

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 253

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## Editorial

Dear Brethren, Sisters, and Friends, Greetings in Jesus Name.

It has been said many times that God would not say one thing and do another, and that God does not change His mind. This has been said to us regarding our understanding of what happened in Eden. God had said to Adam that he was not to eat of a certain tree and if he did he would die that day. Yet when Adam did eat of the tree he did not die that day but lived to be 930 years of age. We believe Adam was forgiven and so allowed to go on living, and that an animal (we think it was most probably a lamb) was sacrificed in his stead in order to cover his sin, and that this sin covering was a temporary arrangement until Jesus died and gave His life in place of Adams.

While considering these things it came to me that there was another very similar occasion. So I wish to compare these two occasions where God gave the law before giving the conditions for forgiveness; where in each case the conditions for forgiveness were given after transgression had taken place.

Let us look at the first occasion: - this is in Genesis chapter 2, verses 15-17 where we read, “The LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

This is the first command God gave to Adam and with the command for obedience there comes the warning of death for disobedience. This is the Law of Sin and Death. Our first consideration is to find out what is meant by verse 17 - “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Some say that because Adam did not die in the actual day of transgression, and God would not say one thing and do another and so they say it must be that God meant a day of a thousand years and as Adam died when he was 930 years old this idea fits well. We do not accept this idea though the expression is mentioned twice in the Scriptures; Psalm 90:4, “For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” and 2 Peter 3:8-9, “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his

promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Each of these references is contrasting how we see the passing of time with how God, who is eternal, sees it; and there is no indication that God explained to Adam that He meant he would die within a thousand years of his transgression.

Others say that Adam died to the law that day and that he was allowed to continue to live, and we think there is some truth in this, but dying to the law is not what God had warned Adam of.

The sentence pronounced was that Adam, if he transgressed, would be put to death that day.

So what Death took place that day?

It is widely believed in Christian communities that the death of which Adam had been forewarned was natural death which comes at the end of our lives whether it is caused by accident, illness, warfare or old age and that Adam and Eve began to die the day they transgressed God’s commandment, but we think otherwise. Moses referred to this as “the common death of all men.” Let us look at just two of the Bible references which provide good reasons for our understanding.

Let us first consider the natural life which God had given Adam. It was a life designed to continue for a set period of time for God had said, “I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.” (Genesis 1:29-30). This food was to sustain Adam and Eve during their lifetime, as it sustained the lives of all other creatures which have been born, lived to maturity, produced offspring and died over the course of millions of years before Adam. This system was ordained of God and Adam and Eve were no exception to it. This seems to be confirmed in Hebrews 11:39 and 40, where we read of the faithful since the time of Adam and Eve who “having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” There is no suggestion here that these faithful people died for their sins.

We believe then, that natural death came to Adam and Eve as it does to all other animals as the natural end to a natural life and was no more the punishment or consequence of sin for Adam and Eve as it was for any other creatures. This is confirmed in Ecclesiastes 3:19 where we read, “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast.”

When God said to Adam, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” He was pronouncing the penalty for breaking the commandment or law and we believe this was therefore a legal matter and required a judicial death as distinct from a natural death.

But what are we to make of the sentence pronounced that they would die in the day of their transgression?

Let us consider just two of several places in the Scriptures where offenders were told they would be put to death for one reason or another. For instance, when Abraham was in Gerar, Abimelech the king took Sarah, Abraham’s wife into his household but God told Abimelech in a dream, “Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.” (Genesis 20:7). Here God uses the very same words and there can be no doubt about the meaning of “thou shalt surely die” for Abimelech answered God and said “Wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?” Abimelech understood that this “surely die” meant slaying.

Another case is where King Solomon had laid a charge upon Shimei, who had cursed David, Solomon’s father. We read of this in 1 Kings 2:36-38, “the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. For it shall be,

that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.” However, after three years Shimei went to Gath and returned again to Jerusalem and King Solomon was told of it. He called for Shimei and said, “Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head; and king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever. So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died.” (1 Kings 2:44-46). Again the words “Thou shalt surely die” meant putting to death, or slaying and cannot mean a natural death due to aging or even accident or misfortune; it was the judicial punishment for breaking the King’s commandment.

We are left in no doubt therefore that God said to Adam that he would be put to death in the day of his transgression. We know also of course that Adam and Eve were not put to death that day. So did God change His mind? This is a matter of concern to many who say God does not change His mind, so what is the answer?

We see this as not so much a change of mind as a matter of not enlightening Adam to the conditions of forgiveness before it became necessary.

We all realise of course that God knew what was going to happen and what He would do, hence we read in Revelation 13:8 that Jesus was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). But why was Jesus slain if natural death only had been incurred? Paul’s testimony is “Christ our Passover is slain for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The lamb slain in Eden was a type; Jesus, the great Anti-type.

So what were the requirements for forgiveness?

Adam, by disobeying God, incurred the penalty of death that day. Had he perished then all his unborn progeny would have perished with him, but God is very merciful and at the opportune moment He demonstrates to Adam the requirements for forgiveness. Adam was not put to death - but an animal was put to death instead. This was done in order to provide him with a coat of skin which symbolically covered over his transgression. This sacrifice of course required the shedding of blood and so Adam’s life was spared. It was a life for a life.

For our consideration of the next occasion let’s move on to the Law of Moses. This was given to the children of Israel when they were in the wilderness having fled from Egypt. But the law was not given all at once. In the first part of the Law we see that God gave Moses a code of conduct for everyday social life expressing His righteous will. In Exodus 24:3, we read, “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.” But there was no mention of forgiveness if they failed and it was upon this declaration of perfect obedience God that made a covenant with them; the first covenant with Israel which bound them as a nation. These commands and judgments were written in a book, the book of the covenant, and in Exodus 24:8 we read that “Moses took the blood, (of the sacrifices which had been made) and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.”

What we wish to note in particular is that as yet God had not told them of any provision for forgiveness should the people fail. Just as with Adam and Eve in the Garden so it was for this new nation of Israel. Obedience was asked for, and in Israel’s case the people had agreed, but it was not until disobedience occurred that the conditions for forgiveness were explained.

And sure enough, the people’s resolve to be obedient did not last long for shortly afterwards Moses was called up into the Mount by God to receive instructions for the building of the Ark of the Covenant as well as to receive the two tables of stone on which God had written the law and commandments, but Moses didn’t return for forty days and nights, “and when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not

what is become of him.” (Exodus 32:1) and very soon ”the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 32:7-9).

When Moses came down from the mount and saw what the people were doing, we read in verse 19 that “Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount” - the very tables of stones on which God had written the testimony; tables which contained the law which pronounced the death sentence that the breaking of the law would bring and there was more, for in these very stones, carved upon with the finger of God, there was provision made for forgiveness when they failed!

As in Genesis where we found that God had given a commandment to Adam without any provision for forgiveness until after his transgression, so once again God gave commandments to Israel without provision for forgiveness until after their transgression. And in the next part of the Law of Moses God gave the people the conditions for forgiveness which involved the shedding of blood; which again looked forward to Jesus sacrifice on the Cross.

Finally, if God once passed over Adam’s sin by a typical redemption could He then in justice impose natural death as a punishment? If we say that our natural death is the punishment for sin then how is it we are not forgiven? And if our sins are forgiven why do we still suffer the penalty? If we are condemned to a natural death for our sins why do some die who have never sinned? (Babies, for instance). Why did Paul say (Romans 8:1) “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ” if the condemnation still stands? And what is the condemnation that has been taken away? Does God condemn anyone who is not guilty? I am sure you agree that He does not. Therefore natural death cannot in any way whatever be the penalty for sin. And we concluded therefore that the penalty for sin is judicial death.

With Love to all in Jesus, Russell.

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I received a letter from our Sister Audrey Bundy, who has been registered blind for some years, in which she says her sight is getting worse. Nevertheless she was able to write a short note to say she sends her love to all the brethren and sisters, and may this be the year in which Jesus returns. May it indeed be so, Audrey, and thank you for your note.

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More from

## **VERITAS AND HIS FRIENDS.**

“I am glad,” said Pietas, “to hear you say that you still hold to the Scriptures; I am sorry to confess there have been (among us who are reckoned very faithful people), a great many concessions to those who seek to dislodge the Bible from its throne in the realm of theology.” “I hold,” said Veritas, “that if you dethrone the Scriptures in that province, you immediately fall into utter confusion, anarchy, and darkness; for apart from them there is no authority under heaven that can announce religious truth, or prescribe religious duty. Without the oracles of Deity all is guesswork, and the mere spinning of human brains.” “I have an idea,” observed Dubitas, “that we can find some ‘brain spinning’ in the Christian Scriptures; in fact, I have come to regard all the sacred books of the world as the products of the human mind, in which fact and fancy are interwoven; myth and marvel and mental vagaries are blended together. No doubt there are sublime ideas and fine sayings to be found in all the sacred books of different nations, but the science of religion is showing us that the pretensions to divine origin which are made by all these books, are not to be accepted in any literal sense.”

Dubitas ambled through this utterance in a very uncertain and hesitating manner, as though he were walking on sand that yielded at every step. Pietas seemed a little chafed at the remarks of his friend, which was perhaps natural, as he had nothing to say in reply, it was a matter that he had never thought or read about; having allowed the stout affirmations of the Bible's infallibility of his clerical leaders to suffice him. Veritas said, with even more quietness than usual; "I have heard that opinion expressed before, and have done my best to make myself acquainted with the so-called sacred literature of the East, as far as it has been translated, and I have come to two conclusions - first, that nothing like the same tacit and implied claim exists in this literature that God is its author, as exists in the case of the Christian Scriptures; and second, that the occasional and mystic beauty to be discerned in the pages of the former, is not to be compared with that sustained and yet restrained majesty of the Bible, which is the signature of God to nearly every page that it contains." "If you will listen to me for two or three minutes," added Veritas, "I will try to point out the broad difference between the literatures in question."

The others simultaneously expressed their pleasure in listening, and Veritas went on: "I can't expect you to see this breadth of difference as I see it, for I assure you the difference is vastly wider to myself now than it was when I took carelessly for granted the loose (I can't say interpretations), suppositions as to what the Bible teaches. You speak of beauty in the literature of the Aryan family of religions, and I confess it, but to me it is the dim and fitful beauty of an early twilight, in which uncertain light it would be quite unsafe, nay, fatal, to take a journey along an unknown path, where precipices and chasms yawn on either side. Whereas Bible beauty -- Christ-light - makes for the world a perfect noon, brilliant and oceanful; in which the largest human thought can revel and the deepest feeling bathe; in which every duty is transfigured, and the whole intended life of man is as clear as day, and the whole path of it, definitely sure from birth to death. The difference between these literatures is given when the two words *natural* and *revealed* religion are uttered. Meaning by 'religion' the means by which man may be renewed in loyalty to God, then the Aryan writings show us man's own thoughts upon this subject. Ever in the past, profound and earnest minds, lifting themselves free from the corruption of their age, have been exercised by the grand problems of religion. To such God has never left himself without witness. Nature has spoken to their heart. The love of the weeping rain and the smiling season; the plentiful products of the ground, with the glory of the sun and stars, have been to them some of the facts on which they have thought out a religion of nature. How strange it would have been if their faculties, dealing with such facts, had not produced some gem of thought or lovely flower of sentiment. Neither is it wonderful that when wrapt in thought and intensely feeling after God, they should really imagine themselves inspired from him, and utter themselves in words that convey that belief. All this is natural without any imputation of imposture, or suspicion of priestly cunning. The sacred books of India, Persia and China, are largely to be accounted for in this way.

"I can quite agree with all that," said Dubitas, "but what is there to show that this does not explain the origin of the Christian Scriptures also!"

"A great deal," promptly replied Veritas, "which I can only briefly point out this evening. In the first place, I think it can be maintained that all religions cannot possibly be false; that there must be a true line somewhere. I think the facts of human nature and history demand this: the religious phenomena of all ages require an explanation. The explanation that is usually given by sceptical writers, is that religion has sprung from the vain desire of man to explain the mystery of the universe, and that it has been begotten of ignorance and fear. But this is floored by the fact that religiousness as a natural instinct strengthens as intellectual and moral development proceed, which ought not to be the case if the sceptical explanation were true. Setting aside reference to any definite theological formulas or acceptance of any alleged historico-religious facts, it may be safely said that the cultivated mind of the world has a more highly developed religious instinct now than in past days. For a proof of this compare, or rather contrast, the time and temper of present-day scepticism with that of a hundred years ago. Many of the leading agnostic thinkers in this country are remarkable for the strength of their religious instincts. Well, all this wants explaining: we hold that universal instincts such as these which deepen as the ages flow on and as intelligence increases, demands this fact, that religion is somewhere true and that its truths are somewhere to be found. If that is a sound argument, then your objection, Dubitas, that what explains one sacred book may explain all, falls to the ground."

Mentor and Pietas both listened with growing attention: it was evident to them that Veritas knew what he was talking about.

“Then the question arises,” Veritas continued, “where among the various literatures called sacred, may the real facts of religion be found? Of course, if the voice of the people were consulted on this question, the believers in each faith would settle it in favour of their own Scriptures, I think we cannot do better, therefore, than leave it to the judgment of such as have made the comparative science of religion a special study, always remembering (at least I always remember) that the accurate apprehension of the wonderful teachings of the Bible is not wholly possessed by such; a traditional interpretation having obscured the glory of the Truth, as it had done to the Jewish Rabbis in the days of Jesus Christ. But, this remembered, you will find the experts (Max Muller for instance) telling us that for sublimity which is highest reason as well, there is no literature to be compared with the Christian Scriptures.”

“But,” said Dubitas, “is it not possible that religious predilections and bias will explain all this: the patriot loves his own country best, and Christians think their own faith the truest and best.” “If you will remember,” replied Veritas, “whose critical opinion I am adducing, you will know that this opinion leans to the view that all the faiths of the world are essentially true, which shows that such bias does not in its case exist; at the same time it affirms the superiority of the Christian Scriptures over all other writings. Your example of the patriot who loves his country best has no force, for whoever heard of the patriot who affirmed that his Lincolnshire fens were grander than the Swiss mountains.”

Supper was now over, and wheeling their chairs into an irregular square, they crossed their legs and prepared themselves for further discussion. The room was airy yet warm; the change from trifles to earnest conversation was refreshing; each seemed to be intellectually better than his usual self in the presence of the others, and as the most perfect good feeling obtained, the evening was passing very agreeably.

“Besides,” Veritas continued, “the claims of the Christian Scriptures do not rest only on their incomparable sublimity, but also on their historic credibility. I mean that the teachings of the Bible have a historical basis which, when it is fairly apprehended, is quite convincing. But the force of this is pretty nearly lost to religionists generally, owing to the gloss which tradition has given to the Scriptures. This will appear, I dare say, in the course of our conversation.”

“I hardly see,” said Pietas, “what it is you refer to when you speak of the historical basis of the Scriptures. Do you mean the historical evidences for the genuineness of the various books?”

“No,” answered Veritas, “I do not refer to that, although what was in my mind has some near connection with the subject you refer to. I am not at all surprised that you did not apprehend me, for your school has never understood that Christianity is a thing rooted and ramifying through human history, from its first planting in Eden to its perfect fruition in a renewed heaven and earth, with “Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” But what I meant was that the Bible was trustworthy, because it shows us God conducting a movement among men in the earth, which movement we are able to verify at certain points by appealing to the facts of history,”

To be continued...

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## **Who Jesus Is...**

The following interesting observations opposing the Trinitarian view of Jesus being God have been taken from our Forum and we thank the writer, whom we know as “Cloudberry”, for her permission to include it here. She writes -

These are Jesus’ words and, when in doubt or not fully understanding what other verses might be saying, I take Jesus’ word, especially if it is clear to me in meaning, as it is here:-

John 17:1 (KJV) *“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is*

*come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:*” Here we see Jesus (son) speaking to the Father in heaven.

17:2 *“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* This is still Jesus speaking...the “thou” is the Father, the “him” is Jesus, the “he” is Jesus, and the “thou” is the Father again. If Jesus is God, would he need to be speaking to the Father as he is doing in 17:2?

And then Jesus continues with... 17:3 *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”* The “they” here would be the people, the “thee” is God the only true God, and Jesus Christ is the one whom “thou” that is God again, hast sent. Here Jesus said that the Father is the only true God. We see this because he had just called him Father in verse 1.

17:4 *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* The “I” here is Jesus speaking still, the “thee” is the Father that he just called the only true God in verse 3, and the “I” again is Jesus. Jesus said the Father is the only true God; he is obviously speaking to someone other than himself while lifting his eyes to heaven. I know many don’t, but I see here Jesus as the son and the Father as God the only true God, as spoken by Jesus himself. I just take Jesus’ word for it as if anyone should know he would.

Let’s look at some other writings:-

Matthew 3:17. *“And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,”*

Romans 8:34. *“It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,”*

1 Corinthians 11:3. *“I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God,”*

1 Corinthians 3:23 *“And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s”*

John 10:29, Christ says, *“My father is greater than all,”*

John 14:28. *“My Father is greater than I,”*

Matthew 19:17. *“Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.”*

1 Corinthians 8:5, 6. *“Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.”*

For me they are not both God, the one Father is God, and Jesus is the Son, as I feel that the verses above show. I know some have a different view, but this is how I see it, and so will present how I view it.

John 5:19. *“Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. 22. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”*

Taking verses 21 to 25, these verses appear to say that we are to honour the Son even as we honour the Father because the Father gave the Son the authority to judge us either for condemnation or to life at our

resurrection. The context does not support the view that honouring the Son even as they honour the Father means that because of this honouring Jesus is God. That just isn't the context of those verses. This is how I see it. For me that isn't saying we should honour the Son equally with the Father, thereby meaning that Jesus is God also. To honour one even as another means that we are to honour both, not just one and not the other, but isn't saying we are to honour them the same, or equally.

Also, what I do not see here in verse 23 is that we are to worship the Son even as we worship the Father, but that we are to honour the Son even as we honour the Father. Some would say it is the same thing, but to me it is not.

If Jesus is God why the need to say that we are to honour the son even as we honour the Father, if they are one and the same, as we would be honouring him when we honour the Father. This verse 23, wouldn't need to be said then.

Therefore, it is obvious to me that they are not the same, that is, Jesus is not God. And the Son, Jesus had said the Father, (who was established as the only true God by Jesus), is greater than I.

So to honour the son even as we honour the Father does not make the Son God, as some believe.

Hopefully this helps others to see why some of us believe as we do. It is just my understanding, of course, and I don't expect others to accept it without researching for themselves. Thanks for listening, though.

Cloudberry.

And our thanks to you also, Cloudberry, for compiling these notes. Russell.

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## **“BEHOLD HE COMETH!”**

The New Testament is filled with words of expectancy, words of urgency, words that call for intense action. “Watch! Pray! Seek! Repent! Go! Tell!”

What is the reason? Why this intense spirit among the early Christians? What in their lives was so stirring, so vitalising? It was the message of the coming King of kings. “Behold he cometh...” It was the message the angels had given to the watching disciples the day Jesus ascended into heaven. They had been walking with Him when suddenly “He was parted from them” and “a cloud received Him out of their sight.” “And while they were gazing after Him into heaven, two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them, and said to them. Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? this very Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in just the way you have seen Him go up into heaven.” (Acts 1:10-11).

All through the Bible the promise is repeated and confirmed. It is “that day,” “the day,” the “last day,” the “great day,” the day when Christ will return to earth. “For I know whom I have believed,” said Paul, “and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (Timothy 1:12). “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:8). “The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.” (2 Timothy 1:18). Again, in the book of Hebrews: “let us consider one another... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25). “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” (Romans 13:12). It is “the day” of the coming again of our Lord to earth.

The second advent of Christ has been sustaining hope of God's people through the ages. It is the central theme of poets, prophets and apostles. Often their message was related to conditions then present;

many prophecies were short-ranged; but always there was the greater, longer-ranged significance which permitted men to think beyond the limits of the world they could see to the Day when God's plan would be culminated on earth.

We find prophecies of Christ's Second Advent and the work He will perform in the Old Testament and in the New. Isaiah tells us that the Lord "will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him." He will "come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger (judgement) with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." (Isaiah 40:10, 66:16-17). Jeremiah tells how God will raise up a "Righteous Branch, and a King" which will "reign and prosper, and... execute judgement and justice in the earth," (Jeremiah 23:5). Ezekiel says Jerusalem will be in an overturned, unsettled condition "until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him." (Ezekiel 21:27).

Daniel foresaw in vision the time when the "kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Daniel 7:27). He knew also the time when the days of the kingdom of men should be accomplished and "the God of heaven" should set up "a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." (Daniel 2:44).

Hosea saw in prophetic vision the number of the children of spiritual Israel "as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered," people of whom it shall be said, "Ye are the sons of the living God." He tells of the day when men shall "Seek the Lord their God, and David their King (Christ, the greater Son of David) and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." (Hosea 1:10-11, 3:5). Joel describes how the Lord "shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people." (Joel 3:16-17). It is the day when there will be "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." (Joel 3:14). Obadiah prophesied of the calamity which would befall the nation of Edom but climaxed his message with the far-sighted vision of the great triumphant day when "the kingdom shall be the Lord's." (Obadiah 21).

Micah tells of the time when "the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." He announces the end of all war, for Christ will have returned and will be reigning supreme. For He shall "judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid." (Micah 4:2-4).

Nahum saw in vision the Lord having His way "in the whirlwind and in the storm", a description of His judgements upon the earth at the time of His second advent. He speaks also of the mountains quaking and the hills melting at the sight of His presence. Nahum 1:3-6. Habakkuk assures us that though "the vision is yet for an appointed time" it is surely coming, for "at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Habakkuk 2:2-3.

Zephaniah warns of "the great day of the Lord," the day which "is near, and hasteth greatly." The day when God will make His people "a name and a praise among all people of the earth" and "thou shalt not see evil any more." (Zephaniah 1:14; 3:9, 15, 20). Haggai foresaw a mighty shaking among all nations when "the desire of all nations shall come": and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2:7).

Zechariah gives us a picture of the Lord coming "and all his saints with (Him)" when His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, and the mountain shall divide and "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and His name one." (Zechariah 14:4, 5, 9).

Malachi closes the Old Testament with the promise of the coming of Him who "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver," who will take swift action against all workers of iniquity." He speaks also of "the Sun of Righteousness" which shall arise with healing for all men, and then concludes his message by announcing the work of Christ's herald, Elijah the prophet. (Malachi 3:2-3; 4:2, 5, 6).

The New Testament continues the theme of Christ's return. In Matthew, Christ is the Bridegroom who comes to receive His bride. In Mark, He is the "certain man" who "planted a vineyard, and.... let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country" and who came again at the appointed time. In Luke He is the "Nobleman" going into a "far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return." (Matthew 25; Mark 12:1-10; Luke 19:11-21). The gospel of John records the words of Jesus Himself: "I will come again." (John 14:1-3).

The book of the Acts of the Apostles tells how the apostles went everywhere proclaiming the message of Christ who lived, died, and was resurrected, ascended to heaven and is coming again in like manner as He went away. (Acts 1:3-11).

In the letter to the Romans Paul tells of the "day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." (Romans 2:15). He confirms this fact by quoting the prophet who said, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer." (Romans 11:26). To the Corinthian brethren Paul wrote of Christ who was the "first-fruits," that is, the first to be resurrected and rewarded with immortality; then follows the promise to every true believer: "but every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." (1 Corinthians 15:23). To the Ephesians Paul wrote of the day when God will send Christ who shall "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." (Ephesians 1:10). In Philippians Paul says that "our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile (mortal) body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." (Philippians 3:20).

Colossians says that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:4). 1 Thessalonians tells us "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise." 1 (Thessalonians 4:16). 2 Thessalonians gives us the picture of "the Lord Jesus... revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God... when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

1 Timothy gives us a command to keep "without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." By doing this we may lay up "in store for (ourselves) a good foundation against the time to come that (we) may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:14, 19). In 2 Timothy we read about the crown of life which is laid up in store for all those who "love His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

In the epistle to Titus, Paul tells of the grace of God by which "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:12-13).

Hebrews speaks of Christ coming "to them that look for Him" the "second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:28).

James tells his readers to "be patient... unto the coming of the Lord." (James 5:7-8). In his first epistle, Peter encourages his brethren to endure the fiery trial of their faith that they might "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:7). He said also, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:4). In the second epistle of Peter we find the warning of scoffers who shall come in the last days, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Nevertheless, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." (2 Peter 3:3-4,10).

1 John gives the great promise to all the faithful: "Now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:2-3).

Jude records the words of Enoch of old: "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." (Jude 14).

The whole book of Revelation is given to revealing events which shall accompany the second advent of Christ. Almost its closing words repeat the promise of Jesus Himself: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be... Surely I come quickly." (Revelation 22:12, 20).

Must we conclude that these promises are past due and out of date? Must we believe that the early Church was disappointed" and that the hope on which they staked their lives is forever unfulfilled? Never! The fact that those early Christians were alive with anticipation shows only their wholehearted commitment to the cause. Paul warned them plainly that "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Jesus warned His eager disciples that it would be a "Long time" before He would return to reckon with His servants. (Matthew 25:19).

Nearly two thousand years have passed into history since these words were recorded, and the "long time" is nearly over. "Behold he cometh!" The day draws steadily nearer. Jesus Christ is coming again. All history is moving towards that great climatic event when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This present hour may easily be the last in the long day of man's mismanagement. Jesus Christ is coming as earth's Conqueror, Redeemer, and King. We do not know when, but His coming is as certain as tomorrow morning's sunrise. It is as certain as the coming of winter, spring, summer and autumn in their appointed season.

Do we believe it? Do we feel the impact of this message from God? Do we sense the urgent responsibility that this promise lays upon us? Then let us stir ourselves with the intensity of those early Christians. Let us believe with every nerve and sinew of our body that Christ is coming. Let us "awake! Arise! Watch! Pray! Seek! Repent! Go! Tell! Then in the eighth chapter Paul describes a man who is "delivered," – a man to whom there is no more condemnation, because he is "not in the flesh" or following the fleshly passions, but in Christ, walking after the commandments of the Spirit. The phrase "my flesh," in this place, therefore, appears to be a shortened form, similar to the phrase, "the flesh," before spoken of.

Author unknown

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## Further comment on "What Jesus Said About The Atonement"

In our last issue of the Circular Letter we published Brother Allon Maxwell's article entitled "What Jesus Said About The Atonement"

Brother Allon presented us with a simplified message of how Jesus died for our sins, but we feel it leaves out two very important matters. These are not matters which Jesus explained but are there for our learning. This was brought out in a recent discussion with others and it was felt that some clarification was necessary in order to present a more complete understanding of how the death of Jesus saves the faithful.

But before we explain our understanding of our first point, it may help if we use another illustration as an example:

For instance, when we say that one is baptised for the forgiveness of sins, this is of course true, but fails to bring out the most important reason for baptism, which is that we come into covenant relationship with God through baptism into the death of Jesus and it is once we are in this covenant relationship we can then, by the grace of God, be forgiven our sins. Baptism includes forgiveness of our personal sins ensuring a fresh start in life. However the main purpose of baptism is to move us out of Adam and into Christ. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" (Corinthians 15:22). Even supposing we lived a perfect life, faultless in every way, which some people probably have done but known only to God, it would still be necessary for every one of us to acknowledge through baptism that Jesus died instead of Adam, and we as Adam's descendants and so heir to his condemnation require to understand that only Jesus sacrifice can save us from our hopeless situation in Adam.

So likewise, what Brother Allon Maxwell's article failed to bring out was the fact that Jesus died in place of Adam and no one else. It was a life for a life and the law of sin and death was satisfied. Or to put it another way, the exact equivalent price was paid by Jesus for what was lost by Adam.

Under the heading of "Substitution" Brother Allon wrote, "Sufficient to say here that substitution is certainly implied in the concept of ransom. Jesus ransomed us by sacrificing His life to save ours." It is here that we feel more needs to be said for while it is true Jesus died for all it is not the full story. Jesus died instead of Adam so that there would be a human race. This fact shows that Jesus, in taking Adam's place in death, gave life to the world – that is Adamic life which has been passed down to us over many generations. This, our present life, is our redeemed life.

Ransom is the price paid in delivering from captivity and as Jesus said, He gave His life as a ransom for, or instead of, many - Matthew 20:28, "even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The many mentioned here by Jesus are all those faithful people who benefit from His sacrifice for He did not lay down His life for all people but for those whom God gave Him out of the world. As Jesus said in John 17:2, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Nevertheless it is seen that Jesus, by dying in Adam's place allowed us to receive our Adamic life, and so it is in this present life that we have our opportunity to receive the life to come in and through faith in Jesus who forgives us freely.

The second matter of concern is to emphasize the fact that Jesus did not receive His life from Adam; He received His life direct from God. Had Jesus received His life from Adam He would have been concluded under sin with the rest of mankind and it would have been quite impossible for Him to have given His life in place of Adam's. Hence the great importance of the Virgin Birth. Adam was given life by God and so was Jesus. The rest of mankind had/has Adamic life.

More could be added, of course, but if the above is taken into account along with Allon Maxwell's article we feel one will have a good understanding of the Atonement.

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*"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." - Mark 16:15 & 16.*

## **AN OUTLINE OF THE ANCIENT GOSPEL**

### **In Twenty-seven Questions and Answers with Proof Texts.**

**1.** What is the meaning of Gospel? **Answer.** Good Tidings.

**Proof.** "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings." Isaiah 61:1 "The Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel." Luke 4:18.

**2.** What is the meaning of The Gospel? **Answer.** The word 'the' points out some particular Gospel, viz., that which the Apostles preached.

**Proof.** "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you." Galatians 1:8.

**3.** Why call it the Ancient Gospel? **Answer.** Because it was "ancient" even in the days of the Apostles.

**Proof.** "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham." Galatians 3:8.

**4.** What is the Gospel about? **Answer.** It consists of "the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ."

**Proof.** “And when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.” Acts 8:12.

5. And what is “the Kingdom of God”? **Answer.** It is a Kingdom to be established on the earth by God.

**Proof.** “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” Daniel 2:44. “And there was given him (Messiah) a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him.” Daniel 7:1 “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” Luke 11:2. “And we shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:10.

6. Who is to be the King? **Answer.** Jesus the Christ.

**Proof.** “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” Psalm 2:6. “All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.” Psalm 72:11. “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 11:15.

7. By what other name is the “Kingdom of God” known? **Answer.** It is known in Scripture by the name of “the Kingdom of Israel.”

**Proof.** “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1:6. “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.” Mark 11:10. “Ye also (the apostles) shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Matthew 19:28.

8. Does the establishment of “the Kingdom of God” require the return of the Jews? **Answer.** Certainly it does.

**Proof.** “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Matthew 2:2. “Bethlehem Ephrathah, out of thee shall he come forth unto me to be ruler in Israel Micah 5:2. “And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father (David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.” Luke 1:32 “What shall the receiving of them (Israel) be, but life from the dead?” Romans 11:15.

9. “The Kingdom of God” then will consist of Israel and all other nations ruled by Jesus Christ? **Answer.** It will.

**Proof.** “Rejoice, ye Gentiles with his people. And again. Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people. And he shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; and in him shall the Gentiles trust.” Romans 15:10-1;15.

10. What is to be understood by the phrase “the Name of Jesus Christ”? **Answer.** The meaning of the name Jesus Christ is Anointed Saviour. The things of the Name may be briefly expressed in the two great facts of the Gospel - the Death and Resurrection of Christ.

**Proof.** “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. “Thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed (Christed)”. Acts 4:27.

11. Who was Jesus Christ? **Answer.** The only begotten Son of God.

**Proof.** “For that which is begotten (see margin) in her is of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 1:20.

12. Was this Only Begotten Son stained with sin? **Answer.** By no means.

**Proof.** “Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” Hebrews 7:26. “In him is no sin.” 1 John 3:5.

13. How does He save His people from their sins? **Answer.** By becoming a voluntary sacrifice for them; their sins being first “laid on him.”

**Proof.** “He is the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 2:2. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Hebrews 9:28.

14. Does this complete the saving? **Answer.** No. Resurrection to eternal life must follow.

**Proof.** “All which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” John 6:39. “If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” 1 Corinthians 15:16, 18.

**15.** What sins were “laid on” Christ? **Answer.** All the sins that had been, or would be committed; except that sin which is unpardonable.

**Proof.** “Not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:2 “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.” 1 John 5:16.

**16.** What is sin? **Answer.** “Sin is the transgression of law,” either in action or intention.

**Proof.** “For sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matthew 5:28.

**17.** How did sin enter the world? **Answer.** “By one man,” Adam.

**Proof.** “By one man sin entered into the world.” Romans 5:12.

**18.** What follows sin? **Answer.** Death.

**Proof.** “And death by sin.” Romans 5:12. “The wages of sin is death,” Romans 6:23

**19.** And what is death? **Answer.** Death is the return of the body to dust, and the destruction of consciousness.

**Proof.** “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Genesis 3:19. “The dead know not anything.” Ecclesiastes 9:5. “In that very day his thoughts perish.” Psalm 146:4.

**20.** Did Jesus overcome death? **Answer.** He did.

**Proof.** “Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light.” 2 Timothy 1:10.

**21.** In what manner did Jesus “abolish death”? **Answer.** By avoiding all sin - by pouring out His blood as an offering for the sins of others; by rising on the third day and being changed to incorruptible, living, substance.

**Proof.** “Who did no sin.” 1 Peter 2:22. “He hath poured out his soul unto death.” Isaiah 53:12. “He rose again the third day.” 1 Corinthians 15:4. “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” Revelation 1:18.

**22.** What then is the life promised in the Gospel? **Answer.** It is the same as that now enjoyed by Jesus Christ Himself, namely, an immortal bodily existence.

**Proof.** “We shall be like him.” 1 John 3:2. “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Philippians 3:21,

**23.** And what is the “inheritance”? **Answer.** The earth on which we now live.

**Proof.** “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Psalm 37:2. Matthew 5:5.

**24.** What is required of us in order that we may obtain these things? **Answer.** We must understand and believe them; and then be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins that are past.

**Proof.** “When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Acts 8:12. “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” Acts 2:38.

**25.** Does obedience terminate with baptism? **Answer.** No. It only begins. We are required to observe all the ordinances of the Lord.

**Proof.** “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:20.

**26.** To what ordinances do you refer? **Answer.** 1) The ordinance of assembling together on the first day of the week. 2) The eating of bread and the drinking of wine in remembrance of Christ’s death and resurrection. 3) The singing of psalms or hymns. 4) The offering up of prayer and thanksgiving. 5) Mutual exhortation. 6) The remembering of the poor.

**Proof.** 1) “The first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.” Acts 20:7. 2) “This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” 1 Corinthians 11:25 3) “And when they had sung an hymn,” or psalm. Matthew 26:30. 4) I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.” 1 Timothy 2:1. 5)

Exhorting one another.” Hebrews 10:25. 6) “Touching the ministering to the saints.” 2 Corinthians 9:1. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give.” 2 Corinthians 9:7.

**27.** While thus living what is the Christian’s chief expectation? **Answer** - The appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up the universal kingdom over which He will appoint him a portion.

**Proof.** “To serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10. “Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.” 2 Timothy 4:1. “Joint heirs with Christ.” Romans 8:17. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.” Matthew 13:43.

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power/ both now and ever. Amen.” - Jude 24, 25.

Edward Turney. 1876.

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## The Nature of Man

In view of the widespread belief in the natural immortality of man which obtains amongst professing Christians, it would, no doubt, surprise very many people to learn that the book of Christianity, i.e., the Bible, is entirely silent as to the possession by man in his natural state of this divine attribute. Such, nevertheless, is the fact. Holy writ will be searched in vain for the statement or statements which establish the doctrine that man is of “immortal nature and eternal character”; its pages will, indeed, reveal to the candid enquirer a mass of testimony which is not only inconsistent with, but destructive of that doctrine. For what does the Bible teach with respect to the nature of man and his relation to immortality? Not that he is an immaterial spirit, a divine being,” a particle of God’s own essence,” possessed from his mother’s womb of the valuable quality of deathlessness, but something vastly different, as the subjoined quotations show. The Bible teaches –

(1.) That man is essentially a material being, of the earth earthy, and lives by the breath of life common to all animals:-

“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (“living animal,” Kitto). Genesis 2:7.

“There is a natural body . . . and so it is written, the first man, Adam, was made a living soul.” - 1 Corinthians 15:44, 45.

“The first man is of the earth, earthy.” - 1 Corinthians 15:47.

“Out of it (the ground) wast thou (Adam,) taken, for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” - Genesis 3:19,

“Behold now I (Abraham) have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.” - Genesis 18:27.

“That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.” - Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20.

“If he (God) set his heart upon man; if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn, again unto dust.” - Job 34:14, 15.

(2.) That in his natural state he is destitute of immortality, the transgression of his progenitor, Adam, having excluded him from the tree of life.

“And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden.” - Genesis 3:22, 23.

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men.” - Romans v. 12.

“In Adam all die.” - 1 Corinthians 15:22.

(3.) That death, which ensues upon his being deprived of the breath of life, resolves him into inanimate clay, and causes him to become as utterly unconscious as though he had never been born: -

“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.” - Psalm 146:4.

“The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything” – Ecclesiastes 9:5

“The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day. Isaiah 38:18, 19.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.” - Ecclesiastes 9:10.

“Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.” - Job 10:18, 19.

(4.) That immortality, or eternal life, is only attainable by man in Christ Jesus through a belief of, and, obedience to, the Gospel: its bestowment, moreover, being subsequent to, and impossible without, a resurrection from the dead: -

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” - Romans 6:23.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” - John 3:16.

“To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, (God will render) eternal life... in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” - Romans 2:7-16.

“There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, for my sake and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this present time... and in the world to come, eternal life.” - Mark 10:29, 30.

“The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life.” - John 5:28.

“If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.” - 1 Corinthians 15:16-18.

“If after the manner of men I (Paul) have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” - 1 Corinthians 15:32.

Taken from The Eon. No name given. Dated 26<sup>th</sup> September 1884

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## Jesus said...

“There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” - Luke 18:2 to 8.

The parable of the unjust judge reveals, by use of contrasts, the attitude of God towards our prayers, for all that God is, the judge was not; and all that the judge was God is not. The judge cared for no one but himself, and in contrast, God’s care and great love for those who will come to Him is unbounded. The judge would not listen to the pleas of the widow for justice until she became a nuisance to him. However, God’s desire is that we should follow justice as a way of life, that we may reflect His justness and as His children emulate His only begotten Son. “And shall not God avenge (do justice for) His own elect, which cry unto Him day and night, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.”

This story follows on the discourse of Jesus to His disciples regarding His second coming. We read in verse 23 of the preceding chapter, “And they shall say to you, See here, or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day.” This is the moment we pray for when we say, “They Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” This is the taking away of the elect before the great tribulation, and then shall Jesus reign.

Another contrast we can consider in this parable is that of time, for what is to us a very long time, a time in which we can grow weary, is to God but a moment. It is the reason Jesus told the parable to His disciples as we read in verse 1 of this chapter, “And He spake a parable unto them to this end that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” that is, grow weary.

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21:36.

Brother Russell Gregory

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## THE SONG OF ALL SONGS

The Song of Solomon has been neglected, misread, and has even had doubts cast upon it as to its suitability for a place in Holy Scripture. What a terrible pity. Why? Because with the help of our Father we are able to obtain from its pages a wonderful vision of the Lord of Glory, God’s beloved Son, and His Bride, which is the church.

The author of “The Approaching End of the Age” writes, “Now scripture leaves us in no doubt as to the meaning of the symbolic bride, the Lamb’s wife... The purpose of Christ’s love, as regards His blood bought church, is that she should be one with Him for ever.” Here, in the Song of Solomon, in vision, we see this blessed design accomplished, and the complete and sanctified church, clad in spotless robes of righteousness, brought to the marriage supper of the Lamb. I think it can be agreed that the New Jerusalem bride represents the true church of Christ. In order to make any spiritual sense of the words of this book, all interpretations of a carnal, sensual nature must be put aside; although Solomon is mentioned therein and he was evidently inspired to write it, it has nothing to do with his loves or marriages. Instead, it is purely concerned with the spiritual progress of the bride of Christ... from the beginning of her search to find her Lord, to the great day of the marriage supper of the Lamb. In the beginning of the book she is just becoming aware of the high calling of God and seeking further enlightenment. In the first chapter, verse eight, she is directed to the shepherd’s tents, the shepherds’ being the expounders of the Word, as in 1 Peter 5:2, “Tend the flock of God... making yourselves ensamples to the flock”. We, the components of the bride, are likewise helped forward by our brethren, past and present, and most of all, by the Bridegroom Himself, that great Shepherd of the sheep who said, “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me; a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.” (John 10:5 & 27.)

The rest of chapter one is a delightful picture of the flowers and plants of the Holy Land. Their fragrance was used in the preparation of the holy anointing oil as we read in Exodus 30. This fragrance the Bridegroom ascribes to His bride who is adorned in the white robe of His righteousness. (It is interesting to note that the henna flower of the vineyards of Ein Gedi still flourish there in the Jordan Valley). From verse eleven of chapter two we have a vivid picture of spring in Israel as it would have been in the land in the days of Solomon before the ground was cursed. Leviticus 26:20, “Your land shall not yield her increase neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.” Isaiah 27:6 foretells the removal of this curse and of a time when it will again bring forth its fruits as in the days of old. (Numbers 13:23). From plants the picture changes to trees. There is one special tree under which the bride rests. She relaxes under its boughs, beneath the grateful shade and is refreshed by its fruits, which could symbolically represent the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, etc. After this she is led to the banqueting house and the Banner over her is love. God’s love, which can never fail, and which keeps her till the great day of the marriage feast of the Lamb. We are

reminded of Psalm 121:5 “The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand”, and Psalm 63:7 “In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.”

It is purest love, the love of God, which flows through this Song, but three times in its course there is a warning of a false love which deceived the unwary. This love is earthly, sensual, devilish, though it beguiles many by a deceitful resemblance to the true. Three times is this warning given, and the number three in the scriptures signifies completion, so it should not be ignored. At the end of chapter two and the beginning of the third, the bride laments that she cannot see the Bridegroom’s countenance, or hear his voice. He is beyond the mountains of “Bether”, which also means “separation”, also, in the New English Bible it says “the hills where cinnamon grows.” In chapter five the bride fails to open her door to Him when He knocks at night. She is far too comfortable, and unwilling to rise and put on her coat and soil her feet. When she realises her mistake it is too late. She opens the door but He has gone. So with us, if we fail Him when He calls on us to serve Him in some unexpected way. It may be a long time before He will call us again. It may be never. “Be ye also ready, for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh.” (Luke 12:40). “Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man open the door I will come in and sup with him.” (Revelation 3:20). Such failures on the part of the bride are like the little foxes of chapter two, verse 15, the little sins which so easily spoil our personal vineyards. But in spite of this the bride can say, with faith in the Everlasting Father’s amazing kindness and forgiveness, “My beloved is mine and I am His.”

While seeking to find Him once more she is persecuted by the watchmen of the town who hit and wound her and take away her cloak, no doubt to humiliate her. But immediately there follows a rapturous vision of the Bridegroom, the “altogether lovely” only begotten Son of the Father, “full of grace and truth”. (John 1:14). This represents the unlovely plant of persecution which can bring forth a marvellous fruit; for all things work together for good to those who love God. This is the joyful prospect which should cheer us as we contend with the cares and fears of this earthly life. Paul, whose life in Christ was one of constant suffering, could say “I am filled with comfort; I overflow with joy in all our affliction.” (2 Corinthians 7:4). Nehemiah also, at the time of the repairing of the Temple, told the people not to mourn or weep, for, said he, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Chapter seven of the Song of Solomon has puzzled many readers, but if we go to the Revelation given to John, it presents no difficulty. Revelation 21:2 reads, “And I John saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” This city, which is also the bride, is now being built here on earth, stone by stone, we ourselves being the stones. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:16, “Ye are the Temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

“I am my beloved’s, says the bride, and His desire is towards me.” Yes, indeed, His great desire is to present us faultless before His Father’s throne, with exceeding joy. (Jude 24). So may we look beyond the mountains of separation to the Great Day of the coming back to earth of Jesus, the Messiah; for when that day breaks the shadows will flee away and “God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Revelation 21:4.

Anon.

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## **EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE**

**Therefore Handle it not Deceitfully.**

It is on the importance and basis of respect for the pure word of God that He has continually set before His servants the Blessing and the Curse as recorded in Deuteronomy 11:26, “A blessing if ye will obey and a curse if ye disobey”. The results of these blessings and cursings are recorded further on in Deuteronomy 28 and also the fact of God knowing that later on they would desire a king, like the other nations, instructs them in the manner of the king and that he would not be of their own choice, also certain conditions would be laid upon him. See Deuteronomy 17:14-20 “When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shall dwell therein, and shall say, I will set a king over me, like as all the

nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you. Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.”

In reading from Psalm 119:97 to 160, and further if you choose, we appreciate the knowledge, understanding and respect David had for this Divine instruction through Moses concerning the study of the law and general conduct as the God-appointed king of Israel. David had his weaknesses and faults, but he acknowledged them to the God whom he served realising God had taught him from his youth, if he had added to or taken from that word of purity, he could not have penned the words of Psalm 71:18-20 “Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not? until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee! Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.” No immortal-soulism with David. “Add not to his words lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar.” Proverbs 30:6.

Respect for the Word of God enjoins upon those related to Him to keep the commandments which are applicable under whichever dispensation they find themselves, whether from Adam to Moses, Moses to Christ, or Christ Jesus onwards. David said of these Divine precepts, “They make me wiser than my foes, and keep me in thy way.” There is no justification for failure by quoting Paul out of context in Romans 7, “God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap...” The Apostle John had much regard for the word of God and the Son of God who manifested that Word, both in teaching and conduct, so that he commences his record of events with a positive declaration, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” This word was Power. So that John the Baptist was moved to say concerning Jesus the Word made flesh, “He that cometh from above is above all... and what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth . . . He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” John 3:31-34. Though the Apostle John is looked upon as the disciple whom Jesus loved because of his devotion to the Master, he was no weakling, but a very strong character, and Statesmanlike, as can be learned from his epistles, which possibly were written, as also the Revelation, in A.D 85-90 after the destruction of Jerusalem. John had many problems to resolve with the Ecclesia with whom he was involved, and was as forthright in his condemnation as his praise.

One particular trouble John was forced to rectify concerning the Gnostics, whose views had become a problem to the believers, and they needed instruction. Gnosticism considered matter as evil, and thus Christ could not have a human body. Thus their doctrinal theory which taught that Christ only appeared, or seemed to have a body, had to be confronted. Gnosticism also taught that only by knowledge (gnosis) could one get from the world or material and evil, to Spirit which is good. Thus John emphasised in contradistinction, the true knowledge, or great certainties of the Christian faith which alone can save man. Note the frequent use of “know” in his first letter, where John uses it over twenty-five times. John wrote the gospel to prove the Sonship of Jesus in relation to the Deity, and why his mission as the “Ransom for many” demanded he be of the same nature as Adam, yet Son of God (Like Adam before sin) un-alienated from God. John ever demonstrated the fact of Jesus as Lord and Son of God, and also of flesh and blood, and nowhere does he teach that nature as being evil. It might be as well to remember that about 115 years ago someone seized on the Gnostic theory as a convenient weapon to combat the Truth but later, facts and history has shown it to have “boomeranged” on its very advocates. This is what comes of handling the Word of God deceitfully - we should not add or take away from it in order to bolster up theories that are alien to it, for then it becomes the word of men, yet, nevertheless the Word of God remains pure at the source. John showed the Gnostics to be Anti-Christ in believing a materialistic body to be evil when in fact Jesus came in that very nature which God pronounced “very good”. The “changed Adamic flesh” theorists are not unlike the Gnostics in

regarding the material flesh as evil, consequently the Gnostics invent a theory that cannot accept Christ in the flesh and blood; and the “changed flesh” theorists cannot accept a Christ who was holy, undefiled, unalienated by Adamic sin, and a true Son of God from the womb of Mary. We, who profess to know the Son of God, know that we are of God as a result of rightly dividing the Word of Truth and not handling it deceitfully. Like John, therefore, “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Amen. “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” 2 John 1:9.

Your Brother in Christ Jesus, Phil Parry.

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## WHO IS MELCHIZEDEK

### Hebrews Ch. 7

Brother Fred Pearce answers a correspondent who wishes to know more about Melchisedec and writes:

“You ask, who was Melchizedek? and state that you should like to know, so indeed would many more. Very much has been written upon the question but opinions are various.

The introduction of Melchizedek into history occurs when Abraham and others rescue Lot with others from their captors and their spoil and is subsequently met by Melchizedek described to be “priest of the most high God”. The story occurs in the 14th chapter of Genesis and is the only place where any historical record occurs of him, (verses 18-20) and it is said that he is the first individual who was called a priest in the Divine record, and he was a king as well as a priest, a combination that did not apply under the Levitical order.

Now, in regard to the difficulties in Hebrews 7 where he is said, in verse 3, to be “without father, without mother, without descent (or pedigree), having neither beginning of days nor end of life” the following remarks have been made upon them. In the first place, to take the phrase “without father or mother” literally, he could not have been a man which he is stated to be, as referred to above. At the time the epistle to the Hebrews was written it is stated that allegory was carried so far as to imperil the plain sense of the sacred narratives and such phrases as “fatherless”, “motherless”, etc., were not only in Rabbinic Hebrew but even in classical Greek and Latin writings where speaking of certain individuals whose parents and ancestry were simply unrecorded are spoken of as being parentless; for example, a celebrity in Grecian history calls himself “motherless” when he supposed himself to be the son of a slave woman; again, a Pagan writer speaks of himself as sprung of no ancestors, and a Jewish Rabbi refers to a Gentile as having no father, that is the father of a proselyte is of no account in Jewish pedigree.

The above throws considerable light upon the expression “fatherless” and “motherless” as applied to Melchizedek, there is no record of his birth, appointment, or his death and therefore it seems that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was speaking in a language which would be well understood in those days that the Melchizedek order of priesthood was “without descent” or pedigree. For this reason Philo, a Jewish mystical philosopher, in those days draws a lesson that Evil never dies among the human race because of the non-mention of the death of Cain, adopting the idea in the case of Melchizedek, that order of priesthood never dies for the same reason, and it is suggested this view is probably what was in the mind of the writer when using the words in the 8th verse of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter “of whom it is witnessed that he liveth”. Again, with regard to “descent” or pedigree, it will be remembered that the Jewish priests were obliged to keep most careful genealogies, and some families were even excluded from the priesthood in Ezra’s day, because they could not adequately prove their priestly descent (Nehemiah 7:64), therefore they were “without descent” or pedigree. It is said that one of the objections of the Jews against the legitimacy of the priesthood of Christ is that he came from no particular stock and not a Levite.

The following are one or two renderings of Hebrews 7:3 which go to strengthen the views expressed above:

The OLD SYRIAC VERSION translates it as follows - "Whose father and mother are not inscribed among the genealogies."

The ARABIC - "He hath neither father nor mother, the genealogy not being reckoned.'

The ETHIOPIC - "He had neither father nor mother upon earth, nor his genealogy known."

The REVISED VERSION gives "without genealogy" in place of "without descent."

The whole design and object of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to show, as you doubtless are aware, the superiority of the Messianic dispensation over the Mosaic, hence in treating of the Priesthood of Christ, shows and proves how much it was exalted in its nature, being of the order of Melchizedek, which order has never been abrogated like the Levitical one; that in the latter order priests were constituted without an oath, but in the former one by an oath; that the Levitical was not a perfect or permanent institution and therefore it is superseded by the Melchizedek, and as the Mosaic law appointed priests only of the tribe of Levi, Christ being of the tribe of Judah; of which Moses spake nothing pertaining to the priesthood, the priesthood being changed, the whole system of the Mosaic economy and its priesthood, over which it presided is done away in Christ. (Hebrews 7:11-21).

I would counsel you to read and study carefully the seventh chapter of Hebrews, turning up the marginal references. You will find it a profitable study, although the matter is stated to be difficult and likened to strong meat. (Hebrews 5:10-14).

Just a few odd remarks and I close. Take particular notice of the point in the seventh chapter, verse 4, as to the dignity of Melchizedek, that even Abraham paid him tithes. That Levi, the father of the Levitical tribe, it is stated, paid tithes in a figure, to this man. If Melchizedek himself is still alive, where is he? And where does he exercise his functions? In conclusion, I told you at the start the subject is somewhat profound and more than equal to my powers of dealing with it. Hence if I have not put the matter as clearly as others could I have done my duty in endeavouring to throw as much light upon the problem as my abilities permit."

Affectionately Yours in Christ, Fred Pearce.

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"Mercy and justice are the keynotes of the law,  
and glory to God in the highest is their object."

- O.E.H.G.