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2025: A Biblical Perspective

*“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty”
(2 Timothy 3:1 ESV).*

The year 2025 was marked by significant events that shaped global dynamics, challenged social and political norms, and advanced technological progress. Yet, in many ways, the world has moved further away from finding solutions to age-old problems.

The Global Environment

One of the most notable events of 2025 was the global effort to address climate change. The United Nations Climate Summit in July brought together world leaders to assess progress on their commitments under the Paris Agreement, which was adopted on December 12, 2015. It officially took effect on November 4, 2016, but nearly ten years of debate have resulted in questionable progress. Scientific reports have claimed that the severe impacts of climate change were noted in more frequent and intense extreme weather events worldwide. Regulations aimed at reducing fossil fuel use continued to produce mixed results as many countries experienced leadership changes that did not support these initiatives due to domestic issues. Critics argued that accelerating the shift to “green energy” could result in job losses in traditional industries. Supporters contended that investing in green technologies would generate new employment opportunities.

Technological Advancements in Artificial Intelligence

In 2025, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) gained prominence. Breakthroughs in AI technology transformed numerous industries, especially health-care, transportation, and finance. Notably, a significant development was the launch of CRISPR-AI in health-care. This revolutionary platform combined genome-editing technologies with AI to accelerate research in genetic disorders and personalized medicine.

Autonomous vehicles have advanced in their deployment throughout urban areas. By the end of 2025, cities like San Francisco and Singapore had begun implementing fully autonomous public transportation systems, marking a new era in urban mobility. These developments sparked discussions on ethical considerations, especially regarding AI decision-making in life-or-death situations.

Like other perceived advancements, the widespread use of AI has raised concerns about security and job loss. Many workers faced uncertainty as increased automation threatened jobs across various industries. Additionally, the misuse of AI in social media has raised questions about whether the technology can balance innovation with responsible oversight.

Global Health

The shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect global health discussions in 2025. Despite progress in vaccination and treatment, new variants posed challenges for containment efforts. In response, countries launched large-scale vaccination campaigns, including booster shots targeting emerging variants.

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Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) called for increased funding and research to better prepare for future pandemics. The year also saw the creation of the Global Pandemic Response Coalition, a collaborative effort among nations aimed at improving surveillance and quick response capabilities. Countries that shared resources and information were more able to manage outbreaks.

Backlash against vaccines intensified, driven by a mix of political division, the quick development and deployment of new vaccine technology, and the spread of misinformation on social media.

Geopolitical Tensions and Conflicts

Geopolitical tensions intensified in 2025, particularly among major powers like the United States and China. The South China Sea remained a hotspot, with an increased military presence leading to confrontations between naval forces. Additionally, the Taiwan Strait experienced heightened rhetoric as both sides solidified their positions, raising fears of potential conflict.

This instability spread to Eastern Europe, where Russia's involvement in regional conflicts led NATO to strengthen defensive measures. The situation revealed the fragile state of international relations. Diplomacy, military planning, and economic interests gained importance as ongoing conflicts continue to contribute to global instability.

Social Movements

2025 also marked a resurgence of social movements advocating for human rights and equality. Protests in various countries were fueled by increased perceptions of rights — real or imagined. The influence of social media as a mobilization tool became more apparent, transforming how grassroots movements organized and communicated. New laws in several countries were enacted under pressure from politics.

Middle East

One of the major highlights of 2025 was the continued progress of the Abraham Accords, which started in 2020. In 2025, several Arab countries expanded their diplomatic ties with Israel, resulting in more trade and cultural exchanges. The normalization of relations enabled joint efforts in technology innovation and security cooperation, especially in counter-terrorism and regional stability. This change produced a more cooperative approach to shared issues like water scarcity.

However, Syria remained a major obstacle to peace. The underlying causes of the civil war that overthrew the previous regime were not addressed. Still, an international coalition established a ceasefire, enabling humanitarian aid to reach millions of displaced people. Additionally, the return of government control in some areas signified a significant change, although concerns about human rights violations and regional



Israel and neighbors

governance persisted.

2025 also saw major socio-economic shifts as Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, kept diversifying their economies away from oil reliance. Challenges like youth unemployment still remain a key concern.

Finally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained in the spotlight as protests worldwide tilted in support of the “Palestinian cause.” Suggestions for a two-state solution gained traction. The international community’s involvement in mediation seeks to influence the outcome. According to scripture, this will never happen.

Ezekiel 38 and Russia

“And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal ... After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, upon the mountains of Israel ... and thou shalt ascend, and all thy hordes and many peoples with thee” (Ezekiel 38:1-9).

Ezekiel describes a future time when an enemy, known as Gog, from the land of Magog, will try to invade Israel. Genesis 10 links these names to the area around the Caucasus Mountains, now part of southern Russia. The leader of this invading army is called Gog. He is expected to lead the forces of evil against Israel at the Time of the End. Notably, verse 5 of Ezekiel’s prophecy mentions Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya, which are associated with the prophetic Gog in the conflict. Persia, as mentioned in the book of Daniel, is today’s Iran. Sheba and Dedan, also listed in this alliance, can be traced to Arabia and Yemen.

Today, under President Vladimir Putin, we observe events that highlight Russia’s increasing role in the Middle East, bringing this prophecy closer to reality. Closely linked to the prophecy is Iran (Persia),

which has also undergone significant changes in the past year.

The Russian approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has evolved over time. During the Cold War, Russia was hostile toward Israel, especially after Israel's founding in 1948. It limited Jewish emigration and built relations with the PLO and Arab countries. Russia also provided scholarships to Arabs and Palestinians. However, in the 1990s, this changed when Gorbachev co-hosted a meeting with George H. W. Bush to promote a two-state solution.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, a wave of Jewish migration occurred from Soviet-controlled regions like Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, which shifted Russian perspectives on Israel. When Putin took office in 2000, over a million Israelis traced their roots back to the Soviet Union, mostly speaking Russian. Putin also had personal connections to Jewish families.

Vladimir Putin, born in 1952, grew up in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) after WWII. In his autobiography, *First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self Portrait*, he mentions a Jewish couple becoming his “de-facto” parents and taking care of him. Putin also writes about studying German under a Jewish teacher who emigrated to Israel. When Putin joined the KGB, he visited the woman on official state visits and even bought her a flat for retirement — although it has recently been revealed that one of his billionaire friends purchased it for her as Putin's proxy. When speaking of the Israeli population, Putin refers to “our Jews.” Many claim that he is trying to entice Israeli Jews to return to Russia, viewing them as a resource for high technology, a crucial need in Russia's pursuit of global leadership.

For the first time in nearly four decades, Iran faces a potential leadership change — and possibly even regime transformation. As Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's tenure nears its end, a 12-day war in June revealed the fragile foundation of the system he built. Israel targeted Iranian cities and military sites, paving the way for the U.S. to drop 14 bunker-busting

bombs on Iranian nuclear facilities. The conflict showcased the stark contrast between Tehran's ideological bravado and the limited power of a regime that has lost much of its regional influence, no longer controls its skies, and has less authority over its streets. At the war's end, 86-year-old Khamenei came out of hiding to declare victory in a raspy voice — a display of strength that, in reality, highlighted the regime's weaknesses.

Over the past two years — since Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, which Khamenei alone among major world leaders openly supported — his life's work has been dismantled by Israel and the United States. His closest military and political allies have been killed or assassinated. His regional proxies have been weakened. His extensive nuclear program, built at great expense to Iran's economy, has been destroyed.

Yet the deeper truth remains when a totalizing ideology collapses, it often leaves behind cynicism and nihilism instead of renewal. Post-Soviet Russia focused more on accumulating wealth than on democratic development. Similarly, a post-theocratic Iran might show patterns where consumerism and flashy spending replace lost faith and shared purpose.

An Iranian version of Putin might adopt tactics from the Islamic Republic, seeking stability through causing chaos among Iran's neighbors, threatening global energy supplies, hiding aggression under a new ideology, and becoming wealthy alongside other elites while promising to restore Iran's dignity. For the US and Iran's neighbours, the lesson from Russia is clear: the end of ideology doesn't guarantee democracy. It can just as easily lead to a new strongman who is just as unscrupulous, full of renewed grievances, and driven by new ambitions.

Iran and Arabia, key players in Ezekiel's prophecy, are now an essential part of Russian foreign policy. In 2015, Russia became involved in the Syrian civil war; Putin states that Moscow's goal was to protect Israel from threats from Iran, Hezbollah, and ISIS. Shortly after the intervention, Russia established a communication channel with Israel, allowing Israel to inform Russia of any planned strikes against Iranian proxies in Syria to prevent counterattacks. Israel now refers to Russia as its “neighbor to the north.”

October 7, 2023

For much of his regime, Vladimir Putin has valued Russia's relationship with Israel. However, since its invasion of Ukraine and Hamas' attack on Israel, things have changed. In just over a year, the Premier's attitude has shifted considerably. The Kremlin now labels Ukraine's Jewish President Zelenskyy as a Nazi. Russia's reliance on Iran for drones and military support has increased Putin's anti-Semitic remarks and pushed him further away from Netanyahu. He has openly criticized Israel while forging relationships with Hamas and other terrorist groups.



Iran suffered loss of nuclear facilities.



Ukrainian War Damage

The situation in the Middle East has become significantly more complicated. Russia has strong interests in how events develop in the region. Wars cost a lot, and its ongoing conflict with Ukraine — expected to last for years — has affected oil revenues and financial assets. It was recently reported that Krill Dmitriev, head of Russia’s sovereign wealth fund, along with several billionaire Russian investors, gained access to Dubai as a center for corporate relocations during negotiations for the original Abrahamic Accords (along with other European companies). Saudi Arabia, which was not a party to those accords, now hosts many major Russian companies. Russia will undoubtedly be a party to any discussions about the future of the Palestinians and the land of Israel. This suggests a need to reconsider the prophecy of Ezekiel 38.

Preparing for the Time of the End

Israel is central to God’s plan. The reestablishment and revival of the nation confirm that His promises are true. Starting with fewer than 600,000 people in 1948, immigration has increased so that now more Jews live in Israel than in any other country. However, before 10/7/2023, Pew surveys showed that two-thirds of Israelis were either “not religious” or “convinced atheists.” With antisemitism rising in the Western world, we should expect more Jews to move to Israel, even though most will probably remain unaware of

God’s plan for them until the final fight against Gog.

“The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). Amid vivid prophecies of Christ’s Kingdom bringing Millennial glory on the earth, the fall and destruction of Great Babylon, Isaiah describes one major event — the foundation of the plan of salvation. “But though He had performed so many signs in their sight, they still were not believing in Him” (John 12:37). Isaiah’s question, speaking from a future perspective, asks why almost no one believed Jesus was the Messiah, even though he fulfilled all the predictions Isaiah made. Skeptics remain today. “Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, They will raise up former devastations; And they will repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4). Israel stays blind until the Church is complete. The land is now being restored (current battles are part of this process), and the people are being regathered. Advances in science and technology are benefiting the world.

Keep Looking Up

As shown by all these events, the world will continue to keep Israel in the forefront of discussions (Zechariah 12:2) and respond to whatever happens there. During this critical time in history, let us be students of prophecy but not prophets. However, this should not be our primary focus. Be aware of what is happening, but don’t become overly focused. “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap” (Luke 21:34). Most people in the world remain concerned about get-rich-quick schemes, lose-weight-fast diets. However, Biblical long-term scenarios stay at the bottom of their list of interests.

When we wash an infant’s hair, they tilt their head down, causing the shampoo to run into their eyes. If they look up, there is no problem. When we look down (at our earthly problems), we tend to overemphasize the cares and interests of this life. When we look up, we bring a spiritual perspective into our lives. Let us continue to look up until we hear the words of Matthew 25:23: “His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy’” (New American RV).

*“The Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:7)*

In Remembrance of Christ

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-24 NASB).

Jesus was a Jew, and was, therefore, obligated to every feature of the Mosaic Law. He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. This study points to the fulfilment of one feature of the Law — the Passover — not that it is already entirely fulfilled, but that the antitype has been in process of fulfilment for over nineteen centuries, during which time the Church of the First-born remains covered by the blood.

To appreciate this, we must have clearly in mind the type. Approximately 3,500 years ago God delivered the people of Israel from the despotic power of Pharaoh, King of Egypt. Time after time Pharaoh had refused to let the people go, preferring to hold them as chattels, slaves. Time after time God sent plagues upon Egypt as chastisements. Under the influence of each plague Pharaoh repented, and through Moses entreated God for mercy for himself and the people for relief from the plague. Nevertheless, every manifestation of Divine mercy tended only to harden his heart, until finally the tenth plague, the severest of all, was necessary. That plague consisted in the execution of the death sentence against all the first-born of Egypt. But the Israelites in Egypt were exempt from its provisions under certain conditions. Each family was required to have its own lamb, not a bone of which was to be broken. Its blood was sprinkled on the doorposts of the house, and the family, assembled within, partook of its flesh, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, pilgrim-like, with staff in hand, ready for departure out of Egypt in the morning.

Passover to be Observed

When that night the Divine sentence slew all of Egypt's first-borns, the first-borns of Israel were passed over or spared, hence the name Passover. And this ceremony, as a reminder of the great blessing of the Lord upon Israel, was commended to be observed yearly as a still greater mercy and blessing yet to come.

A little later on those spared first-borns were exchanged for one of the tribes — Levi. Thereafter the Levites were the passed-over firstborns and were specially devoted to God and His service.

Those experiences of the Israelites and their first-borns were very real, and properly very interesting to them; but they are still more interesting to Christians, who themselves are antitypes now being passed over. By Christians we do not mean all who

merely make profession, nor all who attend Church, however regularly. We mean merely the saintly few who are now being called and being tested as to faithfulness to the Lord, and by faith being passed over — from death unto life. These are Scripturally styled “The Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). As the deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egypt took place after the sparing or passing over of the firstborn, so, correspondingly, the Divine blessing will come upon the world of mankind directly their passing from death unto life, by the power of the First Resurrection. If there is a first-born class, it implies that there will be an after-born class. Thus the Scriptures everywhere distinctly teach that the present call, trial, testing, proving and final rewarding of the Church will not be the end of Divine mercy toward humanity, but, on the contrary, will be only its beginning; for since the saintly are spoken of as the “Church of the first-born,” or, as the Apostle declares, “the first-fruits unto God of His creatures” we are assured thereby that after-fruits are equally part of the Divine Programme.

The Levites

Amongst the Levites were several divisions, representing different ranks and grades of the Church of Christ. But the principal division or section of the Levites was the priestly family of Aaron, just as there is a special class amongst the antitypical Levites, the faithful few, known in the Scriptures as the Royal Priesthood.



Preparation for the first Passover

In Jesus' day the time had come for the fulfilment of the antitype of the Passover. Jesus Himself was to be the Passover Lamb. By faith the merit of His sacrifice, His blood, was to be sprinkled upon the doorposts of His people's hearts, and His flesh, the merit of His earthly perfection, was to be eaten or appropriated by them in their minds. With it they were to eat the unleavened bread of the Divine promises, and bitter herbs of trials and adversities, and withal they were to drink wine, the blood of the grape, symbolically implying their participation with the Lamb in ignominy and sufferings.

The Lamb of God, Jesus, the antitypical Passover Lamb, was slain over nineteen centuries ago on the exact anniversary of the killing of the typical lamb. The sacrifice of Jesus needs not to be repeated, for by faith we all sprinkle this same blood today, and in our hearts feed upon the merit of the same earthly sacrifice and have plenty of bitter herbs of persecution and drink of the blood — share the Master's spirit and its reward of suffering for righteousness' sake.

The Little Flock

Not many have experienced these privileges during all these nineteen centuries — in all but a "little flock." Nor are there many who envy them their present experiences; nor are there many who appreciate how great will be their reward and blessings in the life to come. Then, instead of suffering with Christ, they shall reign with Him in glory, honour, and immortality.

Jesus, about to begin the fulfilment of this type by dying as the antitypical Passover Lamb ("Christ our Passover is slain for us," 1 Corinthians 5:7), instituted for His followers an annual remembrance, which, in their minds, would take the place of the type, and continually remind them of the great Antitype. Instead of the literal flesh of the lamb, our Master used bread, and instead of the blood, the fruit of the vine, and instead of a further commemoration of the type, He directed that this be done in remembrance of the antitype — "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," and the Passover coming to the Church of the firstborn, as precedent to the great blessings for Israel and all the families of the earth.

Our Lord, as a Jew, was obligated to keep the typical Passover, eating of the literal lamb, etc., first; but subsequently, after the Passover supper, He instituted with the bread and fruit of the vine His substitutionary memorial of Himself, saying, "Take eat, this is my body. And He took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And he said ... Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God" — until His second coming in power and great glory to receive the Church as His elect Bride and Joint-Heir in His kingdom, and to shower blessings richly upon Israel, and through Israel upon the whole world of mankind.



Jesus arrested in the garden

The Hour of Betrayal

The hour for betrayal was drawing near. The Master knew by some power unknown to us who would betray Him, etc. Breaking the matter to the twelve, He said, "One of you will betray me." Each said, "Is it I?" Even Judas brazenly challenged the Master's knowledge of his deceitful course and said, "Is it I?" The answer was, "It is as you have said — you are the betrayer." The Divine programme was carried out by the traitor; and the Scriptures were fulfilled, which declare that Jesus should be sold for thirty pieces of silver; but the coincidence marks the Divine foreknowledge without implying that God in any manner instigated the traitorous conduct, hence the statement, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." From this standpoint we are to understand that there is no hope for Judas in a future life. His sorrow and anguish before his death were such as found no compensation in any happiness he had enjoyed in previous days.

In giving the disciples, the bread which represented His flesh, and the cup which represented His blood, the Master pictorially offered them justification and sanctification, and, as Paul explained, He did more than this — He offered them a participation with Himself in the sufferings of the present and in the glories of the future (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17, Matthew 26:29). The antitype of the cup in its higher sense will be the new joys of the kingdom which all the faithful in Christ will share with the great King of Glory, when He shall take unto Himself His great power and reign.

"Lord, I would keep Thy Holy feast,
Like Israel when His bondage ceased.
And safe beneath the sprinkled mark,
His every home became an ark.

Only the lamb which Israel slew
I need not to make Heed anew:
Because the blood which stained the Cross
Is mark of which there ne'er is loss.

I'd keep the feast with bread from heaven,
Free from all taint of earthly leaven:
Yet find some sad resemblance glide,
Which sets the bitter herbs beside.

I seek the feast with up girt mind,
As for immediate work assigned;
And eat like one in passing stay,
Impatient to resume the way.

That sprinkled blood hath had the power
To hold me safe is judgment's hour;
But still for me a task remains,
To haste and flee from Egypt's plains.

With Thy refreshing viands fed,
I shrink not, Lord, wherever led;
And still with pilgrim's staff in hand,
Plod firmly tow'ards the promised land." — *Selected*

Memorial, 2026

"Do this in remembrance of me"
(1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

The anniversary of the Lord's Memorial will fall on Tuesday March 31, 2026. after sundown. It is for the brethren to arrange their observance in accord with the spirit of the occasion within their ecclesias. An online service will be provided for brethren starting at 1900 hours AEST. Details of this service can be obtained by emailing — australianbiblestudents@gmail.com



Comparing Jacob and Esau

Twin brothers, but distinct differences

The characters of Jacob and Esau are entirely different. In Genesis 25:27 we are told Esau was a skilful hunter and a man of the field. He cared only for the pleasures of the moment as he was worldly, not religious, indifferent to his parents' wishes, uninterested in the Divine Covenant and unmindful of its privileges and responsibilities.

Jacob was called "a quiet man" in the Revised Standard Version. He was peaceable, living a Bedouin life and being content to take care of the flocks. (Later, he served Laban by tending sheep and goats.) In contrast, Esau lived an active, wilder existence. The hunter was being compared with the shepherd, who peacefully pastured flocks and lived a Bedouin type of existence. Jacob was humble; Esau was more aggressive.

In Hebrews 12:16 we read, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person as Esau, who for one meal sold his own birthright" (RVIC). The RVIC states he was profane and the NASB renders this as godless. So, Esau was a worldly person in his desires and as a hunter along natural exploits. Esau could be considered a fornicator in that when he was 40 years of age, he took two Hittite wives from among the forbidden tribes (Genesis 26:34, 35).

Jacob was his mother's darling, staying at home till he was 77 years old. He followed domestic occupations and was occupied with flocks and cattle. His interests centred around his home. Although crafty, subtle, and deceitful, he showed strength of character, patient endurance, and warmth of affection. However, long years of discipline and suffering were

needed to purify him and make him worthy of the Divine Covenant and Blessing. He believed in and sought after his father's and grandfather's God and held spiritual things in reverence.

Esau was in some respects the better man; a fine country gentleman popular with all. He was not religious; he never prayed or built an altar. He was just a man of the world. Jacob, on the other hand, liked to bargain. He lied a few times to his father in obtaining his birthright. But he had one redeeming feature: deep down in that clever calculating heart there was devotion, as he never went anywhere without building an altar and praying to God. The book of Genesis records his life covering twenty-five chapters where we see Jacob growing finer and better while his brother Esau grew coarser and sank into obscurity. In fact, Jacob became one of the outstanding figures in Jewish history. The real passion for spiritual things proved to be Jacob's salvation. All lives to be successful must be lives of one desire; the greatest desire of all is worship and service of our Heavenly Father.

In Genesis 25:28, "Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob." This verse shows that parents do not always make the right choice with their children. They may fail to recognize the virtue of one above another. Rebekah probably cherished in her heart the specific answer she got from the Lord when she was pregnant and felt discomfort within her prior to giving birth, that "The elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23).

Esau Sells His Birthright

One day Esau found Jacob preparing a pottage of aromatic lentils. Genesis 25:29-34 gives the account of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob. Let us first take note that there was nothing in this transaction that violated justice. Esau came upon his brother after what apparently was an unfruitful hunting mission for game. He was tired and very hungry. Jacob was boiling some stew. Esau got one sniff of the delicious broth and immediately asked for some. The canny Jacob saw an opportunity and asked Esau to sell him his birthright for a bowl of the stew. Esau, who clearly did not appreciate that birthright, quickly agreed and it became what is called today a "done deal."

In fact, Jacob acted most appropriately. The Scripture states that Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:34). Paul places the matter of Esau's priorities very clearly: "No immoral person, no one worldly-minded like Esau. He sold his birthright for a single meal, and you know that although he wanted afterwards to claim the blessing, he was rejected; though he begged for it to the point of tears, he found no way open for second thoughts" (Hebrews 12:16,17, New English Version).

Although he did not receive the spiritual inheritance, or birthright, he did get the earthly (natural) part of the Abrahamic promise. Esau lost and could not get back the birthright of the firstborn.

The only thing that would seem to extend some mercy to Esau is that he did get a blessing from Isaac along temporal lines. Also, one can easily sell "their birthright" for "one single meal." Proverbs 23:23 admonishes, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." When we disregard the truth, we disregard the Giver of the truth; we disdain the hand of the Bridegroom that is offered. When any of the prospective Bride class dissemble from that hand, they manifest a lack of interest in the privilege of the truth, and that act can bring condemnation.

Since Jacob now was the legitimate owner of the birthright, he could expect to receive the blessings which were to flow from it. These would include the special blessing from his father, Isaac, a double portion of the family inheritance, and the right to lead the family in worship as patriarch priest of the family. Since Jacob was a worshiper of Jehovah, he should have had faith to await the outworking of all of this by God.

Esau further despised his heritage by marrying two Canaanite wives from "the daughters of Heth" (Genesis 27:46); they were daughters of Hittites (Genesis 26:34). These few words describe graphically Esau's complete indifference to spiritual privileges showing no regret, no sad feelings, and indifference to the Abrahamic promise. If it is argued that Jacob was cunning and mean in taking advantage, it must be said he really and truly valued the privileges which Esau despised.

God had marked out Jacob as the heir to the promises, but Isaac struggled against God's will and Jacob's blessing was obtained by deceit. Is there any excuse for Jacob's subtlety? Jacob sought no earthly goods; after all, it was not the elder brother's share of the father's wealth that he wanted. All that was Isaac's, Jacob resigned to Esau, and he went away penniless to Haran. However, Rebekah and Jacob should have trusted God to bring about what He had predetermined before their birth. Had Rebekah's faith been pure and exalted she would have known that God would somehow fulfil His word even at the



Esau and Jacob

last minute without her help. But the fault began with Rebekah probably considering she was preventing a grievous wrong.

Jacob Lies

To obtain Isaac's blessing Jacob impersonated Esau, but he did not keep up his acting role very well, for when Isaac asked how he had obtained the venison so quickly Jacob replied (Genesis 27:20), "because the Lord thy God brought it to me." It was not in Esau's character to see anything providential in his successes in hunting exploits and this combined with the quickness in preparing the meal, may have aroused Isaac's suspicions.

Consecutive lies were given by Jacob to Isaac (verse 19): I am Esau, I made the food. It was a kid not game, and the food was prepared by his mother (verse 20). Isaac asked why were you so quick? Jacob responded that the Lord had provided. Isaac suspiciously mentioned it is the voice of Jacob — Jacob lied, I am Esau — he then presented hairy hands that were the kid's skins. He even put on Esau's clothes to smell like Esau.

Later Jacob was deceived by Laban many times when he substituted Leah for Rachel (Genesis 29:23-25), and he even changed Jacob's wages 10 times (Genesis 31:7). Many years later Jacob was deceived by his own sons into thinking Joseph had been killed by a wild animal, by bringing Joseph's coat covered in the blood of a kid trying to prove his death. Thus, reminding us of Jacob's lies in impersonating Esau and dressing up like him.

When Esau later revealed what Jacob had done (Genesis 27:33), "Isaac trembled very exceedingly." This was not only at having been deceived and the disappointment of Esau losing the blessing, but on reflection that he felt he had really been resisting God by recalling what God had spoken much earlier to Rebecca, prior to the twins' birth. Isaac acknowledged the Divine purpose as he had no word of blame for Rebekah and Jacob, but confirmed to him the blessing would stand, because Isaac began to see the situation as providential. "Yea and he (Jacob) shall be blessed."

"Is he not rightly named Jacob?" (a supplanter) claimed Esau (verse 36), thus playing upon his brother's name. Esau claimed Jacob had defrauded him of his birthright and now wanted it back. But Esau never told his father that he had sold his birthright to Jacob much earlier, and yet here he alludes that Jacob has dealt with him fraudulently and deceitfully. If anything, Esau dealt fraudulently with his father Isaac.

Rebekah advised Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Haran, saying (Genesis 27:42), "Tarry with him a few days until thy brother's fury turn away." She then suggested that Isaac give Jacob the same advice that Abraham had given to Eliezer in finding a bride for Isaac: "Go to Haran, and get a wife of your kindred." Verse 46 tells us that Jacob was still dwelling in the tents of Isaac as well as Esau and his wives, and that



Isaac blessing Jacob

there was friction between Jacob and Esau. We recall there had also been strife between Ishmael and Isaac when they dwelled with Abraham, when Hagar was a burden to Sarah. Thus, similarities of friction and grief took place in the two generations. Rebekah was grieved over Esau's Hittite wives being right there in the family. She realized the importance of marrying into the faith.

Sadly, she never saw Jacob again.

In Genesis 28:7-9, when Esau realized that Jacob had obeyed and left to get a wife of their kindred, and that his own Hittite wives did not please his parents, he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, Ishmael's daughter. Esau's action showed his lack of understanding, as he did not concentrate on the true Abrahamic spiritual promise.

The Dream

Esau was a hunter; Jacob was not used to living off the land. It took faith for Jacob to flee, as the journey was long, some 800 kilometres. Evidently, this was a low period in Jacob's life. He was fleeing for his very life with the barest of necessities. Had he been able to stay with Isaac, he had the potential for blessings and riches. In his depression, Jacob was told by God, "I am with thee, and will keep thee" (Genesis 28:15). This assurance renewed Jacob's spirit. He had desired the spiritual blessing earlier, and now his spirit was revived. Christians, too, have highs and lows, as did Jesus in Gethsemane. In pouring the oil, Jacob made the stone an altar.

Evidently on the way to Laban, Jacob's thoughts were very full. Would God confirm him in the possession of that which he had secured by deceit, fraud and cunning? By meditating on this he had drawn near to God. Then he had a dream which assured him that though in distress and fleeing for his life, yet he was the object of God's love and care. He was to learn that all that was to happen was a part of the working out of Divine Providence. One object of the dream was to show that Jehovah watches over the whole earth and that messengers to and fro come from Him and return to Him.

After his amazing dream (Genesis 28:19) we are told that Jacob poured oil over the rock he had used as a pillow for his head. He gave his little all, the very oil he took he now poured out on the stone pillow. (He may have taken flour and oil, intending to knead and make cakes.) Jacob was in a perilous situation in trying to get to his destination. In anointing the stone, Jacob used what little he had to honour the situation.

Next Jacob vowed a vow to give one tenth of all he had to the Lord (Genesis 28:20-22). The translation of the KJV rendering is poor and gives a wrong sense of interpretation. The revised version margin is better. Jacob did not say, “if God will be with me ... then shall the Lord be my God,” but his vow implies no doubt on his part and shows his acceptance of the terms of the covenant. “If the Lord will be with me so that I come again to my father’s house in peace and the Lord will be my God then this stone ... shall be God’s house; and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth to Thee.” Surely this was a vow of gratitude. Before the Law, Jacob promised a tithe to God in appreciation. Here, for the second time, a tithe is mentioned in the Book of Genesis. Abraham earlier had paid tithes to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20).

The Divine care and blessing promised at Bethel are shown in the account of his sojourn at Haran from whence Jacob returned, blessed with a large family and rich in goods. Equally marked is the severe discipline in order that the darker features of his character might be purified and that he might learn to put his reliance not in unworthy scheming, but in simple faith in the love and blessing of God. While at Haran, Jacob the deceiver was deceived as he served fourteen years for his wives and stayed another long period without any settlement for his hire. At the end of this period Jacob’s trust and faith in God are seen (Genesis 31:5), “The God of my father hath been with me.”

On the homeward journey God gave Jacob another vision of angels (Genesis 32:1). What a sense of protection they must have afforded, yet when approaching Esau, he took all reasonable precautions and prayed. His message to Esau was humble; he called Esau his lord and himself a servant and enumerated his wealth and thus showed he required no

assistance or any claim to a share in Isaac’s property, but Esau made no answer. Jacob’s extreme distress, in spite of Divine encouragement repeatedly given to him, shows that his faith was very feeble, but it was real, and he sought refuge in prayer. His prayer was a pattern of humility, earnestness, and faith and shows grateful acknowledgement of past mercies, confession of unworthiness, believing, and pleading of God’s promises and a plea for protection. Having quieted his mind by prayer, he used his best judgment. Genesis 32:14 says that he sent five hundred and fifty head of cattle in five droves as a present. Here Jacob used clever strategy again by dividing the present for Esau into separate droves, each followed by a servant driving them to meet Esau. He wanted to appease Esau with this present so that perhaps he would accept him.

A crisis in Jacob’s life was approaching, and he was to receive the final lesson which humbled and broke down his self-will and convinced him that he could not snatch the blessing from God’s hand but must accept it as a gift of grace.

Jacob was alone and wrestled with a man (Genesis 32:34). To Jacob initially it seemed to be a man, but Hosea 12:4 calls him an angel, and in verse 30 Jacob recognised in him a manifestation of God. He had come to the land God had covenanted to give him and was about to enter possession of it.

All his life, Jacob had leaned on his own cleverness; his quick mind had already planned how best Esau’s wrath might be appeased. Suddenly he was caught by an opponent, someone he did not know but who evidently meant to humble him. The angel disabled Jacob by touching the hollow (the socket into which the end of the thigh bone is inserted).

Jacob would not let Him go without obtaining from Him a blessing. He who was beaten back, in his wealth now carried all before him in his poverty. The name Jacob, which was associated with his crooked dealing, was changed to Israel, meaning “A prince with God.” He conquered himself in the end and proved himself and was given a new name (Genesis 32:28).

At Bethel, Haran, and Peniel he showed his conviction that God was with him to guide and bless him. As he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him. To Jacob nature had a radiance it never had before because the breach was healed between him and God. The shadows had fled and there was sunlight in nature and sunlight in his soul.

In Genesis 33:14, Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced and kissed him, and they wept. What a wonderful answer to Jacob’s prayer! Whatever suspicions Esau had, were allayed by all of Jacob’s strategies. Esau’s character is shown favourably here by him not carrying a grudge and not still planning to kill Jacob. Twenty years had elapsed and both Esau and Jacob had prospered during the years of separation. It was at Jacob’s insistence (Genesis 33:11) that Esau finally accepted the present.



Brotherly embrace of Jacob and Esau

Antitype

Esau was the firstborn, but he lost the right of the firstborn to his brother, who was second from his mother's womb. In considering the antitype, the "church of the firstborn" includes both the Little Flock and the Great Company.

In the antitype in one picture Esau represents natural Israel, who were given the opportunity of the high calling and forsook it as a nation. In another picture Esau could represent the Great Company among the truly consecrated, a class who reap

condemnation because they sell that which is spiritual for some earthly, fleshly desire. Those of this class lose the high calling to the divine spiritual nature.

Some of the lessons from Jacob's and Rebecca's life are that we are never to lie and that we cannot help God. Our Heavenly Father can select who He chooses before birth, as He predetermined Jacob. Another example was the Apostle Paul who was selected in his mother's womb and saw the lord's hand in this. All acts have consequences; the results can be 50 years later, and we reap what we sow.

Some Better Thing: Our Heavenly Calling

In the early days of our Christian life there is some difficulty in understanding how to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We do not comprehend all at once that God's Plan provides, first, a heavenly salvation for the Church, and then an earthly salvation for mankind in general. The study of the Bible along Dispensational lines clears away all our difficulties. It shows us that the promise that the redeemed "shall sit every man under his own vine and fig tree," and "long enjoy the work of his hands" (Micah 4:4, Isaiah 65:22), is God's provision for Israel restored to Divine favour, and for all the families of the earth, but not for the Church. Of the true Church, the Bride of Christ, it is declared that her members shall, in the resurrection, be like unto the angels — heavenly or spirit beings.

Paul distinctly says of these, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Jesus tells these that He has gone to prepare them a place in the Father's house on high (John 14:2, 3). But the place for man, the earth, already provided from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34), is a very different one from ours, of which we read, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9, Isa. 64:4).

The Promise is Earthly

Now we understand why it is that from Genesis to Malachi there is not one suggestion of a heavenly or spiritual hope for any natural man. Every promise is earthly. In Abraham's case, for instance, we read, "The Lord said unto Abram, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all this land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13:14-17).

Paul refers to this difference between the hopes of the spirit-begotten Church, founded at Pentecost, and those of all others. Pointing to the faithful of the past, he declares that although they had God's testimony to their faithfulness, nevertheless, they "received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:38-40).

As soon as we get our "better thing," our higher reward of "glory, honour, and immortality," in joint-heirship with our Lord, as figuratively His Bride — then the worthy ones of ancient times will get their reward of resurrection to human perfection. Under Messiah's Kingdom, those perfect men will be "princes in all the earth" (Psalms 45:16). Then, from the spiritual to the perfected earthly ones, the blessings and instruction will descend for the poor, ignorant, selfish and superstitious world to help them, to uplift the obedient to the perfections illustrated in the perfected Worthies.



The prophet Malachi

Many are Confused

We have heard of the Sunday School teacher who told her class about heaven, about its pianos, harps, organs, horses and carriages, fruits and flowers, etc. We see that she was merely thinking of the blessings God has provided for the faithful and obedient of the world — “in due time.” She had no conception of the “heaven of heavens” promised to the faithful followers of Jesus in the “narrow way.”

The Great Teacher explains that it is impossible to describe heaven with its beauties and charms. He said to Nicodemus, “If I have told you of earthly things,

and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” (John 3:12).

In line with this, the Bible makes no attempt to describe heaven itself, nor its inhabitants. We are merely told that “God is a Spirit,” “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see” — personally (John 4:24, 1 Timothy 6:16). Men must discern God in His works — the noblest of which is the perfect man — made in His moral likeness, on the earthly plane, “a little lower than the angels” on the spirit plane. The most that His Word declares of our heavenly inheritance is that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

Able Ministers of the New Covenant

The Bible Teachings (Part Twenty-Four) — Covenants, Mediator, Ransom, Sin Offering, Atonement

In what sense was our Lord Jesus “the Messenger of the Covenant” and in what sense are we the “able ministers (or messengers) of the New Covenant?” (Malachi 3:1, 2 Corinthians 3:8).

Our Lord was the Messenger of the New Covenant by a divine promise. Israel was aware that their Law Covenant under its Mediator Moses had not brought to them the long-expected blessings implied in the Abrahamic Covenant. God had promised that at a future time He would make a New Covenant with them (Jeremiah 31:31). Thus implying that they were right in not expecting much from the Law Covenant. Of course, a New Covenant would imply a new mediator for that Covenant. This, Moses himself had foretold, saying, “A prophet [teacher, mediator] shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me [but greater]” (Acts 3:23). They understood that this great Prophet or Mediator would be Messiah, and they consequently longed for and delighted in the prospect of His coming.

Messenger of the Covenant

This is the thought behind Malachi’s prophecy, “He shall come, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in.” Of course, at that time our Lord had not yet become the messenger or servant of the Covenant, hence this was merely a prophecy respecting His future work. He became the Messenger or Servant of the New Covenant at Jordan, when He consecrated His all unto death as the ransom-price for the world (its application in due season). He there began to serve the New Covenant by providing the price, the blood, which should ultimately seal the New Covenant or make it effective. The laying down of His life was not the sealing of the Covenant, however, but merely a preparatory work. He there became the “surety” or guarantor that in due time the New Covenant would be sealed and made effective. In His

sacrifice of Himself our Lord was serving a Covenant not sealed, merely promised or guaranteed.

Church Now Ministers of the New Covenant

Similarly, the Lord is now gathering His Church, a “little flock,” to be members of the antitypical Prophet, Priest, King, Judge, Mediator between God and the world of mankind during the Millennium. These called, chosen, spirit begotten, are “able ministers of the New Covenant,” after the same manner as their Lord — walking in His steps. They minister or serve the New Covenant as an attorney serves in drawing up an agreement or Covenant. It will not be a Covenant until sealed, but, while it is in process of preparation it is spoken of as a Covenant and, in writing the agreement, the attorney is serving that agreement by putting it into shape, arranging for its sealing, etc. So, Christ and His members are able or qualified ministers or servants of the New Covenant which God has promised and in which the hope of Israel and the world is centred.



The earthly kingdom will be peaceful, and universal.

In what way do Christ and the Church now minister for or serve that New Covenant? In various ways:

(1) In gathering the members of the Body of the great Mediator.

(2) In learning and teaching to others the lessons necessary to qualify for the position.

(3) In preparing the blood with which it is to be sealed, “His blood,” “Jesus’ blood,” appropriated first to the Church and ultimately, after having served its purpose in the justification of the Church to be passed on for the blessing of the world through the sealing of the New Covenant with Israel (Z. 1909, 308).

COUNTING THE BLOOD COMMON

“Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing (a common thing), and hath done despite to the spirit of favour” (Hebrews 10:29).

Despising God’s Laws

The Apostle is here evidently contrasting Moses and his law with the Antitypical Moses and the greater law. Anyone who despised the law of Moses, the arrangement made and established through the typical Law Covenant, was condemned to death, a sentence from which he is to be released through merit of Christ. Since that condemnation was merely of a temporal character this does not affect his eternal interests.

Condemnation Under Old vs. New Law Covenant

It is evident that there is a difference between these two condemnations — that if anyone should come under the condemnation of the Antitypical Moses his punishment would be even more severe. This severer, or “sorer punishment,” we understand to be the “Second Death” — utter annihilation. If

anyone despises the Law of God, in any particular, as expressed through Christ and the New Covenant arrangement, he will be worthy of the Second Death. This principle, we see, will apply all through the Millennial Age, in the sense that any and everyone who, after being brought to a knowledge of the provisions and favours that God has brought to him through Christ, shall then treat the matter lightly and fail to reciprocate such love, fail to be obedient to this arrangement for his relief, will be counted unworthy of receiving any more favour of God and will go into the Second Death. Evidently, however, the Apostle is not here considering what will happen at the end of the Millennial Age, and we merely mention it incidentally to show the wide scope of the comparison between Moses and Christ.

Counting Blood Common, Applicable to Church Only

The Apostle is not applying this text, however, to the world, but to the Church. All the context shows that he is addressing the Church, those who have been begotten of the holy Spirit, those whose sins have been covered by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness and who, in the strength of that covering, are justified, have presented their bodies living sacrifices. For what purpose do we thus make consecration? It is in answer to our lord’s invitation to drink of His “Cup”; to be baptised into His death; to suffer with Him as members of His Body, that we may reign with Him and be His members on the plane of glory, members of the Spiritual Israel, the Spiritual Seed of Abraham, for the great work of blessing natural Israel and through natural Israel, all the families of the earth.

Responsibility for Great Light

So, then, the Apostle, in bringing this matter to our attention, is discussing the Church and what will happen if any of us — not any of us who have merely turned from sin, and have realised that Christ is the great Atoner for our sins — no, but those of us who have been justified through faith in His blood and have been sanctified — those of us who should then fall away.

Those Invited to Participate in his Blood

We remember that on the night of our Lord’s institution of the Last Supper, the same night in which He was betrayed, when He took the cup He said, “This cup is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” God’s intention regarding this blood, as the blood that will seal the New Covenant, is that it should be efficacious to the remission of all the sins of Adam and his children. This was the purpose, the object for which our Lord’s blood was shed. “This is my blood,” and your blood. It is the blood or life that I am giving, that I consecrated when I was begotten, and that I am



Jesus and his followers

to relinquish today upon the cross (for it was then the same day or part of the same day in which He was crucified). This which is mine today — the blood that will seal the New Covenant between God and men — I invite you to participate in. “Drink ye all of it.” All of you drink of it and drink all of it. Leave none. The invitation to participate in this blood, this cup, is never to be given to any other people or class but you — you who are specially called for this purpose. Not only you Apostles to whom I now speak, but all those who shall believe on me through your word, and who similarly shall make this consecration and undertake to be baptised into my death, I invite to drink of my cup.

Participation in Christ’s Blood the Greatest Privilege

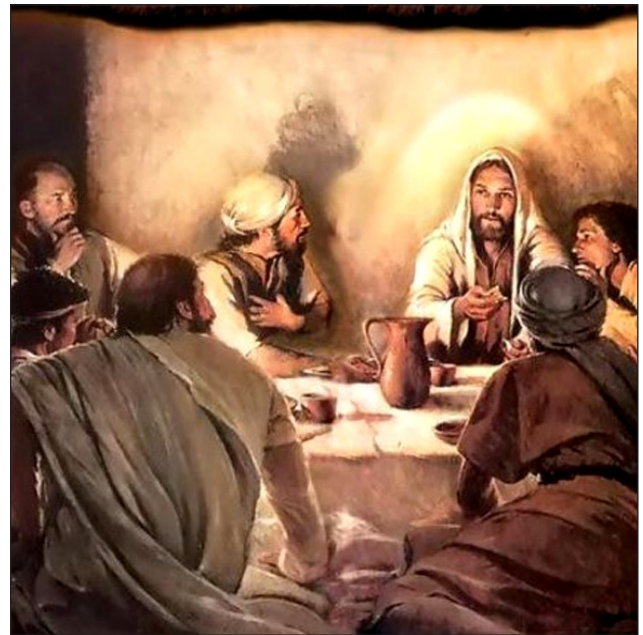
The Apostle asks concerning this cup of which we participate in the communion, “Is it not the participation of the blood of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16). We answer, yes. Is not the blood of Christ the blood of the New Covenant? Are we not, therefore, participating in the blood of the New Covenant? In the participation, therefore, in that blood, by the invitation of our Lord, are we not sharers in His “cup” and all that pertains to it? Yes. What does this mean to us? A great deal. We should be very thankful for the great privilege we have been accorded to share in His “cup,” to be “baptised into His death.” As the Apostle Paul declares in the third chapter of Philippians, I count all things as loss that I might win Christ; that I might have fellowship in His suffering; that I might be baptised into His death; share His “Cup” of suffering so, should we. Paul counted every other interest and consideration as of no value in comparison with this great privilege of the Gospel Age, which is accorded us.

Losing Sight Participation — Counting Blood Common

Now, if we should ever lose sight of this wonderful privilege, if we should ever come to the place where we fail to appreciate the fact that we have been invited to share in our Lord’s “Cup,” have been invited to participate with Him in this blood of the New Covenant, this blood which is to ratify, to seal the New Covenant, it would be doing despite to all these privileges and favours which have been specially given to us, but never given to any other people in the world and never will be given again; a great privilege never offered to the angels, but offered only to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and those who would have His spirit during this age.

Despising God’s Arrangement

If then, we lose our appreciation of that “Cup” and say that it is only an ordinary thing, only such as all nominal Christians have thought it to be; only turning away from sin and trying to live an upright life; it is



Jesus with his disciples at the Last Supper

not a special sacrifice; it is not a participation in the blood of Christ at all, nor drinking of His “Cup,” then we are despising and rejecting all the privileges that were offered to us especially, above those offered to any other people. It would signify that we had despised the whole arrangement and that something was wrong with our hearts — providing, however, we did it intentionally, willingly, knowingly, after we had seen that this is the privilege of sacrifice, after we had known that we were accepted as members of Christ, to “suffer with Him, that we might also reign with Him.”

Turning Away from Clear Knowledge Is Rejecting Blood

For all such as have ever had this clearer knowledge and appreciation, to turn away is to reject this “blood of the Covenant,” and to do despite to it, and to fail to use the privileges offered. In undertaking to use these privileges they had first, of necessity, to make the sacrifice of the earthly nature. It therefore follows that there is nothing left for them, for they have scorned the new nature and the Lord’s provisions which are obtainable only through participation in the sacrifice of Christ. No opportunity for restitution has left them. Hence the only thing for them is that which is appropriate for those who despise God’s arrangement after they have once understood it, and that is the Second Death.

The Sorer Punishment

The “sorer punishment” mentioned by the Apostle (Hebrews 10:29) is that “sin unto death.” Are we competent to point out who have committed that sin? For our own part we would prefer not to exercise judgment in the matter, but merely to say that such judgment is for the Lord. We will not make any decision until we see the lord’s judgment.

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<https://meetings.diapad.com/room/australianconvention>

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The Gentian Flower

One Christmas someone sent Mr. Whittier a gentian flower pressed between two panes of glass. Seen from one side, it appeared only a blurred mass of something without beauty. But seen from the other side of the glass, the exquisite beauty of the flower appeared in all its delicate loveliness. Whether the gift was lovely or not depended on the side from which one viewed it. The poet hung the gift in the window, facing his room. Those who passed by outside marked only a grey disk of clouded glass, seeing no beauty; but the poet, sitting within, looked at the token and saw outlined against the winter sky all the glory of the flower. He then penned this lovely poem:

They cannot from their outlook see
the perfect grace it hath for me;
For there the flower, whose fringes through
the frosty breath of autumn blew,
Turns from without its face of bloom
to the warm tropic of my room,
As fair as when beside its brook
the hue of bending skies it took.

But deeper meanings come to me,
my half-immortal flower, from thee!
Man, judges from a partial view,
none ever yet his brother knew.
The Eternal Eye that sees the whole
may better read the darkened soul,
And find, to outward sense denied,
the flower upon its inmost side

Too often we look upon the blurred side of actions — yes, of people, too. We do not see the loveliness on the other side. We are all continually misinterpreting others. There is a flower side in many an act which we condemn because we see only the blurred side. Let us train ourselves to believe always the best of people and of actions and find some beauty in everything. — J. R. Miller

"For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12 NIV).

The New Year

Bless, O Lord the op'ning year
To each soul assembled here:
Clothe Thy Word with power Divine,
Make us willing to be Thine.

Shepherd of thy blood bought sheep
Teach the stony heart to weep:
Let the blind have eyes to see,
See themselves and look to thee.

Where Thou hast Thy word begun,
Give new strength the race to run:
Scatter darkness, doubt, and fears:
Wipe away the mourner's tears.

Bless us all, both old and young:
Call forth praise from every tongue:
Let this whole assembly prove.
All Thy power and all Thy Love.

John Newton (1725-1807)



Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly: Be to me a rock of strength. A stronghold to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me. (Psalms 31:2-3 NASB)

