romans 8:28). But it requires a strong faith to be assured of this at all times and under all circumstances.

Taking our minds back to the illustration of the shepherd and the sheep, we can imagine what difficulty the sheep would have, if they were capable of reasoning on the matter, to understand how some of the experiences of the day would be of a benefit to them. Should the shepherd lead them through a barren wilderness in order to reach green pastures beyond, or perhaps over rugged mountain passes to find refreshing waters, it would be difficult for the sheep to comprehend the necessity of the hardships thus imposed. But no matter how difficult the way, the shepherd would understand the necessity thereof; if the sheep could but grasp the thought, they would know that “all things” were working for their good.

It is through faith we are able to understand what the sheep could not grasp; namely, that all the experiences through which our Good Shepherd is leading us are for our very highest and eternal welfare. “We know” this, Apostle Paul wrote. The reason we know it is that we have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and under its blessed influence have been enlightened to know something of the meaning of the trials along the narrow way. We may become bruised and weary from the hardships of the way, but the anointing of our “Head,” which has reached us through him, soothes and comforts by making us “know” that “all things” are working together indeed for our “good.”

Some of the “all things” are of course so pleasant and refreshing. The Good Shepherd leads us beside “still waters,” and he maketh us to “lie down in green pastures.” These blessed provisions are a delight to all the Lord’s sheep. But there are other “things” among the “all” that are different, and in these, too, our faith needs to see value, so that by them we are drawn even closer to the Good Shepherd and made to realize more fully our dependence upon him. It is in this vein

that Paul asks, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ [our Good Shepherd]? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For your sake we being put to death all the day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered’” (Romans 8:35,36).

Here the apostle has enumerated some of the truly trying experiences of the Lord’s sheep, yet they should not be permitted to weaken our confidence in the wisdom and the tender loving care of our Good Shepherd. We may be “considered as sheep to be slaughtered,” and if we were “walking after the flesh” we would decide under such circumstances to cease following the Good Shepherd. But inasmuch as we are walking “after the Spirit,” we should know that all the Lord’s sheep are to be sacrificed. That just as Jesus himself, our “Head,” was led by the Spirit to the slaughter as the Redeemer of the world, so it is our privilege. Now that he is exalted to glory and is our Good Shepherd, we are to follow in the footsteps of sacrifice which he so clearly outlined by his example.

Thus, in all these “we overwhelmingly conquer,” gaining the victory through faith in the Great Shepherd, faith in the Good Shepherd, faith in the divine plan, and faith that if we perform obediently our part in that plan, we shall ultimately “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Knowing this certain outcome of the “all things” which are working together for our good, we can say with the apostle that we too are “convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor



We thank Jesus for his services to us.

things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).

How thankful we are, for the anointing of our “Head,” and that as members of his body all the riches of divine grace involved in that anointing have come to us. No good thing will be withheld as long as we abide in him (Psalms 84:11). All our needs will be supplied. Strength will be given through the “Spirit of power” (2 Timothy 1:7). We will be directed in the way in which we should walk. We will know that God is for us, and we will realize that because God is for us, nothing and no one can be successfully victorious against us, for he is greater than all our enemies (Romans 8:31, 1 John 4:4). Truly, we can say with the Psalmist that because our Great Shepherd has anointed our “Head” with oil, our cup is running over.

“Follow Me”

“And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’” (Matthew 4:19 NASB).

This was the simple statement that Jesus made to two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew, fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. They were going about their business of casting their nets into the lake. This seemingly simple statement was sufficient for them to leave their nets and follow Jesus. Also, these simple words were sufficient for the sons of Zebedee; James and John, to leave their boat and their father and to follow Christ.

Little is said about what the disciples knew about Jesus before they were called. From John’s gospel we see that some were disciples of John the Baptist, and that when John saw Jesus walking, the disciples heard him say “Behold the Lamb of God.” Andrew was one of those disciples, and it is recorded, “He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Christ)” (John 1:41 NASB).

John tells of Jesus finding Philip and saying to him, “Follow me.” It appears that as Philip came from the

same city as Andrew and John, that they had spoken to him about Jesus. It is very interesting to note what Philip said to Nathanael. “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45 NASB). Nathanael was not convinced, stating, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Jesus did not criticize Nathanael, but saw his heart intention, stating of him, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom I find no deceit.”

The call to Matthew to “Follow me” is one of the most interesting calls. Tax collectors were hated by the Jews, as the taxes they collected were for the Roman Empire and many of the tax collectors charged high fees for their service, adding to the burdens of the Jews. Why would Jesus call him? It certainly raised the ire of the Pharisees when they saw Jesus and the other disciples at Matthew’s home. “And it happened that he was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with

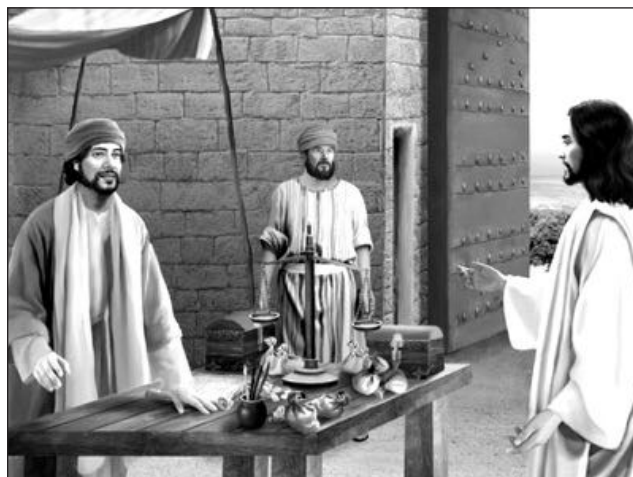
Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, ‘Why is he eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?’” (Mark 2:15-16 NASB). It appears that Matthew was quite wealthy and had a profitable business, and yet when asked “Follow me,” he got up immediately and followed Jesus.

In Luke we have the account of others that apparently were called to follow Jesus. “Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them in pairs ahead of him to every city and place where he himself was going to come” (Luke 10:1 NASB). Their task was to prepare the cities and places where Jesus was heading to prepare those who had an ear to hear the message that Jesus would bring.

Counting the Cost

There was a cost to following Jesus, as each of the disciples had jobs that they were doing which they set aside to follow Christ. Those that were fishermen did have the opportunity to go fishing occasionally, but of others, such as Matthew, there is no record of him continuing to collect taxes.

In Luke chapter 9 the following exchange is recorded between Jesus and one desiring to follow him. “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9:57-58 NASB). We are not told whether the person did follow Jesus, but it appears that Jesus was warning him that the way would not be easy. To another Jesus asked, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” But he said to him, “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:59-60 NASB). To some readers this may appear cruel, as the Jews buried their dead usually within 24 hours, so it appears that this man wished to look after his father until he died however long that might be. Jesus knew that there were other family members who could look after the father.



Jesus calling Matthew

Rich Young Ruler

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the exchange between Jesus and this rich young man. Jesus answered his question, “what do I do to inherit eternal life?”, telling him to obey all of the commandments. The young man seemed to understand that this was not enough, stating “All these things I have kept from my youth” Jesus said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor; and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Luke 18:18-22 NASB). The young man went away grieving, for he owned much property. Jesus had not expected him to sell everything to be dependent on others, but knew that this man’s heart was attached to worldly things.

My Sheep Hear my Voice and They Follow Me

Not all that hear the words of Jesus follow him. At his first advent Jesus gave the message from his Father to the lost sheep of Israel. He performed many wondrous signs and miracles to show the love and power of God, and yet many, especially the religious rulers, did not accept him as the Messiah, as their traditions and desire for worldly honour and recognition blinded their eyes and blocked their ears to the wonders that were set before them. Jesus told them “But you do not believe because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:26-27 NASB). Today, hearing Jesus’ voice is through hearing and reading the word of God. Paul states “He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:14 NASB).

Following Jesus

The call to follow Jesus is not to a group, or a certain nationality, but is a very personal one. It is not a demand, no one is forced to follow Jesus. This is shown in the verse, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me **draws** him” (John 6:44 NASB). From there the offer to “Follow me” comes from Jesus. Accepting this invitation does not come without a cost. Jesus states, “Those who come to me cannot be my disciples unless they love me more than they love father and mother; wife and children, brothers and sisters, and themselves as well” (Luke 14:26 GNB). There must be a change in a person’s priorities. Another condition was, “Those who do not take up their cross and follow in my steps are not fit to be my disciples” (Matthew 10:38 GNB). Not all those who are called will literally lay down their lives for Jesus, but they are called on to value him so highly that they do not count their lives as precious to themselves anymore.

The Apostle Paul brings out what “take up the cross” really meant. He speaks of his position as a Pharisee, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as a keeper of the law he was blameless, and a persecutor of Christians.

After his conversion he wrote, “But all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ’s sake. Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8 GNB).

Following Jesus Today

The followers of Jesus today can be divided into categories, as occurred during Jesus first advent on earth. Jesus spoke of those who were following him, “I am telling you the truth: you are looking for me because you ate the bread and had all you wanted, not because you understood my miracles” (John 6:26 GNB). They were not following him for his doctrines, which were confirmed through the miracles he performed. One that followed Jesus for the right reason was Nicodemus. “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent by God. No one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God were with him” (John 3:2 GNB). Others came there because they were fed and were satisfied. Today there are those who are satisfied with the social interaction they receive from their church, with little interest in the true message.

When we accept the call “follow me,” we attempt to imitate our Lord and Master. Paul tells us, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever-greater degree of glory” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18 GNB). In Galatians the effect of the Holy Spirit, which is gifted to those who truly commit to following Jesus, produces the following effect on the life of that person. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,



Nicodemus, who came by night

goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 GNB).

The invitation to “Follow Me” was extended to all people from all walks of life, they were all sinners who were not asked to become righteous before they could accept the call. Paul reminded them, “Christ came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all” (1 Timothy 1:15 NASB). He also showed the selection criterion, saying, “for consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not

many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong” (1 Corinthians 1:26-27 NASB).

When our Lord called Matthew, he was criticized by the Pharisees for choosing sinners, eating with tax collectors and sinners. He told the Pharisees “But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9:13 NASB). It is not enough just to believe the truth. We are also to live the life that these doctrines teach.

There are some that start out following Jesus but fall to the wayside as shown in the parable of the Sower. This does not mean that Jesus condemns them, but shows that the way is narrow, and the going can be very difficult. This is also set out in John chapter six, where the message from Jesus became more challenging, and many started to fall away. When the disciples were asked, “You do not want to go away also, do you?”, hopefully the true follower can join Peter in saying “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:67-69 NASB).

The Security of the Tree Planted by the Water

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit”
(Jeremiah 17:7-8 NIV).

These verses are part of the section titled “The Sins of Judah.” Jeremiah tells them, “Judah’s sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars. Even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles beside the spreading trees and on the

high hills” (Jeremiah 17:1-2 NIV).

Written With a Pen of Iron

Judah’s idol worship was so ingrained that it is indelibly written in their heart and the inscriptions were inscribed with a flint point, possibly a diamond,

and written on brass or copper. The inscriptions were also written on the horns of the altar. The Apostle Paul read the inscription on the altar at Mars Hill. “As I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship — and this is what I am going to proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23 NIV). Judah had followed the example of the heathen nations that they were supposed to have destroyed as they entered the promised land.

This worship of idols was something that had not just happened, but had continued for a long time. Their children had been witnesses to this idolatry, and when they had become adults, they continued the practice. Jeremiah goes on to warn them, if they do not repent, the Lord will give away their land, wealth, and treasures. The problem for Judah was that they trusted in man, they were drawing strength from mere flesh, and had turned their hearts away from the Lord.

The Result

“That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives” (Jeremiah 17:6 NIV). You would have thought with this warning that the Jews would have heeded the warning and turned to God, but as recorded, this happened time and time again because of their stony hearts. Even when God sent his only begotten Son to die for their sins, except for a few, this did not melt their stony hearts.

Not all would be lost, there was hope in the letter to the Hebrews “But God found fault with the people and said: ‘The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after

that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people’ (Hebrews 8:8-10 NIV).

Trust In the Lord

Jeremiah must have felt like Elijah, who stated, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets (1 Kings



The prophet Elijah

18:22 NIV). He was surrounded by the idols, their altars, and the sacrifices, and yet he had the courage to bring a message of hope. The vision of a parched desert where no one can live, to the blessings that are available to those who put their trust in the Lord. Judah would have to throw off their trust in the idols and turn to the Almighty. Jeremiah may have remembered the words of the Psalm, “Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing” (Psalms 34: 8-9 NIV).

Our Duty

The duty required of us — to *trust in the Lord*, to do our duty to him and then depend upon him to bear us in doing it. When the world around us tries to deceive or threaten us, we need to reaffirm our commitment to God who is all-sufficient both to fill up the place of those who fail us and to protect us from those who set upon us. It is to *make the Lord our hope*, his favour the good we hope for, and his power the strength we hope in.

The Comfort

The comfort comes from doing of this duty. He that does so will be *as a tree planted by the waters*, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like *the heath in the wilderness*; he shall be like a tree that *spreads out its roots*, and thereby is firmly fixed, spreading them out *by the rivers*, whence it draws abundance of sap, which denotes both the establishment and the comfort which those have who make God their hope. They are at ease, enjoying a continual security and serenity of mind. A tree thus planted, thus watered, does *not see when heat comes*, does not sustain any damage from the most scorching heats of summer; it is so well moistened from its roots that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought.



Like trees by a river

Mediator and Advocate

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1 NASB).

"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5 NASB).

In these two verses Christ is spoken of as having a role as an Advocate and as a Mediator.

As a Mediator

Understanding Christ's role as a mediator means looking at who can be a mediator and what are their duties. It is then necessary to see how this role fits in with God's plans, especially as to when this role is applied.

In the Old Testament the term mediator is not found, although the Septuagint uses the word in Job 9:33. Job appears to have lived during the Patriarchal age and asks the question in reference to God. "For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:32-33 NASB). In verse 35 Job gives the reason for his question: "Then I would speak and not fear Him; But I am not like that in myself" (Job 9:35 NASB). There is a note of despair which characterizes this passage showing that Job has no hope that such an arbitrator between him and God existed. Job acknowledged the position that God held and he as a mere human trembled at the thought of standing before God without an umpire / mediator between them.

This thought of the need of a mediator is brought out further when the Israelites left Egypt to become a nation chosen by God from all the nations of the world (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

With the giving of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai the Israelites realised that they needed a mediator to be between them and God. In Exodus chapter 20 the giving of the law is recorded. At the end of the Ten Commandments the people spoke to Moses: "All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, 'speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.' Moses said to the people, 'do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.' So, the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was" (Exodus 20:18-21 NASB).

In the previous chapter the Israelites were given a wonderful promise. "Moses went up to God, and Jehovah called to him from the mountain, saying, 'thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the

Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.' So, Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Jehovah had commanded him" (Exodus 19:3-7 NASB). The Israelites then pledged, "All that Jehovah has spoken we will do!" (Verse 8).

The need for a mediator soon became apparent as the Israelites, servants of God, failed to keep their promise. The Israelites had left Egypt three months before they made their promise to God. Moses was then instructed to go up into the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights to receive further instructions from God about the tabernacle and the religious services that the Israelites were to observe. While Moses was on the mountain the Israelites came to Aaron and said "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him" (Exodus 32:1 NASB).

Aaron, Moses' brother, heeded the call of the Israelites, collecting the gold that they had brought from Egypt and made a golden calf which they could worship. God's reaction is recorded in the following verses. "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!' Jehovah said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation" (Exodus 32:7-10 NASB).

The next verses show Moses in action as a mediator between God and the Israelites, pleading, "Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to



Moses at Mount Sinai

His people” (Exodus 32:11-14 NASB).

Many times during the journey to the Promised Land, Moses was called upon to mediate between the rebellious Israelites and Almighty God. This demonstrates that a mediator is, as the name suggests (and as the Greek word used for mediator, *mesites*, literally means): “The one who mediates or stands in the middle.” Thus, a mediator is one who has links with two opposing sides. He sympathizes with both and is trusted by both. And as the assigned “middleman,” he represents each side to the other with the goal of mending a broken relationship.

The Greek word *mesites* is used five times in the New Testament. Once it is used to speak of Moses, and the other four refer to Jesus Christ as the mediator of a covenant.

Moses: Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. (Galatians 3:19 NASB).

Christ: “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5 NASB). “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6 NASB). “For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15 NASB). “And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24 NASB).

In looking at the context of 1 Timothy 2:5, it becomes clearer to why Christ is the only one qualified to be the mediator of the New Covenant. “God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time” (1 Timothy 2:3-6 NASB).

God desired all men to be saved. The problem was that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 NASB). Man could not provide a ransom, as recorded in Psalms 49:7, “No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him” (NASB). God already knew that man would fail, and so a plan had been devised for a ransom to be prepared from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Because of the ransom price having been paid, mankind can be raised from death in the Millennial Age. They are not raised perfect in heart and mind and so cannot stand before God in their own right. They need one who can stand between them and God. A mediator needs to have a knowledge of both parties so that they can be brought together. Paul is specific that it was the perfect man, Christ Jesus, who can mediate for them. He has experienced life on earth as a human being, as well as being with his Father as the only begotten son, and after being raised from the dead sits on the right hand of God.

Hebrews 8:6 speaks of Christ having a more excellent ministry, i.e., the previous ministry had been organized by God using the tribe of Levi, but being from fallen man they often failed to fulfill God’s orders. The ministry they offered was not capable of bringing everlasting life to those that they served. The Law Covenant just demonstrated how sinful they were, and although it was designed to bring them to Christ, because of the hardness of heart, they failed to recognize the Messiah in their midst.

The New Covenant will allow mankind to receive the promises of the eternal inheritance shown in Jeremiah 31:31-32. “Days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD.”

In a way this is the main theme of the Bible. It starts right from man’s fall in the Garden of Eden, with a promise to Eve, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15 NASB). Through the promise to Abraham, after him offering to sacrifice Isaac as recorded in Genesis 22:16-18, God said this. “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (NASB). This, plus the promise of a New and Better Covenant, all pointed to Christ, because without his sacrifice nothing could be achieved. In Genesis God and Man are estranged, death entered mankind, and communication between

both parties was broken. After the work of the Mediator in the Millennial Age, with man learning to walk up the road of righteousness and coming to know the rift will be healed, death will be removed, and man will be restored to what God had planned from the beginning of creation.

It is noteworthy that Paul reminds the Hebrews, to whom the Law Covenant was made, those that God had led by the hand, out of Egypt, becoming for the first time the nation of Israel, that these same people, natural Israel, would be those to whom a New Covenant would be made. Like the first covenant, it would have a mediator and would require full obedience to gain everlasting life.

Nearing the end of the book of Hebrews, which appears to be written before the destruction of Jerusalem, Paul reminds the Hebrew Christians about Christ and what they should do. "Therefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come" (Hebrews 13:12-14 NASB). They were to leave Jerusalem, the home of their former religion, leaving it behind, and to set their eyes on the city to come, a spiritual city.

As an Advocate

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2 NASB).

The word Advocate in this verse comes from the Greek word G3875, *parakletos*. Thayer's definition of this word is: (1) summoned, called to one's side, especially called to one's aid.

(1a) one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate. (1b) one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor. (1b1) of Christ in his exaltation at God's right hand, pleading with God, the Father, for the pardon of our sins. (1c) in the widest sense, a helper, succourer, aider, assistant. (1c1) of the Holy Spirit destined to take the place of Christ with the apostles (after his ascension to the Father), to lead them to a deeper knowledge of the gospel truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom.

It is interesting that this word is only used five times in the Bible, and in each case it is by the Apostle John.

(1) "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter**, that he may be with you for ever" (John 14:16 ASV).

(2) "But the **Comforter**, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that



John, the Apostle

I said unto you" (John 14:26 ASV).

(3) "But when the **Comforter** is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me" (John 15:26 ASV).

(4) "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the **Comforter** will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7 ASV).

(5) "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

In John's Gospel the word is translated as "comforter" in the KJV, ASV, and in some other translations as "helper," referring to the Holy Spirit which the Heavenly Father would send once Christ had ascended to heaven. Through this, the believers would be taught all things, also spoke as the Spirit of Truth.

In 1 John 2:1, perhaps no one English word adequately conveys the full meaning of *parakletos*, but the translators' choice of "advocate" is quite apt, as descriptive of the intercessory role of Christ *in relation to his church*.

An advocate is one who speaks on behalf of another, especially in a legal context, the one represented being for some reason unable to speak for himself. Our faith and consecration as believers places us where the Heavenly Father already accepts our sincerity of heart and intention as righteousness, not demanding that actual perfection of conduct which is as yet impossible.

The Law Covenant had just about fulfilled its purpose and the relationship between God, Christ, and those true followers was about to change. They were no longer going to be slaves to the Law Covenant. "You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in my name He may give to you" (John 15:14-16 NASB).

There was going to be another change in the relationship between Christ's disciples and God, but this had to wait for his death, resurrection, ascension to heaven, and applying the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The coming of the Holy Spirit brought about the change in how God viewed those that believed. In John chapter 1 it is evident that the Law could not make them children of God, only servants. They needed to change, as stated: "But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13 NASB).

This was all part of God's plan, as shown in Galatians 4:4-7: "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father! Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (NASB).

This shows the change from slaves to sons and heirs of God. The Gentile believers were also grafted in to become sons, sons through faith in Christ Jesus. As such they have access to the Father through an Advocate. "Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34 NASB).

During his years of anxious concern for his spiritual children, he must all too often have seen the frailty of human nature lead a brother or sister into sin, bringing some to bitter remorse and to the dread that all was lost. Thus, the provision of an advocate was very important, one that could truly understand man's situation. "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16 NASB).

Jesus pleads the cause of the repentant sinner, the believer during the Gospel Age. He does this based on his own blood, shed for Adam's posterity, but imputed first to those who are justified by faith in that cleansing blood. Our Advocate works constantly on our behalf to maintain our peace with a God whose justice is perfect and unbreakable, but whose love found a way to reconcile sinners to himself. Our Lord's role as our Advocates ends when the Church is complete.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NASB).

Br. Agripino (Greg) Polistico

In Memory

Br. Greg, as he was known by the Philippine brethren, was the founding elder of the Taguig class. In 2006 he contacted the Dawn Bible Students in the USA requesting the Dawn to arrange for elders to come to the Philippines to help the brethren grow spiritually.

The Dawn asked Br. Ray Charlton and Br. Adam Kopczyk from Australia, would they be willing to travel to the Philippines and visit the brethren. The first visit was made in 2006 attending the class in Taguig, visiting the brethren. The following year Br. David Christiansen (USA) joined Br. Ray and Br. Adam as they expanded the trip to include other classes in the Philippines.

Br. Greg was instrumental in organizing these trips to visit the brethren and studying with them in General Luna and Buena Vista. Br. Greg translated the discourses

for those who did not have a clear understanding of English.

The trips overseas to the Philippines ended in 2019 due to travel restrictions imposed by Covid. During 2006 to 2019 Br. Greg assisted in the running of seven seminars in Cebu as well as many trips to Buena Vista, and Dipolog, to run mini conventions.



Br. Agripino (Greg) Polistico

Over the many years of service, Br. Greg assisted the brethren throughout the Philippines by translating many of the Dawn booklets as well as translating the Dawn lessons and Volume one. His work was greatly appreciated by the brethren, especially by those who did not have a good command of the English language.

He will be missed by the many brethren he helped in the Philippines, and by those in Australia and the USA who knew him.

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The Bible Teachings

On the Covenants, Mediator, Ransom,
Sin Offering, and Atonement.

This book was published by the Berean Bible Institute during the 1970's and sets out the teachings from the Bible on topics which so eluded many in the Christian world. The insert in this edition of the Peoples Paper covers the next part of this 274-page book. For Brethren who would like to read more of the content, it is available through the Berean Bible Institute's official webpage.

www.australianbiblestudents.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/The-Bible-Teachings-on-the-Covenants2.pdf

The Heart of a Lesson

His name was Bill. He had wild hair, wore a T-shirt with holes in it, jeans, and no shoes. This was his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He was kind of eccentric but very, very bright. He became a Christian while attending college.

Across the street from the campus was a prosperous and very conservative church. They wanted to develop a ministry to the students but were not sure how to go about it.

One day Bill decides to go to the church. He walks in with his wild hair, jeans, T-shirt, and bare feet. The service has already started, so Bill starts down the aisle looking for a seat. The church is completely packed, and he can't find a seat. The well-dressed people look a bit uncomfortable, but no one says anything. Bill gets closer and closer to the pulpit, and when he realizes there are no seats, he just sits down right on the floor.

By now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick. About this time, the minister realizes that from the back of the church, a deacon is slowly making his way toward Bill. The deacon is in his eighties, with silver hair and a three-piece suit. A godly man, very elegant, very dignified. Leaning on his cane, he walks down the aisle toward the boy.

The church is utterly silent except for the clicking of the man's cane. All eyes are focused on him. The minister can't even preach the sermon until the deacon does what he has to do. Everyone expects the deacon is going to eject Bill from church — and who could blame him?

But now they see the elderly man drop his cane on the floor. With great difficulty, he lowers himself to sit down next to Bill and worship with him, so he won't be alone.

Everyone chokes up with emotion. When the minister regains his control, he says, "What I'm about to preach, you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget."

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16 NASB).

Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some people will ever read.

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On the Covenants — Mediator — Ransom — Sin Offering — Atonement

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OFFICE OF ADVOCATE AND MEDIATOR CONTRASTED

The “Mystery of God”

The fact that the Church is “the Mystery of God” has become more clear within the last twenty years. We know that Christ and the Church are separate and distinct from the world in every particular. They are neither under the old Law Covenant nor under the new Law Covenant, but are a peculiar people, called, sanctified, developed, under a special Covenant by themselves, in which none of the world will ever participate. This the Scripture styles the Covenant of Sacrifice: “Gather My saints (holy ones) together unto Me (saith the Lord); those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. (Psalms 50:5). This special class of saints, or holy ones, who make the Covenant of Sacrifice have as their Head the Lord Jesus Himself. When this company shall have completed their Covenant by Sacrifice, this present Age will end. Moses of the law Covenant given to Israel represented specially the Law Covenant which will be given to the world through the antitype of Moses — The Christ. In other words, the Mediator of the Law Covenant was one man.; but the Mediator of the New Law Covenant of the Millennial Age is the new Man, of which Jesus is the Head — and the Apostle declares that the members are made up of those elected from Jews and Gentiles.

“Better Sacrifices” Basis of New Covenant

From the time of Jesus down, the Mediator of the New Covenant has been in process of selection, and the “better sacrifices,” as the basis for the New Covenant have been in process of offering. During this Gospel Age Jesus has not exercised His office as Mediator for the World; and the world has no relationship with God, but still lies in the Wicked One. The Mediator Himself has been in process of development. As the Apostle declares, God raised up Jesus first and since has been raising up the Church, and soon will finish the raising up. It is this Mediator or Prophet of whom St. Peter speaks in Acts 3:22,23. (See also 1 Timothy 2:5,6.) No mediating can be done until the Mediator of “many members” has qualified for the office. His qualification consists of His sacrificing, according to His Covenant of Sacrifice. The Christ, Head and Body, are, therefore, the Mediator for the world in a prospective sense — in the same sense as Jesus, the Babe, could be spoken of as the Saviour and the King. He is only now becoming the King and has yet saved only a few of His people.

Distinction Between Work of Mediator and Work of Advocate

There is a wide distinction between the work of a

mediator and the work of an advocate. The Great Mediator between God and man — The Christ of glory — will fill the Mediatorial office for a thousand years and complete it only by the end of that time, when He will deliver over to the Father, fully reconciled, all who can be brought into harmony with the Divine arrangement. The work of an advocate is different, and according to the Bible, relates only to the work which Jesus accomplishes on behalf of the Church during this Age. The Church will need no advocate in the future. The world has no advocate now. “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” It is Jesus individually who is the Advocate for us — “the Church, His Body.” He advocates our cause — first of all by imputing to us the merit of His sacrifice, thus making us presentable in the Father’s presence and acceptable as sons of God. Because of this Advocacy, we have received the holy spirit and are New Creatures in Christ. As New Creatures we still need our Advocate, because we cannot do the things that we would — perfectly. We have imperfections of the flesh, which, as New Creatures, we cannot fully control. Hence, we need a Throne of Grace and an Advocate through whom we may maintain our present relationship with the Father, and thus not be condemned with the world (Z. 1916, 220).

THE RANSOM NOT THE SIN-OFFERING

Distinction Between Sin-Offering and Ransom

Word “Ransom” in Old Testament and New Testament The word “ransom” in the Old Testament seems to be used less definitely than in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated ransom is kopher, and signifies a covering, a protection, as when we read, “The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous” (Proverbs 21:18) — their covering, their protection. The righteous are few and uninfluential in the world; and laws would not generally be made especially for their protection. The laws of society -are made for the masses of the people — not for the saints; but those laws made for the people in general we — the Lord’s saints — have as a covering.

“Ransom” — A Covering in Old Testament

The Prophet David declares that no man can give a ransom for his brother (Psalms 49:7). That is to say, all mankind are imperfect through the Adamic fall. All are sinners; therefore, none could stand before God in the sense of justifying themselves; and thus, unable to justify themselves, they would be wholly unable to justify another — their brother. Here the thought is very similar to that attaching to the word “ransom” in

the New Testament, showing that to be such a ransom, or covering, requires perfection, righteousness, which no man of all our race possessed, except the Man Christ Jesus, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” who was therefore able and qualified to give Himself “a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” 1 Timothy 2:6.

“Ransom” — A Corresponding Price in New Testament

The word in the New Testament Greek used for “ransom” is very explicit; it signifies a price to correspond, or a corresponding price. The implication is that something was lost that needs to be re-purchased, redeemed, bought back; and the thing which is competent to purchase it back must be of equal value to the thing lost or forfeited — no more, no less — a “corresponding price.”

Why a Ransom Was Necessary

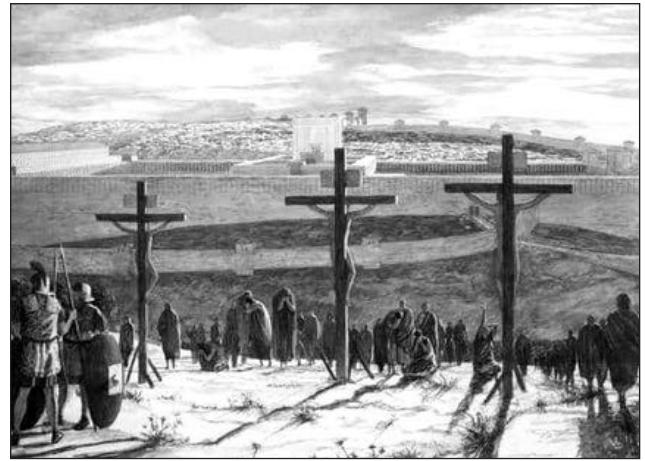
The thing that was lost by Father Adam for himself and all of his family was the right to life. As the perfect man, God’s arrangement provided him with the privilege of living forever on condition that he would be obedient, loyal to his Creator. His sin was disloyalty, disobedience, and its penalty was death — the forfeiture of the right to live. Thus, because of Adam’s disobedience, he came under the death sentence, “dying, thou shalt die” (Genesis 2:17, margin). Adam’s children were born to him after he had thus forfeited his life-rights, and he was unable to give them more than he possessed — a dying nature. Thus, we read: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned, etc. (Romans 5 :12).

God’s Dignity Must Be Preserved

God reveals to us in His Word that while He wishes to be merciful and to receive back to Himself all the willing and obedient of the race, nevertheless He must maintain the dignity of His own Law and cannot set aside the death sentence except upon the conditions which He has arranged; viz., a Ransom. If Adam is ransomed from the sentence of death, Justice will have no further claim against his life, and the ransomer would have the right to restore Adam and his race. But no ransomer could be found amongst all the family of men; for all were sinners — none was perfect, all had inherited the blemishes of sin. Hence God’s arrangement — the sending’ of His Only Begotten Son to be the Redeemer, the Ransom, of Adam and his family, and ultimately to be the Restorer of all that was lost.

A Great Reward Attaches to Carrying Out Divine Plan

To this service — to this carrying out of the Divine Program — God attached a very great reward of glory, honor and immortality. The Logos, “The beginning of the creation of God,” “the first born of every creature” (Revelation 3:14, Colossians 1:15), accepted the Divine arrangement gladly and humbled Himself. Leaving the honors and favors of His high position on the spirit plane, He was made flesh in order “that He by the grace



Jesus was our Ransom.

of God, should taste death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9) as the Ransomer of Adam. St. Paul tells us of Him as the One “who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame,” and now as a result, “is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2), henceforth expecting, waiting, until the time shall come for Him to bless Adam and his race for whom He had already died — waiting that the Father in due time, after the selection of the Bride Class, may put all things in subjection under Him — under the Messiah — that He may reign a thousand years for the uplifting of those for whom He died.

The Philosophy of the Ransom

As the sinner was the perfect man, Adam — in full harmony and fellowship with God and only a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor as a perfect human being — so the one who would redeem him, or be his ransom, must have all these qualifications. He must be a man, and a perfect man; in him God’s image and likeness must be complete; he must be crowned with the glory and honor of perfection; he must be “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” and in full fellowship with God.

God’s Requirements Met

All these requirements were fully met in the Man Christ Jesus when He was thirty years of age, at which time He presented Himself at Jordan to complete and confirm His consecration unto death, giving Himself a Ransom-price for all the race, to be testified to them all in due time . As a bullock could never take away sin by its death, neither could an angel or other spirit being ever take away sin by dying for Adam. Under the Divine arrangement, the Redeemer must be a corresponding-price to the one redeemed. Jesus was all this; nothing more was either, necessary, or possible. There was nothing lacking in the merit of the perfect Man to redeem the first man and his family; nothing therefore that the Church could give or do that would help in the matter. Justice could accept only the corresponding price.

Ransom-Price in Hands of Justice

That Ransom-price, that Corresponding-price for

Adam, has already been placed in the hands of Justice. Jesus did this in His consecration at Jordan, in that He agreed to do the

will of the Father even unto death; and on the Cross He declared, "Into Thy hands I commit My spirit" — the spirit of life, His right to life, which He had not forfeited, either by sin or otherwise. That Ransom-price, Price sufficient to redeem Adam and all of his race, has been in the hands of Justice as a deposit ever since, and is there now — still unapplied. It cannot be applied piecemeal, a little to each one; when applied, it must be applied for all at the same moment.

Why Merit Must Be All Applied At One Moment

Why must it be applied all at one moment? Because it is the one life. It would require the entire merit of Christ's sacrifice to recover Father Adam from his condemnation, and it would require the entire merit of that sacrifice for any one of the children of Adam. The Ransom cannot be divided up into millions of parts and a little piece given to each member of the race. The whole sacrifice of Christ was necessary for each one of the race and is sufficient for the entire race, when it shall be so applied. It is to be applied for the entire race, but not until the Father's time has come for turning over the race to the Redeemer — not until His appointed time for the Redeemer to take possession of the race as King of kings and lord of lords, to establish over them His glorious Kingdom, to release them from the power of sin and death and to give them all the Restitution privileges which His Ransom-sacrifice makes possible.

The Sin-Offering

In the meantime, another feature of the great Heavenly Father's Plan is working out — an arrangement by which a certain number of the children of Adam may become associates with Jesus in the suffering of this present time and in the glory that is to follow. This feature of the Plan is not the providing of a Ransom; for that was already provided in the death of Jesus; but this plan is to provide an under-priesthood who are eventually to be kings with the Saviour — a Royal Priesthood. Evidently, therefore, the Sin-Offering must not be confused with the Ransom-price, for the Ransom price is complete, and was complete before the Church was invited to come into this position of self-sacrifice.

What the Jewish Day of Atonement Pictured

The Jewish Day of Atonement pictured the entire work and operation of the Sin-Offering, which began in the person of Jesus. The death of Jesus was typified by the killing of the bullock on the Day of Atonement. That was the great sacrifice for sins —



Golden Altar

a Sin-offering, which was made by Jesus, who offered up Himself. He was both the anointed Priest of God and also the devoted Sacrifice. The merit of that Sacrifice might have been applicable to all the people; but if so, there would have been no room for the sacrifice of the Lord's Goat Class, the sacrifices of the under-priests, who, if faithful, are by and by to be made the Royal Priesthood of the Millennium. In the type, the High Priest allows the merit of his sacrifice to be applied to himself and his house — himself representing the Household of Faith, the consecrated ones who will fail to become members of the Body of Christ and will instead be on the spirit plane, "a great multitude" who will serve God, day, and night in His Temple — in the Church glorified.

Offerings Made During the Gospel Age

This passing of the merit of Jesus' Sacrifice, first of all, to and through His Church does not diminish the merit of that sacrifice nor its value, for everyone who shares in that merit, participates on condition that he will surrender his earthly rights, following in the footsteps of Jesus. The priestly class includes those who keep their covenant arrangement, voluntarily and heartily lay down their lives in the Lord's service. The Great Company Class is composed of those who have failed to fully surrender their earthly lives and rights and will therefore have these earthly rights taken from them through great tribulation. Any others who receive of the lord's favor during this Age and fail to get into one or the other of those classes — if they fail to become members of either the Royal Priesthood or of the Levite -servant company — cannot retain any Restitution blessings or privileges but will die the Second Death. Thus, the entire merit of Jesus, designed for Adam and his race, merely passes through the Church Class, the consecrated one, on its way to Adam and his race. 'The Church having the opportunity, by reason of this arrangement, to share with Jesus in suffering for righteousness' sake — the great High Priest accepts our consecrated beings and makes them part of His sacrifice, and the full measure of His merit as the Ransom-price passes on to humanity to give Adam and his family Restitution privileges for a thousand years.

"Better Sacrifices" Not Made by Church but by High Priest

These are the better sacrifices and offerings for sin not made by us but made by the great High Priest whom the Father has appointed for the purpose. This great High Priest has been completing His sacrifice for sins; first His own flesh, and then the flesh of all those who have come unto the Father through Him during the past nineteen centuries. He will soon complete His sacrificial work and glorify with Himself those who suffer with Him — making of them His consorts in His Messianic Kingdom. Then He will apply on behalf of all mankind the merit of the sacrifice which He finished at Calvary and which He has merely loaned or imputed to the Church during this Gospel Age.

When Justice Will Have No More to Do with Mankind?

This Sacrifice will be given fully, completely, everlastingly, to Justice, appropriated as the full offset of Original Sin. Forthwith Adam and all of his children will be turned over by Justice into the hands of Jesus. Divine Justice will have no more to do with mankind. All will be under the administration of the Millennial Kingdom. For a thousand years the Redeemer, the Ransomer of the race, will teach, reward, punish, deal with humanity for their instruction in righteousness and their uplift from the sin and death condition giving to everyone a full opportunity for returning to perfection.

Result at End of Millennial Age

At the close of the thousand years, Messiah having accomplished everything possible for every member of the race, will turn over all to the Father and will say to the sheep class, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the (earthly) Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). All others, found unworthy of everlasting life, will be destroyed in the Second Death, symbolically pictured as a devouring-fire. Thus, we have striven to make plain the distinction between the Ransom-price and the application of the Ransom price, and the Sin-offering and the blessings resulting to the Church from the privilege of participation in those sin offerings — the sufferings of Christ.

Christ's Merit Not Divided. Three Interesting Questions

We take occasion here to answer some related queries.

Question — Is it proper to say that we, the Church, receive by imputation "a certain portion" or "our share" of the merit of the Ransom now — during the Gospel Age?

Answer — The person using this language might have the proper thought but would not be using the best words in which to express that thought to avoid being misunderstood. As above shown, all the merit of Christ is necessary to each member of the race. If we divide up the merit of Christ, nobody would have enough. If it were all given to one, the others would get none. God's Plan, therefore, is to hold that Ransom-price in reserve until the due time for the inauguration of Messiah's Kingdom, and then apply that price and transfer the whole race at one time to Jesus to the Messianic Kingdom. Then during the Millennium, it might be proper to say that everyone will be receiving the Restitution blessings as his share or participation in the Ransom merit; but strictly speaking, the whole blessing of the whole world is the ransom blessing.

Not a Portion but the Entire Merit Imputed

Question — If the Ransom has not yet been applied, apportioned, credited, to the race on the Books of Justice, and if we who are of the Church are members of the world, how do we participate in the Ransom blessings?

Answer — The entire Ransom merit being in the hands of Justice, the one who owns that merit, Jesus — in harmony with the Father's Plan — imputes it to the

whole company who will accept the offer of this Gospel Age and surrender themselves sacrifices to walk in the Master's footprints. There is quite a difference between giving and imputing, just as there would be a difference between giving a man a thousand dollars and imputing to him a thousand dollars by endorsing his note. Jesus, as our great Advocate, imputes to us, or endorses us to the full extent of our contract with the Father. Our contract is that, like Jesus, we will surrender our earthly rights.

Church Not Worthy Only as Advocate Endorses

The Heavenly Father could not recognise us as worthy of entering into such a contract, except as our great Advocate endorses for us, or guarantees us, in the matter. What does He guarantee? He guarantees that we shall lay down our lives — that our earthly lives shall be fully surrendered in due time.

Three Classes for Whom Jesus Becomes Surety

As we have seen, there are three classes for whom Jesus becomes Surety, Guarantor. First are those who fully and completely carry out their contract, both in letter and spirit, laying down their lives voluntarily, after the Master's example. These will be the "more than conquerors," the members of the Body of the Anointed. Next will come the Great Company class, who will eventually be conquerors, but not "more than conquerors." Because conquerors, they will be granted everlasting life on the spirit plane; but because of lack of zeal and love, they will fail of the election as members of the Body of Christ.

Some Neither Conquerors nor More Than Conquerors

Third, there are those who will be neither more than conquerors nor even conquerors, but failures — turning back to sin, like the sow to her wallowing in the mire. These will die the Second Death. Our great Advocate, the High Priest, having endorsed for all of these, will thus be ultimately free from all liability for them in that they all will have died according to the flesh and none of them will receive or retain Restitution rights or privileges. These Restitution blessings will be fully and completely released when the last member shall have gone into death.

While Church in Flesh Restitution Blessings Impossible

Question — Would it be proper for us to suppose that the world might begin to receive its share of Restitution blessings while some of the members of the Church are still in the flesh?

Answer — No! This would be an impossible thought. The whole merit of Christ is mortgaged by the imputation which Jesus has made of His merit to the company consecrating during this Age. This mortgage must be released fully, completely, before the New Covenant can be sealed and put into operation for giving Restitution blessings to Adam and his race. Hence, we are not to expect any Restitution, either of the Ancient Worthies or others, until the little Flock shall have passed beyond the veil, and the Great Company class shall have passed through its tribulation (Z. 1916, 310).



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Nine Steps to the Kingdom

Any time you set out for a destination, you need to have directions or a road map. Ours will begin in the book of Matthew chapter five and is commonly known as the Beatitudes.

First Step

Our first step on this journey to the Kingdom is written in Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What does it mean to be poor in spirit? It is worthwhile to examine some thoughts found in the following scriptures:

Let us begin with Matthew 19:13-14. “Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

You might ask yourself, what would these children have to do with me being poor in the spirit? Well let us look at it from this angle. Much more than happy, happiness usually proceeds from outward causes. Attitude is necessary to receive the Father’s blessings. In this case the Greek word signifies extremely poor, humble minded, therefore more teachable. The lesson is that Christians should emulate the good qualities of a child: humility, obedience, trust, compliance, teachableness. We should minimize our faults as much as possible by overcoming them and maximize our good character points by developing them. God will not accept one possessed of the spirit of pride and selfish ambition! Not necessarily poor in pocket, or in intellectual gifts, are the very proud in spirit. This trait is essentially the doorway to other blessings.

The Apostle Peter was a poor uneducated fisherman who had no ambitions but was rich in hope of the coming Messiah. We look to the account found in John 1:37-39 concerning Peter’s introduction to Jesus. Starting with verse 37, “And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them,

What do you seek? And they said to Him, Rabbi (which translated means teacher), where are you staying? He said to them **Come and you will see.** They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.”

One of the two who heard Jesus speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus, Jesus looked at him, and said, You are Simon the son of Jona you shall be called Cephas (which is translated Peter)” (John 1: 40-42).

It’s clear that at this point Jesus had made His selection of Peter to be a disciple, and eventually to be an Apostle. Was he selected because he was educated, or important, or that he was influential? No, he was selected because of his faith. This does not say that those who possess these afore mentioned qualities could not have a place in the church class, but that it would be much harder! We refer you to Jesus words found in Matthew 19:23-26. This was right after Jesus had the talk with the rich young ruler, “And Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” and when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, then who can be saved?

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Jesus said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” So, the essence of this first step is to be rich in faith so that you may please God.

Step Two

The next essential quality mentioned by our lord is related to the first one. In Matthew 5:4; “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Does this mean to be sorrowful for oneself? Of course not! Again, this is deferring to others who either have lost a loved one or undergoing severe trials in their own life.

Let us refer to a couple of scriptures to get a better understanding of mourning. Isaiah 61:2-3, This chapter is based on the exaltation of the afflicted. Starting with verse 2, “To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. And the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.” At the First Advent, Jesus omitted the last half of verse 2 about the day of God’s vengeance.

He was directing his comments and comforting message at that time, and ever since, to his followers, to the Church. But this prophecy will continue, for it also extends to the world of mankind in the future as they come out of the prison house of death (Luke 4: 18, 19). Jesus’ message was an uplifting, exhilarating prophecy for those who recognized they were being oppressed with sin and sickness (physically, mentally, and morally) and who were looking for rescue. We should reach out to those who are undergoing present trials, and comfort them! Those who are sympathetic, who realize their own imperfections should have great pity on the less fortunate.

We can cultivate this type of grace by frequently comforting those who are in desperate need of consoling. Remember “Beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning” (Psalms 30:5).

Jesus teaches us this principal of consoling one another in John 16:20-21. In His lesson He uses the picture of anguish turning into joy. Verse 20 “Truly, truly I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore, you to now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.”

We should cultivate the sympathetic spirit. Frequently thinking of others, their interests, trials and difficulties to seek to give a lending hand and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).



Jesus, presenting the Sermon on the Mount

Step Three

Jesus places great emphasis on this next instruction in Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.” Webster’s dictionary defines meekness as “submission to the divine will, patience and gentleness from moral and religious motives.” Patient submission to the divine will is impossible without the first step of humility. Patient submission can only be developed by those who mourn. How many times in your life have you been given a sharp rebuke when a gentle reply or a soft touch on the arm would have accomplished so much more in response? To be gentle and kind is worth far more than gold or silver. This characteristic of being gentle is one that is absolutely necessary to become a teacher for mankind in the kingdom, and now for that matter!

A profound statement is made by Jesus in Matthew 11:29, 30. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and My load is light.” This invitation followed Jesus’ prayer in verses 25 and 26, where he thanked the Father for hiding these things from the worldly wise and revealing them to “babes.” Those with humble dispositions make good disciples, just as Jesus’ humble disposition made him do the Father’s will. We must become gentle in order to make our calling and election sure! In Revelation 2:10 Jesus says; “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” He does not say its guaranteed, but He says be faithful until death! You have to do your part in this walk. This is not once saved always saved! You must be faithful until your last cognizant breath! And being gentle is a big part of this requirement!

Step Four

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6). There are two sub-steps in this statement. First there is hunger, and then there is thirst for what? Righteousness. When you hunger it applies not only to your physical but also to spiritual life. No one can

have this hunger unless they have had to a certain extent the previous four characteristics.

You have cravings for sympathy and fellowship; cravings for ease and comfort; cravings for name and fame; and cravings for pleasure. This hungering if applied wrongly can lead to a path that cannot find the fellowship with the Lord! God allows us to become very hungry before He gives us the truth. Unfortunately, many of the Lord's people reach for His table without first having a keen appetite and therefore are only satisfied with the basic things of the truth. They stay at the milk level of the word without progressing on to the strong meat stage. This can be due to a lack of proper fellowship, and little or no personal study!

You have to approach the throne of grace with a ravishing appetite! There is an excellent article in Reprint 5218 concerning and explaining this matter, and we quote, "Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall have afflictions" (and you may ask why), the scriptures tell us that all who will live godly lives shall suffer (Acts 14:22, Timothy 3:12, Romans 5:3-5). The reason why this is true is that the world is traveling in the opposite direction to righteousness — in the way of selfishness and gratification of the flesh. "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). This is especially true of this gospel age, when few are following in the footsteps of the Master.

It was also true of the Jewish age when some were seeking to walk in the way of righteousness. The Lord delivered them out of their afflictions, not in the sense of shielding them from trials, but in not permitting them to be overcome by their difficulties.

A just man will not fall into sin. The very most that could happen to him would be to stumble. There are various causes for stumbling. But if the heart is right, the man will rise again; for the Lord will show him that he has made a mistake and will point out the way to him to enable him to recover.

Fifth Step

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7 NASB). The Lord lays great stress upon this quality of mercy upon others neither will our Heavenly Father have mercy upon us. But it must be a genuine mercy. True mercy shows forgiveness, benevolence. Mercy shows the heart condition which sympathises with others in their failures and imperfections.

We should be merciful as God is merciful. 'Mercy rejoiceth against justice' James 2:13. Divine mercy satisfied divine justice and therefore prepared the way for the rescue of our race from the sentence of justice, so those who partake of the Divine Spirit to a reasonable extent will permit their mercy to triumph over their conceptions of justice.

What does it mean to you to be merciful? In different languages it takes on a slightly different meaning. In



Blessed are the pure in heart.

Latin it is *merced*, meaning reward, in old French it is *merci*, which equals "pity," in middle English it can be translated "heavenly reward." But what about other scripture application? We will quote a few.

- 2 Samuel 24:14, David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercy is great; but do not let me fall into human hands."

- Psalms 145:9, "The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all He has made."

- Titus 3:5, "He has saved us not because of righteousness things we have done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

- Hebrews 4:16, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

- 1 Peter 1:3, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead."

Now what does mercy mean to you? Can you relate to these scriptures in your life?

Sixth Step

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8 NASB).

The chemist or those who have taken chemistry will probably relate to this next word in our search for true meaning, as it applies to our walk in the narrow way, and that word is "pure. Purity of heart is purity of motive, intention effort, will and truthfulness. See God is a profound statement." Can our finite minds even comprehend this statement? We don't even know the lowest form of spirit being, the angels, let alone see God! What does Jesus mean by His statement? Well to begin with He said you can see God if you are pure in heart! Let's examine!

In the British Dictionary definitions for pure are as follows:

1. Not mixed with any extraneous or dissimilar material, elements.
2. Free from tainting or polluting matter, clean.
3. Free from moral taint or defilement (pure love).

● Let's take number 1. (Not mixing with dissimilar.) One of the first steps we are to follow is to remove ourselves from positions in the world that would harm the new creature. Limit the association with those who are not walking in like manner as yourself. This limits contamination!

● Number 2. (Free from polluting matter.) Often, we get wrapped up in television programs that seem harmless on the surface but turn out to have negative moral substance which would be harmful to the new creature!

● Number 3. (Free from moral taint.) Often times we find intriguing reading material which ultimately evolves into tainting the mind, and critically stumbling the new creature.

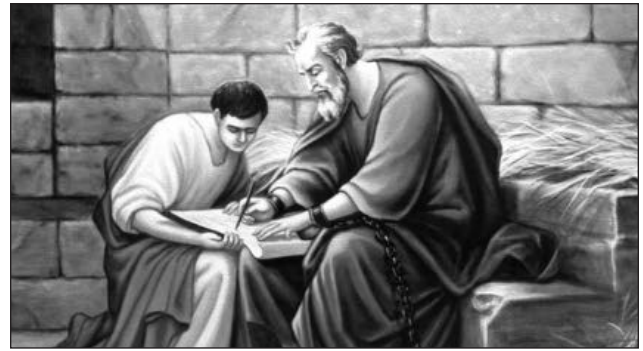
So, what does all this say? Do we have to live in a cocoon in order to please God? The scriptures give the answer to these life-long questions. It seems in all of the scriptures moderation and thoughtfulness take a prominent place. Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6:12. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything."

The Christian should in all respects be a model of good works, and in teaching show integrity and dignity. You were called to freedom don't use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another! Christ states "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48 NASB). God's standards are not set lower for us, but he has provided for us by grace, mercy and peace through Christ, if we walk in his footsteps this purity of heart being so essential in the narrow way.

This walk we are in is a very narrow way as Apostle Paul states "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NASB). As the beatitude states, you must be pure in heart if you wish to see God!

Seventh Step

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9 NASB). This is an outward manifestation of the sixth step. In this world today there are hardly any who could be called peacemakers. In the game of finance or business the idea is always to outmaneuver or get the upper hand. There is no room for those who are truly honest who look out for your highest welfare. It's always who has the gold rules! Arguments abound in business, sports, religion, and yes even in medicine.



Paul, a prisoner for his faith, advising the churches

Let us look at the definition of a peacemaker. "A person who brings about peace, especially by reconciling adversaries" This is tried by politics but fails miserably! If you are successful in your walk then this will be one of the traits you will exercise in the kingdom, to the glory of our Father. So only those with a pure heart will be able to accomplish this. Today we have wars, strife, murder, and slander in abundance, because of lack of this trait, peacemaker! Only the sons of God will be able to exercise this trait!

Combativeness exercised toward our fellow humans, must be modified by mercy: it must be trained to fight for truth and against error, but not against the ignorant servants of error. There's a wonderful article in Reprint 2588 on this subject of peacemaking we quote, "Some of the Lord's people find in themselves naturally considerable of a spirit of combativeness, unfavorable to peace. Indeed, it requires something of the spirit of combativeness to fight a good fight against the world, the flesh, and the adversary, and to contend earnestly for the faith: so those who have combativeness naturally find themselves in antagonism with others along some line continually. However, they should not be discouraged by this but should remember that combativeness is a valuable servant and soldier, if turned and exercised in the right direction. It's exercise towards fellow creatures must be modified by mercy, by a realization of our own imperfections and the imperfections of all. Combativeness must be trained to fight along the lines of love and mercy — to fight for the truth and for all the servants and agencies of the truth and against the error, but not against the blinded and ignorant servants of error!"

Again, regarding this trait of peacemaking, "Very evidently but a small number of the Lord's people have progressed so far as to have this trait markedly developed and exemplified in their lives. The great majority even of those who have named the name of Christ, seemed to pursue a reverse course which indicates that even if their hearts are pure and their sympathies large, they have still much to learn in the school of Christ; for instead of being peace promoters they are strife promoters. Yet this is not of evil intent, but rather of habit, and of ignorance and of failure to discern the wide difference between the Divine course of love, and the opposite

course of selfishness which prevails in the world. Strife making is chiefly stirred up with the tongue, though it may be aroused by a gesture or a glance. Likewise, peacemaking is chiefly done with the tongue, though it may also operate through the eye. How many Christian people we all know, who have tongues which are continually stirring up strife! The adversary controls many in this manner long after they have escaped from his control in many other aspects; and this is largely because they do not detect that in this way, they are doing Satan service — do not even detect that they are stirrers up of strife, hatred, envy, malice, and planters of roots of bitterness by which many are defiled” (Reprint 2588).

When will Christians learn the length and breadth and depth of these injunctions, “malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men” (Titus 3:2 NASB). “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29 NASB). How many lessons line upon line, must they have to convince them that they are not only to avoid gossip about other people’s business, and fault finding, and cynicism, but that these are all evidences of their deficiency in Christ’s likeness, and their lack of the qualities of a peacemaker; and these deficiencies need to be striven against earnestly, if they are to make their calling and election sure to a place in the heavenly kingdom?” This is a very serious matter as we are all observed every day by our Father and His Son.

Step Eight

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10 NASB).

There is a critical point here. It is dealing with those who are persecuted not for their own wrong doings but for those that suffer from doing right. “For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong” (1 Peter 3:17 NASB).

The integrity of those who are persecuted for righteousness condemns the ungodly world and can invoke hostility. The world hates a righteous life because it exposes their own unrighteousness. Christ was persecuted because He showed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees through His good works such as healing on the Sabbath. These were trials for Him but there is a promise “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12 NASB).

Step Nine

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me” (Matthew 5:11 NASB).

In the previous step Jesus had said “for righteousness’ sake.” Here He identifies Himself and His cause with that of righteousness, binding up the cause of righteousness in the world with the reception of Himself. Jesus also warned the disciples that toward the end of this Gospel Age that things could be worse “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name” (Matthew 24:9 NASB). Being imitators of Christ would bring persecution because it will be contrary to the way of the world.

There is a powerful account in Acts that illustrates these acts of persecution and standing up for the Lord. “As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening” (Acts 4:1-3). Witnessing to the world whether by preaching or passing out literature may bring harassment or being ridiculed, but at all times a Christ like character must be shown as the Apostle Peter states “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12 NASB).

In Conclusion

The total sum of all these steps is in essence the development of love and those who have these steps or traits are therefore loveable. We so much need to attain these blessed conditions stipulated by our Lord Jesus in the Beatitudes. These are a requirement for the Little Flock in the kingdom. As God is love and love will continue on for all ages to come. The Apostle Peter gives similar instructions concluding with “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you” (2 Peter 1:10-11).



The Resurrection of the dead is a wonderful hope.

Comments on Hebrews

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB).

The general design and purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to preserve those to whom it was sent from the danger of apostasy. Their danger on this subject did not arise so much from persecution, as from the circumstances which were fitted to attract them again to the Jewish religion. The temple was still standing. The morning and evening sacrifice was still being offered. The splendid rites of that imposing religion were yet observed. The authority of the law was undisputed. Moses was a lawgiver, sent from God, and no one doubted that the Jewish form of religion had been instituted by their forefathers in conformity with the divine direction. Their religion had been founded amidst remarkable manifestations of God — in flames, smoke and thunder; it had been communicated by the ministration of angels; it had on its side and in its favour all the venerableness and sanction of a remote antiquity; it commended itself by the pomp of its ritual and by the splendour of its ceremonies.

On the other hand, the new form of religion had little or nothing of this to commend it. It was of recent origin. It was founded by the Man of Nazareth, who had been trained up in their own land, had been a carpenter, who had had no extraordinary advantages of education. Its rites were few and simple. It had no splendid temple service; it had none of the pomp and pageantry, the music and the magnificence of the ancient religion. It had no splendid array of priests in gorgeous vestments, and it had not been imparted by the ministry of angels. Fishermen were its ministers; and by the majority of the nation, it was regarded as a schism, or heresy, that enlisted in its favour only the most humble and lowly of the people.

In these circumstances, how natural was it for the enemies of the gospel in Judea to contrast the two forms of religion, and how keenly would Christians there feel it! Of all that was said of the antiquity and the divine origin of the Jewish religion, they knew and admitted. All that was said of its splendour and magnificence they saw, and all that was said of the humble origin of their own religion they were constrained to admit also. Their danger was not mainly that which arises from persecution. It was that of being affected by considerations like these, of relapsing again into the religion of their fathers, and of apostatizing from the gospel; and it was a danger which beset no other part of the Christian world.

To meet and counteract this danger was the very design of this epistle. Accordingly, the writer contrasts the two religions in all the great points on

which the minds of the Christians in Judea would be likely to be affected and shows the superiority of the Christian religion over the Jewish in every respect. Especially in the points that had so much attracted their attention and affected their hearts.

Apostle Paul begins by showing that the Author of the Christian religion was superior in rank to any and all who had ever delivered the Word of God to man. He was superior to the prophets, and even to the angels. He was over all things, and all things were subject to Him. There was, therefore, a special reason why they should listen to Him, and obey His commands, chapters 1 and 2. The purpose of the book is to show that Jesus was sent of God as the Messiah, and the rest of the book will prove this point. Therefore, Paul opened his epistle by showing that God used the same method with Jesus that

He had used with the prophets in the past. He had spoken before through an individual, and He was doing the same thing now. And Jesus was greater than the Old Testament prophets — he was God’s Son. Jesus was superior to Moses, the great Jewish lawgiver, whom they venerated so much, and on whom they so much prided themselves, chapter 3. Having shown that the Great Founder of the Christian religion was superior to the prophets, to Moses, and to the angels, the writer proceeds to show that the Christian religion was characterized by having a High Priest superior to that of the Jews, and of whom the Jewish high priest was but a type and emblem. He shows that all the rites of the ancient religion, splendid as they were, were also but types, and were to vanish away — for they had had their fulfilment in the realities of the Christian faith. He shows that the Christian’s High Priest derived His origin and His rank from a more venerable antiquity than the Jewish high priest did



Melchizedek, a picture of Christ

— He was typified by Melchizedek who was both a priest and a king who lived long before Aaron; and that He had far superior dignity, from the fact that He had entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven.

The Jewish high priest entered once a year into the most holy place in the temple; the Great High Priest of the Christian faith had entered into the Most Holy place — of which the former was but the type and emblem — into heaven. In short, whatever there was of dignity and honour in the Jewish faith there was so much superiority in the Christian religion. While the Christian religion was permanent the Jewish one that was fading. The rites of the Jewish system, magnificent as they were, were designed to be only temporary.

They were mere types and shadows of better things to come. They had their fulfilment in Christianity. In Paul's day, a dispensational change was taking place, and some of the Israelites sensed it. Christianity was the substance of what in the temple service was a type and shadow. By considerations such as these the author of this epistle endeavours to preserve them from apostasy. Why should they go back? Why go back from the substance to the shadow? Why turn away from the true sacrifice to the type and emblem? Why linger around the earthly tabernacle, and contemplate the high priest there when they had a perfect and glorious High Priest, who had entered into the

heavens? And why should they turn away from the only perfect sacrifice — the great offering made for transgression made by Jesus¹ and go back to the typical sacrifices. And why forsake the system that was to endure for ever — in contrast to that which was soon to vanish away? The author of this epistle is very careful to assure them that if they now rejected the sacrifice of the Son of God, there was no other sacrifice for sin. It was God's great provision for the satisfaction and cancellation of the sin of mankind. It was never ever to be repeated. If that were rejected there was no other.

The Jewish rites were soon to pass away; they could not cleanse the conscience from sin. Persecuted, then, though they might be — reviled, ridiculed, opposed — yet they should not abandon their Christian hope, for it was their all; they should not neglect Him who spoke from heaven, for in dignity, rank, and authority He far surpassed all who in former times had made known the will of God to man.

(1) Jesus had to be made flesh in order to take Adam's place and provide the ransom price of redemption. Adam was a king, and all of his children would have been kings if he had not failed. Jesus came as a King to take Adam's place. However, he had to partake of the same human nature and the same glory; that is, Jesus had to be exactly like Adam (a perfect human being) in order to be a substitute for him and to redeem the promises made to him in Psalm 8.

The Shepherd's Goodness and Mercy

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalms 23:6).

David in his meditations on the Lord's tender watch and care over all his interests became so impressed with the reality of his heavenly Shepherd's love that he left no room for even the shadow of a doubt concerning it. Therefore he wrote, "Surely [unquestionably], goodness and mercy shall follow me." This reminds us also of Apostle Paul's assurance of divine care as expressed in the well known verse, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

The certainty of the Good Shepherd's care is further emphasized in the expression, "shall follow me." The Hebrew text gives the thought of to pursue goodness and mercy shall "pursue" me. This suggests that divine care is aggressively manifested toward us, in that the Lord anticipates our needs and is ready to provide them even before we ask. When we think of how energetic the various forces of evil are in their opposition to the Lord's people, of how we are pursued by evil, it is indeed comforting to realize that we are also being pursued by God's goodness and

mercy. Knowing that greater is he who is for us than all that be against us, 1 John 4:4, so therefore we can with confidence entrust ourselves to the care of the Good Shepherd "all the days" of our lives.

Both the "goodness" and the "mercy" of the Lord manifest his love toward us; and while these two principles are closely related, their operation is along different lines. In the use of the two expressions David's mind is evidently reflecting upon the various ways the shepherd's care for his sheep illustrate God's goodness and mercy, the various ways which he had just enumerated in the preceding verses of this psalm. It is a summing up as it were, of all those manifestations of divine grace which the Psalmist saw so beautifully portrayed in the shepherd's care of his sheep.

"I Shall Not Want"

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," wrote the Psalmist. David knew that it was because of the goodness of the Lord that all his needs were sure to be supplied. He lived under the terms of the Law covenant given to the children of Israel at Sinai, and

through that covenant God obligated himself to supply all the needs of those who obey his Law. David knew that the Lord was faithful to this arrangement. As in another psalm he wrote, "I have been young, and now am, old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25).

Therefore David could clearly write, "I shall not want," because in his own experience as a servant of God, and in his observation of the manner in which divine care had been manifested toward others, there was no indication that God ever failed to carry out that which he had promised. So what was true in the life of David is equally true in our experience today. The goodness of God in providing all the needs of his people during the Gospel age is manifested more particularly along spiritual lines, but to those who live by faith, and who are setting their affections on things above rather than on the things of the earth, this goodness is very real, very satisfying.

With David we too can say that because of God's goodness "we shall not want." We may not always have all the material good things of life that we deem as necessary, but we will not want for any of the spiritual blessings which are so important to us as new creatures in Christ Jesus. No one in the church has been more faithful in following the Good Shepherd than was the Apostle Paul, yet he wrote, "I have learned both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:11, 12). This is a reference to material needs, and indicates that the apostle did not always have sufficient food and raiment, possibly like Jesus, he too did not always have a place to lay his head. From this standpoint Paul could not say, "I shall not want," but from the standpoint of the new creature he could affirm that all his needs were more than abundantly supplied.

To the apostle it was consistent with the terms of his consecration that the outward man should perish, so it made little difference to him whether it perished as a result of insufficient food, or for other reasons. The important thing to Paul was that the inward man, the new life begotten in him by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, was being renewed and nourished and built up by the spiritual food so abundantly supplied to him by the Good Shepherd (2 Corinthians 4:16).

"Green Pastures"

Following his general affirmation of God's goodness and mercy, by the words "I shall not want", David from verse one then begins to itemize, from the shepherd's standpoint, the various ways in which the Lord's care is manifested. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Here we are reminded of God's abundant provision of spiritual food. The pastures of truth are indeed green for all those who are faithful in following the Good Shepherd whithersoever he leads. This has been true of the entire church of the Gospel age, and it is more than ever true now in the end of the age,

when in fulfillment of his promise, the returned Lord has girded himself and has served his people with that "meat in due season" (Matthew 24:45). How wonderfully green and refreshing, luscious delicate, toothsome and satisfying are the pastures of present truth! Truly our longings are satisfied by these green pastures as nothing else could do!

Surely it is a wonderful manifestation of God's goodness to be blessed by a knowledge of the present truth in these dark days of world distress and chaos. One of the great blessings of the truth, especially in this "time of trouble," is the confidence it gives us, the peace of heart and mind (Daniel 12:1). Truly we can "lie down" in these green pastures, and rest contentedly as we partake of the nourishing spiritual food to which the Good Shepherd, now present to set up his kingdom, has led us.

"Still Waters"

As if the green pastures were not sufficient evidence of the Good Shepherd's loving care, in order to reassure us that we shall not want, the Psalmist further adds, "He leadeth me beside the still waters" the margin gives, "waters of quietness." It is not just enough merely that we should be led where there are waters of truth to drink, but that they are "still waters," or "waters of quietness." This water is not only refreshing, but set out before us in a way that we can drink of it with ease, and generously.

So how true this is of the waters of truth of which the Lord's sheep are privileged to drink during this harvest period at the end of the age! Beginning with the return of our Lord, these waters were cleared of the muddy traditions of the past and caused to flow in a deep and inexhaustible stream of refreshment, a stream which has been readily available for all who have had the ears to hear and recognize the Good Shepherd's voice calling them to follow him. John 10:11 Because of this wonderful provision, all who have had their spiritual thirst quenched by the waters of present truth can truly say with the Psalmist, "I shall not want." They know that in their thirsting after righteousness they have been filled to overflowing, that their thirst has been quenched.

"He Restoreth My Soul"

In outlining the various ways in which he assures us that we shall not want, David draws illustrations from the life of the shepherd which remind us not only of God's goodness, but also of his abundant mercy. This is why in summing up his meditation, he said so appropriately and so eloquently presents, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." God's mercy is of course a manifestation of his goodness, but it is a goodness which operates under different circumstances. God supplies our needs of spiritual food and drink, but this is not the end of his goodness. There are times when in addition to these blessings we are in such sore need of his mercy.



Young David, who would later write many psalms

It is this that the Psalmist spoke of when he wrote of the Good Shepherd, “He restoreth my soul” literally saying, “He saveth my life.” It required an exercise of God’s mercy, operating through the saving grace which is in Christ Jesus our Good Shepherd, in order for us to become his sheep in the first place. Then, all along the way we need his mercy. We fail, at times to give proper heed to the Shepherd’s voice and find ourselves straying away from him and from the remainder of the flock. In this unhappy position we are exposed to the various enemies of the sheep. There are wolves in sheep’s clothing, ready to devour us. But worst of all, our great adversary, the devil, goeth about as a “roaring lion” seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8 Because of these and other enemies, our lives are in constant danger, particularly if we do not keep close to the Good Shepherd. But he is merciful, as we are “pursued” by his mercy, and when we find ourselves in these positions of special danger, threatened by enemies too cunning and too powerful for us to resist, he comes to our rescue and in his great mercy he restores our souls.

There are no enemies of the Lord’s sheep who are able to pluck them away from the protecting care of the Good Shepherd. Because of our imperfections we may inadvertently expose ourselves to danger, but even then divine mercy pursues us and we are restored to safety. It is only if we willfully walk away from the Shepherd, by deliberately turning our backs upon him and upon his goodness and mercy, that he gives us up to our enemies and we fall helpless into their clutches.

“Paths of Righteousness”

Divine goodness is further manifested in the fact that the Good Shepherd leads us “in the paths of righteousness”, or the right paths. We need divine wisdom in order to walk in the right way, and this is promised to us if we ask in faith, doubting nothing (James 1:6, 7). But we must be willing to obtain divine wisdom through God’s appointed channel which is his inspired Word. It is through the Word that the Good Shepherd leads us; it is through the Word that we hear his voice calling us to follow him.

The path of righteousness is not an easy one in which to walk, yet there is a joy in walking in that path,

although the path itself is often rugged and difficult. It is the narrow way of sacrifice (Matthew 7:4). If we walk in this path of righteousness to its very end, we will find that it leads to death. But the goodness of God is manifested toward us in this connection by the fact that those who are led by the Good Shepherd to the end of the path of righteousness, along the narrow way, and are faithful all the way to the end, will have the privilege of living and reigning with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). They suffer with him, but through faithfulness in suffering, they will share his glory and be with him on his throne.

In a most wonderful manner then, divine goodness is demonstrated in that the Good Shepherd leads us in the paths of righteousness. It would be impossible for us to walk in this way unless he did lead us. In leading us he not only shows us the way, but he gives us strength to walk in it, a strength for every time of need. Truly we need that strength else we would soon become weary in well doing and would faint by the wayside. But his goodness does not permit this. It pursues us, safeguarding our every interest so that we can truly say, “I shall not want.”

This Valley of Death

David cites an extreme condition of danger and hardship through which a shepherd sometimes finds it necessary to lead his sheep, and he declares that even under these most difficult conditions in the lives of the people of God thus illustrated they do not need to fear evil, for the Good Shepherd is with them always, that his rod and staff comfort them. “Yea,” he writes, as if some might doubt such an outstanding example of divine goodness and mercy, “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”

When the Lord found us, before we actually became his sheep, we were just wandering about, in fact dying, in the valley of the shadow of Adamic death. All mankind is walking through that valley, and the only way out of it during this Gospel age is to follow the voice of the Good Shepherd. How truly good the Lord is that we should be permitted to hear that voice saying to us, “Follow me” (Matthew 16:24). We respond, and while the way in which he leads is difficult and fraught with danger on every hand, leading in the end to sacrificial death, we know that by following it we will escape from the valley of the shadow of death to glory, honour, and immortality in the “first resurrection.”

The Good Shepherd’s wise use of both the rod and the staff is a further manifestation of divine goodness and mercy, a further assurance that we shall not want. Through their use he guides and corrects his sheep, and thus manifests a love that otherwise could not be so fully appreciated by his followers. Paul wrote, “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Hebrews 12:6). How glad we are, then, to realize that the divine goodness and love is pursuing us even when it requires the use of the chastening rod.

The Lord's Table

Who can question the goodness and mercy of the Good Shepherd as evidenced by the table of rich abundant spiritual food which he prepares for us in the presence of our enemies? There is a special sweetness attached to this thought, now that we are living in the days of the presence of the Good Shepherd. The green pastures and the still waters might be thought of as the Lord's most abundant provision for his sheep throughout the entire age, and truly he has cared for them in their every time of need. But now, more than ever before, he is feeding his sheep, having prepared a table of the choicest spiritual food, the essential food that is designed to give them strength to overcome all the enemies which surround them in this "evil day." How truly wonderful is his goodness and mercy when viewed from the standpoint of the special provision he has made for us at this time! Let us appreciate this specially prepared table, let us partake of the "meat in due season" which is spread out so abundantly before us, and thereby be strengthened to follow the Good Shepherd in this time when so many are falling by the wayside.

The Holy Spirit

"Thou anointest my head with oil." Here is another manifestation of God's goodness. There is no greater evidence of God's love than his gift of the Holy Spirit, as symbolized by the oil of anointing. Jesus spoke of this explaining that just as earthly parents are pleased to give good gifts to their children, so the Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. Oh yes, God is so good, and he not only manifests his goodness by the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, but as we are filled with that Spirit and yield ourselves to its sweet influence, we partake of divine goodness, and are transformed into the image of God.

Just think of what the "oil" of the Holy Spirit means to the consecrated! It gives enlightenment, spiritual strength and comfort. By it we are commissioned to be co-workers with God, and by it also we are begotten to a new life and become new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). It fills us with love and gives us power and the spirit of a sound mind. It bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). We can call our heavenly father "abba father" (Matthew 14:36). Our relationship to God is sealed by the Holy Spirit; and by the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, its fruits of love, joy, and peace become manifested, enriching our own lives and blessing others. Truly the goodness of the Lord is demonstrated by his gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Overflowing Cup

In view of all these most wonderful ways in which the Psalmist has indicated that the goodness and mercy of the Lord are pursuing us, what could otherwise be the experience of life except that suggested by the assertion that our cup runneth over? This is true of



The Lord's table

each individual "sheep" that is following the Good Shepherd. Not only is the Shepherd's goodness and mercy revealed in the wonderful provisions which have been made alike for all his sheep, but he takes a personal and individual interest in them, providing each one with a "cup" peculiarly adapted to their special needs. How that cup runs over, being a full provision for our every time of need. Truly, each one of us can say, "I shall not want!"

One of the very marked tendencies of fallen human nature is the lack of constancy. Millions of the race start out zealously along some line of endeavor, but soon weary of their attempt and turn to something else. Even among the consecrated people of God this inclination to become weary in well doing must be guarded against (Galatians 6:9). How often we make a feeble effort to bear witness to the truth, through distribution of truth literature, or otherwise, and after a week or two, give it up and seek an easier way to serve the Lord. But God is not changeable (Malachi 3:6). He is constant in the fulfillment of his promises.

We need not fear that the green pastures will continue only but for a few days, or that the still waters of truth will just dry up and leave us thirsting in vain for the refreshment which they give. There is no danger that the Good Shepherd will not be on hand to restore our souls, just when our soul restoration is needed; or that he will ever fail to lead us in the paths of righteousness. Evil will never befall us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, for the Good Shepherd will continue to lead; and his rod and staff will continue to be used until we reach the very end of the narrow way.

Nor will there ever be a lack of food on the table which the Lord prepares for us in the presence of our enemies. It will not be a case of having spiritual food just for today, and not having it tomorrow; nor will there be any stinting in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to guide and enrich our lives. Ever and continuously the cup which the Lord provides will overflow. There will never be a time when it is not full. It is this constancy of the Good Shepherd's care, the never failing aspect of his goodness and mercy, that David affirms when he says that they will pursue us "all the days" of our lives. We can be rest assured of divine goodness and mercy, not merely for today, or tomorrow, but for every day and even for all our days, until we reach the very end of the way.

The Prayer Life of Jesus

“In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there” (Mark 1:35 NASB).

This verse brings out important details of Jesus’ prayer life and give us examples of how our prayer life should be planned.

Jesus Prayed Early

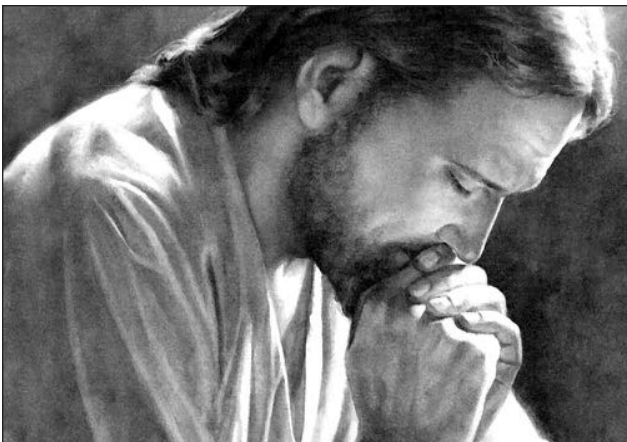
His day was going to be busy and so He set aside time early to commune with His Father. This was a priority in His life of service. Talking with our Heavenly Father should also be a priority, otherwise the cares and needs of the day can overwhelm us. We need direction from the Heavenly Father to prepare us to accomplish His will. “rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, **devoted to prayer**” (Romans 12:12 NASB).

Jesus Went to a Secluded Place

Jesus knew that during the day he would be surrounded by people who wanted to hear what he was preaching or coming to be healed. He needed a quiet place where he would not be disturbed to commune with His Father. Whenever possible we should try to find a secluded place to communicate with our Heavenly Father. There is a place for public prayer as long as it is not just to “be seen of men.” Jesus suggested “When you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you (Matthew 6:6 NASB).

Jesus Prayed to Know the Father’s Will

Jesus told his disciples “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38 NASB). To know the will of the Heavenly Father requires communication, otherwise, how can we surrender ourselves to the will of God if we do not know what He desires of us. Through prayer we gain a more intimate relationship with God.



Jesus, in prayer

Jesus Spent the Whole Night in Prayer

When it came to the choosing of His apostles Jesus requested his Father guidance. “It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12 NASB). There are times when circumstance occur that require patience while we wait on the Heavenly Father to answer our petitions. We can be assured that they will be answered in His perfect time and according to His will in our life.

Jesus Prayed for His Followers and Those That Persecuted Him

In John’s Gospel, the whole chapter is devoted to Jesus’ priestly prayer for His Heavenly Father’s protection over the disciples as he knew he was about to leave them. He prayed “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15 NASB). His prayer also looked forward to our day. “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21 NASB). Paul told Timothy “I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men” (1 Timothy 2:1 NASB). Following Jesus example we have a duty to pray for others both believers and unbeliever “pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44 NASB).

Jesus Prayed Alone

After a busy day of preaching and healing the people Jesus took time out, away from the crowd to commune with His Father. “After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone” (Matthew 14:23 NASB). This sets out the appropriate disposition and circumstances for our prayers, Jesus retired from the world around him, went up to place of solitude, with the silence and the quiet of the night. We too should try to the best of our ability to shut out the world and its distractions when we converse with our Heavenly Father.

In Conclusion

The Heavenly Father is always ready and waiting for His children to approach Him in prayer. We are promised “Every good thing given, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights (James 1:17 NASB). He delights to hear our requests.

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The Bible Teachings

On the Covenants, Mediator, Ransom,
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This book was published by the Berean Bible Institute during the 1970's and sets out the teachings from the Bible on topics which so eluded many in the Christian world. The insert in this edition of the Peoples Paper covers the next part of this 274-page book. For Brethren who would like to read more of the content, it is available through the Berean Bible Institute's official webpage.

www.australianbiblestudents.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/The-Bible-Teachings-on-the-Covenants2.pdf

The Hospital Room

TWO men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes and jobs, their military service, and their travels. And every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods when his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every colour. Grand old trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. With this pleasant daily interlude, days and weeks passed.

One morning, when the day nurse arrived, she found the lifeless body of the man by the window. He had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendant to take the body away.

When it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to do so, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.

Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the world outside. Finally, he would have the joy of seeing it for himself. He strained to look out the window.

It faced a blank wall. The man asked the nurse why his deceased roommate had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse replied, "Why, that man was blind. He couldn't even see the wall! **Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you.**"

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10 NKJV).

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RANSOMER, REDEEMER, SIN-OFFERING, ATONER, ADVOCATE, and MEDIATOR

Blessings Lost Through Quarrelling

Admitting that we are not justified by the degree of our knowledge of the Divine Plan, but by the fulness of our faith, we are, nevertheless, deeply interested in every expression of the Scriptures bearing upon the philosophy of the great fact which the arms of our faith have grasped as a whole. The fact was as large when first we laid hold upon it as it is today, but we did not see its details as we now see them. Quite possibly there may be certain features which will yet more fully open our eyes of understanding in the future. Our proper attitude is one of gratitude to God for knowledge of the blessed fact that His forgiveness of sins is somehow or other made possible to us through the death of Jesus. It was the appreciation of that fact which justified us and drew to the Lord in consecration, saying, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (1 Corinthians 5:14). Since that blessed moment, it has been our privilege to go on and on, growing in grace, in knowledge and appreciation, in love and self-sacrificing obedience.

Let us continue in this way and permit no amount of philosophising to rob us of the blessings and privileges already secured. Some seem in danger of so doing — in danger of quarrelling over philosophies which they cannot see; and, by the wrong spirit fostered through the quarrelling, they seem in danger of losing all the blessings ever enjoyed, let us not follow such a course, but, while maintaining our justifying faith and spirit of devotion, let us seek to appreciate every feature of Divine Truth presented to us in the Divine Word.

The Ransomer and the Ransom

The Gospel message is the good tidings respecting a Ransom sacrifice, on account of which God may be just and yet be the justifier of the believer. Of the Ransomer God gave

the first intimation to Father Abraham, yet without explaining the particulars. He merely intimated that in some manner Divine Justice would be satisfied by Abraham's offspring, the Messiah, and that in consequence a blessing would go through his Seed to all the families of the earth. When our Lord was introduced as the Seed of Abraham He made the first statement of the philosophy of the Divine Plan by which, as Abraham's Seed, He was to bring the promised blessing. He declared, "The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). This comprehensive statement of the Ransom was not elaborated — no details were given. However,

in the law to Israel, God prefigured and elaborated the Ransom, not in such a manner that all would understand it, but in types and shadows, which in His "due time" He proposed should be made clear and plain to such as would have the proper eye of understanding, enlightened by the holy spirit.

Sin-Offering of Atonement

The word Ransom, as we have already pointed out, signifies a price to correspond. Adam, disobedient and a sinner, was condemned to death and needed to be Ransomed or Redeemed or Purchased back from death and from the condemnation of Justice. As he was but one man, so it needed but one man to Redeem him, to Ransom him. But it needed a perfect man, and there was none such. So, God sent Jesus, holy, harmless, and undefiled, to be the Ransom of Adam and incidentally of his race, because all were involved through his disobedience. When, therefore, Jesus "died, the just for the unjust," on Calvary, a price sufficient had been laid down to redeem Adam and his race.

But this merit has not yet been placed in the hands of Justice. Merely the merit of the sacrifice of a perfect human was laid down in death, and it belonged to our Lord Jesus when the Father raised Him from the dead by His own power.

Jesus Appears for Church

What did the risen Jesus do with the merit of His own sacrifice? We answer that forty days later He ascended on high, there to appear in the presence of God for us — believers, the "household of faith." This was pictured in the Law. As Jesus said, "Moses wrote of me." (John 5:46.) In the type, Aaron the high priest, typified the consecrated Jesus anointed with the holy spirit, the High Priest of our profession. As Aaron took the blood of the bullock, which represented His own blood or life or sacrifice, and went with it into the Most Holy and sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat to make for himself (and the under-priests) and for his house (the tribe of Levi) atonement for sins, so did our Lord Jesus do in the antitype. He took not the blood of the bullock, but "His own blood," the merit of His own sacrifice. He sprinkled it not for the literal priests and Levites, the typical people, but for the antitypical Royal Priesthood, and Levites (or servants) of the "household of faith "

Divine Philosophy of Ransom

What has this to do with the Ransom? We answer, this is the philosophy of it, as set before us in the Scriptures. It is not God's intention nor our expectation that all or many will be able to understand this Divine

philosophy. As our Lord says, it is “given” to some to understand and not “given” to others (Matthew 13:11-17).

Merit Passes Through Body

So, then, our Ransom sacrifice was presented before the Father when Jesus ascended upon high after His resurrection; and, according to the God-given type, it was presented, not for all the people, but merely for the antitypical “household of faith.” The Sin-Offering, the offering which Christ made to Divine Justice in offset to man’s sin, was the Ransom. None but He could have given it, as we have shown, and He could have given it for one of the race only, or for all of the race of Adam, as He might choose to apply it. As a price it was sufficient for all, but for how many of the all He would choose to apply it rested entirely upon Himself and the Divine Plan, which He was following, although, as the type shows, He did not apply it for all, but for merely the “Household of faith” — “for us.” nevertheless it is ultimately to apply for all, “a ransom for all,” not only in the sense that it was sufficient to meet the penalty for all, but additionally in the sense that it will yet be made available to all — indirectly — by passing the merit through the “household of faith,” through the “members of His Body.”

Illustration, Springs, and Pipes

The waters of a great spring are set apart for the supply of a great city. To serve the intended purposes it is passed through numerous pipes and spigots. It is the same water in each spigot because from the same spring. In partaking of its refreshment, we might indeed refer to the spigot from which we drew it, or we might refer to the spring itself or sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other. So, in thinking of the merit of our Lord Jesus’ sacrifice we should remember that all sin-atonement merit sprang from our Lord’s sacrificial death — whenever applied and, however, He is the Ransomer. His blood is the blood of Atonement for the sin of Adam, which brought the death sentence upon him and his race. No one adds to that Ransom, and no one takes away from it. In the divine plan it is appropriated to the Church, “the elect,” in order to let us have the privilege of joining our Lord as His “members” and by dying with Him as sharers of His sacrifice we merely pass His merit on to natural Israel and the world through the New Covenant. He is the spring; we are the pipes.

Father Draws During Gospel Age, Son During Millennium

In “Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices” (published in 1880) we have already elaborated this subject. We therein show that Christ, instead of applying the merit of His sacrifice directly to the whole world, eventually effects the same thing by applying His merit to the comparatively small class drawn of the Father during this age. The Father draws (John 6:42) to the Son for “justification by faith in His blood” those who love righteousness and hate iniquity, and



The Mediatorial Kingdom is soon to be established.

who are feeling after God, if haply they might find Him. The Son receives these and acquaints them with the fact that He has already made atonement for sin and presented it on behalf of “everyone that believeth.” And then He guides them to the further privilege of this Gospel Age — that they may become joint-sacrificers with Him and thus become His Bride and Joint-Heir in His Mediatorial Kingdom, which is soon to be established for the blessing of the unbelieving world — yet undrawn, unjustified, unblessed. The Son will draw them during the Millennium. — John 12:32.

The “Mystery”

Why should the merit of Christ Jesus be thus placed upon the “household of faith” and not upon the world of mankind in general?

We answer that this feature of the Divine Plan of the Ages is, as yet, a “mystery” to all except the “saints.” To the latter God reveals this great privilege — that by it He will “bring many sons to glory,” under the Captaincy of Jesus, and that these will be called “His brethren,” “His members,” “His Bride,” according to the various standpoints of observation. In order that they may share His nature and His glory they must share His sufferings, “His death”; thus, since He must suffer, the just for the unjust, so these, being

justified through faith in His blood, must similarly suffer, the just for the unjust, as His “members,” and as “filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ”; not afflictions left behind in the sense of the Redeemer’s incompetency to make the full Atonement for the sins of the whole world, but sins left behind in the sense that our Lord did not apply His own merit directly to the world of unbelievers. “Their sins are left behind that the merit of Christ, passing through the elect Church, might benefit them just as much in the end, and additionally might give the “elect” of this age the opportunity of suffering with their Lord and Head, in order that in due time they might be glorified with Him (Colossians 1:24).

Bullock and Goat Treated Alike

This is all clearly shown in the type of Leviticus 16. As the High Priest's own personal sacrifice is represented in the bullock, so the sacrifice of His adopted members, justified by His blood, is shown in the secondary or supplemental sacrifice of the goat. All who have studied the subject remember well that everything that was done to the bullock was done to the goat, and that thus our lord in advance foretold and illustrated that all who will be members of the "elect," the Royal Priesthood, must be copies of God's dear Son, the great High Priest, by whose sacrifice they were justified. Again, these are they who are called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, in the "narrow-way" — the way of self-sacrifice, self-denial, the way of the cross.

We have repeatedly called attention to the fact that these highly honoured ones were originally "children of wrath even as others," and many of them "strangers and aliens from God," but brought nigh unto Him "by the blood of the cross" and still closer through the sufferings of this Gospel Age, this antitypical Atonement Day of Sin-offerings.

Two Sin-Offerings in type and Antitype

Who cannot see that our Lord offered Himself once for all, a sin-offering? and that Christ died no more than "once for all"? Who cannot see that there were two distinct sin-offerings in the type — the bullock and the goat? Who cannot see that there are two sin-offerings during this Gospel Age, our Lord, our Redeemer, the centre of all the merit, and the sacrifice of His Church, His Body, to whom His merit is applied? Who cannot see that these two offerings, the bullock (Jesus) and the goat (the members of His Body), are the "better sacrifices" mentioned by the Apostle Paul? (Hebrews 9: 23). Who cannot see that these are the sin-offerings which alone were burned outside the camp? (Leviticus 16:27). Who cannot see that the Apostle urges us to present our bodies living sacrifices and to "Go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach"? (Hebrews 13:13). So surely as two and two make four, we who go without the camp with our lord, are therefore participants in the sin-offerings, exactly as the Apostle declares.

Church, Not World, Have Advocate

We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous. The world has no advocate with the Father, because they do not believe and have not accepted Jesus as their Redeemer and Advocate: He has not "appeared" for them, but "for us." When He appeared in the presence of God for us, just after His ascension on high, He presented His merit for believer's "sins that are past by the forbearance of God." He did not apply His merit for our future sins, transgressions, trespasses, weaknesses, ignorance, etc. As the basis of His work as our Advocate, our lord retained a measure of His abundant merit for this purpose, with a view to having us come daily to the

throne of the heavenly grace to obtain mercy — not for the original sin, which for believers is past, through the forbearance of God, but for our daily trespasses of ignorance or weakness. He encourages us to remember that the imperfections of our earthen vessel need be no hindrance as Hew Creatures, spirit-begotten, because for all these human weaknesses "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Thus, we are exhorted to keep our garments unspotted from the world, because if we are in the right condition of heart we may appreciate the privileges of going to the throne of grace and having every trespass of weakness and ignorance blotted out, washed away.

Justice Satisfied for Church's Sins Only

Thus, our lord is the Atoner, "for our sins and also for the sins of the whole world." But there is a difference. Our sins are represented in one part of the sin-offering, the bullock, and the sins of the whole world are represented in the other part, the goat (Hebrews 13). He has already made satisfaction for our sins. Now He is offering His "members" in sacrifice that we may share His sufferings and glory. He is passing His merit through us that He may apply it "in due time" "for the sins of the whole world." Surely the merit of the Atoner is not decreased in any wise by reason of the passing through those whom He accepts and whom the Father accepts as His "members" on the larger scale!

Illustration of Wheat and Corn

This is the thought which our Lord suggested, saying "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). The immediate fruitage of our Lord's death was the bringing forth of the Church and the "household of faith." The dying in turn of those grains accepted as part and parcel with the original is to bring forth in the lord's due time the appointed crop suggested by the Prophet, saying, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (Psalms 72:16).



Grains of wheat fallen into the ground bring forth much fruit.

Ransom, Redeemer, Mediator Not Synonymous

The word “Mediator” is not synonymous with the words “Ransomer,” “Redeemer,” etc. On the contrary there could be no use for a Mediator until first a Redeemer had ransomed mankind. The word “mediator” is Scripturally used in connection with the establishment of the Covenants, and never otherwise. For instance, “Moses, the mediator of the law Covenant,” and Christ, “the Mediator of the New Covenant.” Notice, however, that Aaron, the priest, did not mediate any Covenant; neither does Jesus, as the antitypical Priest, mediate a Covenant. It was the work of the priest to offer sacrifices for sins, and this our lord has been doing for nearly nineteen centuries, as the antitypical High Priest. All of the antitypical priesthood must offer up “sacrifices holy and acceptable to God,” else they cannot be of the “Royal Priesthood” (Romans 12:1).

Moses Typified Greater Christ as Mediator, Not as Priest

But notice further that Moses typified the greater Christ — Jesus the Head and the Church His “members.” As, for instance, in Acts 3:22 St. Peter says, “For Moses verily said unto the fathers, a Prophet (Teacher and Mediator) shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye obey in all things, whatsoever He shall say unto you; and it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not obey that Prophet, shall be destroyed from amongst the people.” The antitypical Moses here pictured was undoubtedly the glorified Christ, Head and Body, in His instruction of the world during the Millennium. It is certainly not true that all are destroyed who disobey the lord at the present time. It is this antitypical Moses taken from amongst the brethren that God has been raising up during this Gospel Age. Our Redeemer and lord was raised up first to be “Head over the Church which is His Body.” Since then, the members are being raised up from the world, separated from the world to the Lord and the Millennial work. Ephesians 1:23, 4:4,12,16, 5:30, Colossians 1:18, 3:15.

Moses was not the typical priest and made not the typical atonement for sin; that was the work of the priest — Aaron. Moses as the mediator of the law Covenant typified The Christ, Head and Body, Mediator of the New Covenant.

However, that it might be seen that the work of the Mediator of the future in the sealing of the New Covenant will be vitally identified with the Atonement work, we have the declaration of the type that Moses used in sealing the Law Covenant, the typical blood of both bulls and goats. The lesson of this most distinctly is that the greater Mediator, Jesus the Head of the Church, His “Members,” will seal or sprinkle the New Covenant with the blood of both of the sacrifices, the meritorious blood of the antitypical bullock (our lord, our Redeemer), and also the blood of His “members” (the Church), the antitype of the goat.

Gradual Development of Divine Plan

Looking back at the original Covenant made with Abraham, it is like a closed-up telescope. For hundreds of years natural Israel seemed to be the Seed of Abraham, to whom the promises were made and through whom all the nations of the world would be blessed. Yet after more than sixteen centuries the telescope was slipped out a notch and matters so completely changed that the Jew does not know what happened unto this day. The thing which did happen was that Christ Jesus came and personally became the Seed of Abraham, by obeying the law. Then, by dying for Adam’s race, He was exalted to be the Spiritual Seed of Abraham. Then He was ready to give the earthly part of Israel’s blessings to as many as would receive them — by justification by faith.

Bewildered Israel held off and the favour went to the few of that nation and to thousands of others previously in darkness — Gentiles. These, after accepting the blessed privilege of human justification, were invited to surrender it, to sacrifice it, as their Redeemer had done.

This work of sacrificing has been going on for more than eighteen centuries, and soon will be finished. When the sacrificing finishes, to whom will the blessed privileges of fellowship with God and Covenant privileges then be given? We answer that the Apostle, and the prophets declare that it will be given to Israel again, but not by their own Law Covenant, but by a Law Covenant which the Lord will make with them at that time. The Redeemer and His sacrificing associates, His “members” or “Bride,” will act as Mediator of the New Covenant between God and Israel (Ezekiel 16:60,61, Romans 11:27-32).

New Covenant not Confined to Those of Jewish Birth

Furthermore, the blessed privileges of that New Covenant will not be confined to those of Jewish Birth, but all the nations of the earth will be privileged to become “Israelites indeed,” without guile, and to come under the terms, conditions and blessings of that New Covenant. Thus, eventually the blood of Christ shall extend in its efficacy and blessing, not only to the “household of faith” of this present time, but to the Jews in the next age and through them to all nations. It will be nonetheless the blood of Christ that will bless and whose efficacy will restore all nations to fellowship with God because (1) Spiritual Israel and (2) Natural Israel shall have been associated in conveying the blessing- to all nations.

Priest and Mediator Always Separate

Have in mind, then, that a priest never is a mediator of a Covenant and that a mediator of a Covenant is never a priest to offer sin-offering and make atonement. What God has thus distinctly separated in His Word, we do well to keep separate in our thoughts and words, else our poor heads will become confused over terms, even while holding fast to certain facts (Z. 1909 — 87).