

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 280

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**With this issue we are enclosing a new booklet entitled
“Comments On Some Christadelphian Writings” by Brother Ernest Brady.**

See also our websites:

Website: www.thenazarenefellowship.co.uk
Discussion Forums on Facebook: The Nazarene Fellowship
Also on Facebook: Christadelphian Open Debate

Editorial

Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters,

It is widely accepted amongst Christian sects that when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden that death was introduced into the world, or at least into the human race, and in support of this scholars go next to Romans 5:12, where we are told, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” One of the outcomes of this belief is that Adam must have been of a different nature before he sinned and hence we have such expressions as “fallen nature” and “the fall of man”. But was there such a ‘fall’?

At first sight it certainly looks as if this is so but a further consideration of other Bible teachings shows this idea cannot be sustained. Let’s look at some facts. Adam was placed under a law; the law of sin and death. God told him “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16, 17). So it can be seen that if Adam kept the law he would live; if he broke the law he would suffer the punishment the day he sinned. That is very clear, yet some have argued that God meant a “day” of a thousand years and so would not suffer his punishment straight away, i.e. within 24 hours, and because Adam died when he was 930 years of age, then that is when he received his punishment. But is this really what God meant? Did God deceive Adam? Also we ask, could the same punishment be meted out on the same person a second time? What would the punishment be for the next sin and any future sins?

When I was a child I remember my father telling me a story – which I believed was a true story – of a man being found guilty of murder and the judge pronounced the verdict by saying to the guilty person, “I hereby sentence you to death by hanging” whereupon the prisoner said “You can’t sentence me to death”!. Judge: “What do you mean, I can’t sentence you to death?” Guilty person, “I am already going to die; all you can do is set the time.”! Think about that for a moment. Isn’t this the position Adam was in? He was

not created to live for ever; he would die one day of old age or illness or accident but he was not going to live for ever unless he obeyed God, and in which case his nature would be changed accordingly – perhaps to the same nature as the angels, but he would not have lived for ever in his present state.

There is yet another piece of evidence. We learn from Eve's words that they were not even to touch the tree for "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die". (Genesis 3:3). Now in Numbers 4 we are told that the Kohathites were to bear the Ark and Sanctuary, but were not to touch any of the holy things "lest they die." Now if God intended something less than violent death when He spoke to Adam, did He mean the same slow process when He uttered the warning to the Kohathites, the bearers of the Ark? You can discover what meaning was attached to this by reference to the case of Uzziah who merely put forth his hand to steady the Ark. God smote him for his error. Thus, at the cost of a man's life for a very trifling offence, God demonstrated what, apart from His saving mercy, is the penalty for sin. It shows what we are expected to learn in regard to Adam and sin, that it was a violent death that was incurred.

Again, even more evidence - in Ecclesiastes 4:19, we are told "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 pre-eminence above a beast:" All this confirms Genesis 1:29 to 31, "And God said, Behold, 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 everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." And it still is today; it is still very good animal flesh with a limited life span according to their species.

So then the death penalty on Adam was not the common death of all men but a judicial death; judicial because it was to do with the law – i.e. the breaking of it.

Nevertheless, God in His loving kindness forgave Adam. How do we know this? Because there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood and in Eden an animal's blood was shed in order to symbolically cover Adam's sin as we read in Hebrews 9:22, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

Is all this important? Yes it is important because it has to do with the reason Jesus died on the cross.

Some say Jesus shared our supposed fallen nature and had to be put to death because of it; they say there was no other way for Him to be rid of such a taint, and then they add that His death was also for us so that we too could be free of sinful flesh by having faith in His death!

In reality, this is not at all the reason Jesus died; and it's little wonder Brother Ernest Brady wrote, "The old nonsense about a physical change implanting sin and death in our flesh won't wash, for it involves the Saviour in the same predicament as sinners and reduces His sacrifice to a meaningless tragedy."

Let us see what the Bible really teaches us about these matters; first, we have seen Adam was not created to live for ever but with a natural body and a limited life span. We see he was put on probation in Eden and his natural life would continue while he was obedient to God.

However, when Adam disobeyed, the death penalty which he anticipated was not carried out. But why not? Because God, in His loving kindness and mercy, forgave him and allowed Adam and Eve to continue their natural life span for many years. So what is the significance of the shedding of blood for the remission of sins, if it is not to point to the need for a violent death? There is no natural death that involves the shedding of blood. And in accordance with God's law He slew an animal (or two) in Eden and "the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Genesis 3:21).

This was only a temporary expedient for while the sin of Adam and Eve was covered over it still had to be taken away and this was foretold in Genesis 3:14 and 15, "So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you

and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

In our last editorial we gave an explanation of who or what the serpent is and that it was not a creature God had made, and here we have confirmation that the serpent was cursed more than all beasts or cattle for indeed the serpent is a personification of man’s desires in contrast to God’s commands. Man’s selfish ways will come to an end in consequence of Jesus crucifixion, who three years previously was baptised as we read in John 1:29 to 31, “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.”

Jesus gave His own life for Adam’s life – the life he had forfeited to sin, which forfeited life he passed on to all generations with the exception of Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus was the exception as He had His life direct from His Father as did the first Adam – and no man ever had two fathers.

Let us honour the Son even as we honour the Father,

With love in Jesus to all our readers, Russell.

Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Exhortation

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Loving Greetings in Jesus’ Name.

Without causing any offence I would like to say there is no such thing as “un-clean flesh,” unless it is diseased. When God made man in the Garden of Eden, He made him very good, and the majority of babies born to-day are still perfect and very good.

We do get exceptions, admittedly, but the flesh is the same now as when God made it originally.

Now, instead of saying “unclean flesh” say “unclean mind” - you get a very different picture. The mind or brain controls a man’s actions. Jesus said it is not what goes into a man that defiles him but what comes out of him. So we ask, what does come out of a man? His thoughts put into words; his mind in action; what he thinks controls his actions.

I have read a lot of literature for and again “unclean flesh” and they all seem to miss this point. Our whole life is governed by our brain; we cannot move a muscle without the brain giving consent.

When the brain is damaged parts of the body may be paralysed; therefore, if you substitute brain or mind whenever flesh or body is mentioned in the Bible you will see it makes sense. Sin in the mind (sinful thoughts), who shall rid me of my sinful mind or thoughts?

Jesus said the thought was the deed; He said if a man was angry with another without good cause he has already committed murder. Likewise, if a man looks on a woman lustfully he has already committed adultery. (Matthew 5).

The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked; we always think of the heart as a person’s mind.

The Psalmist says, "make within me a clean heart, O God (mind)." We sometimes say of an acquaintance, "What a nice nature he has!" In other words, what a nice mind is expressed in his conversation and actions. A clean mind thinks no evil, and in consequence speaks and does no evil.

Jesus always looked for the good in people. He was born of God's mercy, and He had perfect flesh, as we all have, but we are told Mary was favoured by God, so she must have been a very good, pure minded girl, living according to the law. Jesus inherited His mother's humble and lowly mind and God's exalted and righteous mind. What a marvellous combination. No wonder He attracted thousands of people when He spoke.

Doctors these days work on the assumption that the mind affects the body. We all know that hard work killed no one; when centenarians are asked to what they attribute their longevity they invariably say, "hard work;" but how many times have we heard of people being worried to death?

Worry and anxiety causes high blood pressure, ulcers, headaches, and loss of appetite; anger causes the adrenaline glands to work overtime and cause all sorts of complaints; while a guilty conscience causes fear and palpitations of the heart - yet, on the other hand, when we do someone a good turn, or we are happy and contented, we eat and sleep better, and feel as "fit as a fiddle," to use a common phrase, although, as a child, I couldn't understand why a fiddle should be more fit than any other article.

I have enclosed a poem I once read and always remembered, as it gives you the perfect answer to all problems:-

Have life's problems got you down? Do you wear a constant frown? Do you say you can't go on? Do you feel faith has gone?	Then your aches and ills will fade, day by day you'll be remade. Clash of jangled nerves will cease, for your heart will be at peace.
Are you torn and worn and frayed, Tired and weary and dismayed? Do you wish that you could find Health and hope and peace of mind?	Where is this serenity that will bless and set me free? I would, find it, I would know How to live and where to go.
If these treasures you would win You must seek for them within. First achieve tranquillity, poise and inner harmony;	Only God can give it you: He alone can make you new. In His healing love believe, Ask in faith and you'll receive.

Here again, heart is used instead of mind; so wouldn't it be safe to say that we hold the remedy in our own hands for a healthy mind in a healthy body? Sin, in itself; does not alter a man physically, or the police would have an easier job tracking down criminals, although after years of vice a man's character shows in his face.

When Adam sinned his body did not change, but his mind did; he immediately became afraid - he lost his care-free and happy peace of mind, and started to worry over the consequences.

When we commit a wrong we get a guilty feeling and we are not happy again until we put it right. How many times have we heard of someone with a grievance letting it upset their whole life, embittering them and making them ill both in mind and body?

Well, I think this proves almost beyond doubt that it was the mind Paul meant when he spoke about sin in the flesh. Think it over if you do not agree with me; write and let me know, for at least I shall know you have been interested enough to read to the end.

Your Loving Sister in Christ, Ruby Beardsmeor

A Brief Consideration of the BOOK of RUTH.

In the first two verses of the book of Ruth we are introduced to the family and their surroundings and the members of that family. Eli Melech whose name means 'God is King' was I feel a God fearing man, and like Job, had been blessed by God; some writers feel he was the head of a family or clan in the area in which he resided, Bethlehem-judah, or as we are told in the T.B.S.E. Ephrath, was an area of Bethlehem just as today Kings Oak is a part of Birmingham. The name of his wife was Naomi (my sweetness or delight) who no doubt was kindly, helpful, joyful, making home the centre of Godly influences. They had been blessed with two male children; every Jewish father and mother looked forward to the day when their Messiah should be born. They lived in a very fruitful area about 2500 ft. above sea level with a typical Mediterranean climate, Bethlehem was surrounded by an area of fig and olive orchards and vineyards. Mahlon the elder sons name we understand meant (a sick person; or sickness) while his younger brother Chilion according to the Westminster Bible Dictionary meant; wasting away. The family lived together in their native area described by one writer as 'A house of Bread: A place of good food.' But sadly a famine in the land alters everything, so reduced in circumstances and need they seek to sojourn in another country for life's necessities, and to where did Elimelech and his family go? They went to Moab.

Concerning Moab we read in Deut. 25 v 6 the instructions to the children of Israel "Thou shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever." How Elimelech and Naomi felt having to go into Moab we are not told. It must have weighed heavy upon them as God fearing persons, how they must have hesitated before moving. But is there evil in a city and God has not done it' (national sins). So the family move into Moab, but sadly (under the hand of God) the curse seems to follow them. Ruth 1 v 5. "And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left and her two sons." Here was Naomi in a strange land with two sickly sons, how was she to fare? God never yet forsook the man or woman who trusted Him. Provision in the long term was provided for Naomi, but not in just a material manner, for throughout the book of Ruth we trace the hand of God.

Mahlon and Chilion in due time married," they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah meaning (neck or stubbornness) and Ruth (meaning uncertain, perhaps comely but when convinced 'constant Filial love') how true was this latter description seen in her life, yet again to her in a strange land. Still however a curse appears to follow; with sadness must Naomi have in her heart thought upon such words as those recorded in Numbers 25:1-6 as she saw how the surrounding people went on in worship.

By her kindly and motherly instincts Naomi seeks to win her daughters in law; by precept and example to worship the God of Israel. We read in Ruth 1:20 "...call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very... bitterly with me." This was when she had returned to her native land Naomi said this. But what was this "bitterness? We see it recorded in v 5 of this same chapter, for now, not only had Elimelech died, "but her two sons also were now at rest, and we assumed buried in a strange land, having heard that things were now improved in Bethlehem, why should she remain in a strange land, her two daughters-in-law could stay in their native land tend their husbands graves and may "be marry again, and remain in the land." No doubt having considered it well and asked for God's guidance Naomi prepares to leave Moab and return to her homeland. Yes and after all her careful work it would at first appear that she was about to leave her two daughters in law as we see in v 8 of chapter 1 "And Naomi said to her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.' No doubt the two girls had tended with loving care their husbands while they lived; and also mother-in-law. What a difference is seen in many cases when distress and sorrow comes to a family, it is then that deep down feelings come to the fore. Naomi continued "The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband," but only one did Orpah. Was this in any way prophetic? Orpah by another writer describes as 'Youthful and fresh, compared her to a hind of the field, kissed her mother-in-law but was loathe to part from her national environment and so returned. Ruth also kissed her mother in-law but it seems she hesitated, for she clave unto her despite the fact that her sister in law had returned and gone back to her peoples gods meant nothing to Ruth. How the heart of Naomi must have beat at speed with the comfort and reward God had given her for faithful labour and teaching, as she listened to Ruth's words as fully seen in ch, 2 v 16-18, especially, "and thy God my God." Naomi saw Ruth meant what she said and

was determined to go with her, then she left speaking to her. So she returned to her homeland empty but hopeful, no material possessions but no doubt full of hope with Ruth at her side.

Following their return to Bethlehem, the story is well known, from early Sunday School days and today has its lessons for us, in what appears the most unusual circumstances, the Word and Purpose of God prevails. Ruth was requiting the love spent on her and proved a friend indeed. It was not sentimental, but real steadfast love (faith begotten of love). Faith without works is dead. "If ye love me keep my commandments". Ruth became the husband of Boaz whose name means (Lord of Strength); the result of this union was the restoration of lands in accordance with Mosaic order, and the birth of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David. There are many instances in the scriptures where late in life God gives his servants a satisfaction which they have lacked earlier, as Jacob being "brought down to Egypt and seeing Joseph whom he had never thought to see again in this life. In this book of Ruth having nursed her own two sons seeing them die without child, had the joy of being able to nurse the son of Ruth, as expressed in chapter 4 vs 14 and 15 when the women said to Naomi "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons..." This son had a direct connection with the line of Mary or Joseph as we can see in the records of Matthew and Luke. David and David's greater son, Jesus.

Finally let us look at just a few lessons we can see or learn from the Book of Ruth.

1. God does not always work through prosperity even though He may so do at times and through adversity: Job: Abraham: Jacob: David: Solomon.

2. We may judge by appearances as did Job's three friends. But in matters concerning God, He judges the motive of a heart.

3. God can bring good out of evil, as the Moabitish marriage in Ruth, but not when His laws are deliberately ignored or disobeyed. As in the manner of the latter part of Romans ch. 3 v. 8 Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

4. Truth by example and precept honestly taught, brings its reward when acting upon right material, e.g. Ruth rather than Orpah.

5. Blessings of God are not restricted to the one concerned: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, but in this case to generations yet unborn, in Christ.

6. The curse of Deuteronomy 28 having driven the Jews to every corner of the earth God still provides Palestine with abundant rainfall and fruitfulness. The call will yet come to Israel. Psalm 45 v 10 and Isaiah chapter 55.

The above has been compiled from notes left by brother Hembling who now sleeps in Jesus.

TREES OF THE BIBLE

It was on the third day of creation when God said "Let the earth put forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good." All of these things were made for the glory of God, as we read in Psalm 148 "Praise the Lord ...mountains and hills; fruitful trees and all cedars."

When we consider the importance of trees and their place in the environment we come to a fuller understanding of the wisdom of God. For without trees and shrubs with their ability, through photosynthesis to take up carbon dioxide and give off oxygen, the place of animal life in creation would soon be in dire straits. For this one reason alone trees are essential to life on earth, but their benefit does not end there for their multitudinous fruits provide sustenance for humans and animals alike. The Lord said, "Behold I have

given you every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.” Trees also provide shelter, fuel, building materials, and also affects climatic conditions. The earth, without their benefit of cover and shade, becomes parched and arid, a state of affairs that has become evident as the years go by, with man becoming profligate in his felling of the great forests for gain, ignoring exhortations to replant and replenish.

In the scriptures thirty or so varieties of trees are mentioned, all familiar to us except two, and these we only know through God's purpose with mankind. These trees were planted in the Garden of Eden, “God planted a garden eastward in Eden and there he put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and is good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:8.)

These two trees were specifically designed to give instruction. To the Tree of Life Adam had free access “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.” This tree was available but denied by command, and man's future well-being was dependent upon his obedience to this ordinance. The scriptures give us no indication that during his sojourn in the garden whether Adam partook of the Tree of Life, or not, nor whether it was necessary for his physical day-to-day well-being. That it bestowed life is indicated in Genesis 3:22 “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man has 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.” It would appear that the early access was necessary to this tree to stop the ageing process which all nature suffers, and Adam's removal from the garden and access to the tree obviously allowed natural decay to set in, finally leading to death. As the Psalmist wrote “As for man his days are as grass, as the flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone.” Through his disobedience man could no longer sustain his life, but, through the mercy of the Almighty, was given another opportunity to enter the Kingdom of Glory, this through faith, sacrifice and the shedding of blood.

All parts of the tree are used in scripture, from the roots, through the trunk, branches, leaves and finally the fruit. Its roots are likened to a man who trusts in the Lord. From Jeremiah we read “Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord and whose the Lord is. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out his roots by the river, and shall not fear when the heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from bearing fruit.” (Jeremiah 17:8). And again in the Psalms “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And in His law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree, planted by the streams of water that bringeth forth its fruit in his season.” (Psalm 1:3). Here, clearly demonstrated, is the importance of founding one's trust in the ordinances of God, for in them is the very essence, the food and nourishment necessary for the development of the man able to walk uprightly in the sight of God.

“The original seed of righteousness may be only very small as witnessed by Christ in the parable of the mustard seed “which is less than all seeds,” but it has the potential in a fertile situation to develop into a mature tree. In like manner, the spiritual seed may enter the heart of man and if sufficiently nurtured, develop into the righteous understanding of salvation in Christ Jesus, leading to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Whether it be the development and maturing of a tree, or the spiritual growth in ourselves time cannot be rushed. With the tree many years may pass before the first indications appear of flowering and even then it may not be able to produce fruits of any great value, and only by good husbandry will it finally bear a rich harvest.

In Leviticus we read that the Israelites were admonished not to pick the fruit from the trees they planted for several years. Chapter 19 and verse 23, “And when ye come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as their circumcision, three years shall they be uncircumcised unto you, and it shall not be eaten. But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy, for giving praise unto the Lord, and in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase.”

We know from modern husbandry that when a tree first shows its fruits that it is advisable to remove them for a year or two, thereby preventing the tree from dissipating its strength, endorsing the words of Leviticus. By this patient tending a tree will bring forth a bigger reward in quality and quantity.

In a similar manner we cannot expect great results early in our spiritual life. Careful nurturing over the years allow us to grow and reach maturity and be of benefit to our brethren and sisters. Even our Lord was referred to in Isaiah as a tender plant, and thirty years were to elapse before He made known to His disciples that He was the chosen of the Lord God. During these years of development we know from Luke's gospel that He advanced in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and man.

It is not until a tree has reached maturity and borne fruit that it can be judged, as shown in a parable that our Lord used in His Sermon on the Mount “By their fruits shall ye know them, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruits. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” (Matthew 7:17).

The Psalmist wrote, “The righteous shall flower like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They that are planted in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall bring forth fruit in old age, and shall be full of sap and green.” (Psalm 92:12).

To those who walk in the way of the Lord He promises rain in season and an increase in the yield of the land and trees in their fruits. But there is also a warning to the ungodly, and we should take to heart the warning given to the Israelites, mentioned in Deuteronomy if they strayed from the way of the Lord. “Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them, but thou shalt neither drink of the wine or gather the grapes, for worms shall eat them. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy borders but thou shalt not anoint thyself with oil, for the olives will cast their fruits, all thy trees and the fruit of the ground shall the locust possess.”

Despite trees beautifying the countryside and providing fruits and shelter, the Israelites were forbidden from planting groves on consecrated ground, Deuteronomy 16:21 “Thou shalt not plant thee an asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make, neither set thee up a pillar, which the Lord hateth.” A timely warning, for they were soon to enter the land of promise and make contact with the idolatrous worship practised by the inhabitants of the land. Asherahs were worshipped by the Canaanites along with Baal; they were groves of sacred poles, substitute for sacred trees, revered by early Samaritans, these wooden poles were overlaid with precious metals and adorned with woven hangings. It would appear from the earlier admonition that these groves of poles were also surrounded by fairly quick growing trees such as the chestnut, now recognised as the plane tree. A tree of beautiful form bearing thick verdant foliage, no doubt affording grateful shade to the weary traveller coming to worship. It was strakes from this tree that Jacob laid in the water troughs when he tended the flocks of Laban, that they might conceive and bare mottled sheep to his own gain. (Genesis 30:37).

These groves were established time and again as the Israelites departed from the worship of their God and turned to worship idols, ignoring the earlier instruction in Deuteronomy. How little they realised that provided that they did not turn away from the living God, He would always be with them and there was little need for worship in particular places.

There appears to be only one occasion when a tree was planted and an altar erected, and that was done by Abraham. Genesis 21:33 we read that he planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

Conservation was also commanded by the Lord for as the Israelites approached the land of promise they were forbidden to cut down the fruit bearing trees when laying siege to cities. “For thou mayest eat from them, and thou shalt not cut them down, only the trees thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down, and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it fall.”

Unfortunately, this piece of wisdom was not practised by other nations who, over the centuries, subjugated the Israelites, in particular, the Romans who in their final purge denuded the surrounding

countryside of trees, turning a green and fruitful land into a semi-arid desert. The land remained in this condition, populated mainly by nomadic tribes, until the Jews returned, setting up their kibbutzim, establishing settled communities that reorganised agriculture, using age-old methods. This has regenerated the arboreal cover necessary to re-establish the ecological climate. They found that by surrounding each tree with a circular platform of rocks that as the rocks cooled each evening, dew condensed on them and helped irrigate the tree.

The earliest reference we get to a particular type of tree used by man was in the Lord's instruction to Noah "make thee an Ark of Gopher wood." Gopher wood in all probability was the cupressus or cedar, both slightly resinous and easily worked. A most suitable timber as it is extremely durable and not susceptible to attack by insects or fungus. It is rather surprising when we consider the size of the Ark that Noah had the tools to construct such a vessel, let alone fell the trees, for they can grow to well over a hundred feet high and thirty feet in circumference, and with the Ark being approximately 550 feet long, 91 feet wide and 54 feet high. Little wonder he took 120 years to construct it, and in all this time his tenacity of purpose did not waver and there is little doubt that during this time he had to withstand a vast amount of mockery and ribald comment from the local populace.

Another tree specifically mentioned is the shittim, or acacia tree, used in the construction of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant and its sacred utensils. It grew in profusion in the desert from northern Arabia down to Ethiopia. In colour it resembles box wood, very hard and suitable for intricate carving. Being of a very fine grain it was an ideal timber for overlaying with gold. Some reference books only refer to it as a small tree similar to a mulberry, but reading the details of the Tabernacle given in Exodus where boards of 18 feet in length and two feet in breadth were required indicate that it was a much larger tree, possibly similar to the sycamore, a type of wild fig and not to be confused with our own sycamore which is of the maple family. This tree grew to over 50 feet high and had a very large trunk.

Although the Israelites had been forbidden to have graven images the construction of the Ark and the Tabernacle were necessary to provide a focal point in their worship of Jehovah. It was a continual reminder of the presence of their God, especially as they were preparing to enter Canaan, a country riddled with idolatrous worship, and abounded in shrines. Precisely what became of the Ark we do not know. It was certainly placed in the sanctuary of Solomon's temple and from there was probably taken when Shishak removed the treasures from the temple in the reign of Rehoboam, as recorded in 1 Kings 14:25, "and it came to pass in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak, King of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem, and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord..."

During the time of the building of the Tabernacle we find the first reference to the pomegranate a tree much prized for its apple sized fruit. The Israelites esteemed it as one of the great luxuries they had enjoyed in the land of Egypt, sadly missed in the wilderness of Zinn and they complained "Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed, or figs, or vines, or of pomegranates." No doubt they missed the succulent fresh fruit and also the cooling drink of sherbet made from the juice. In the Song of Solomon we find he extols the pomegranate, "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of the pomegranate." (Song 8:2). The rind of the fruit was also used extensively for the tanning of leather.

From the details of the tabernacle and of Solomon's temple it obviously had sacred significance. On the High Priests robe we find woven pomegranates and around the hem, golden pomegranates were alternated with golden bells. "A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate upon the skirt of the robe round about. And it shall be on Aaron to minister, and the sound thereof shall be heard when he goeth into the Holy Place before the Lord." (Exodus 28:34). Its flowers and fruit were used as models for decorating the pillars of Solomon's Temple. The record tells us that 400 pomegranates for the two networks, even two rows of pomegranates for one net-work to cover the two bowls of the chapiters that were on top of the pillars.

Another tree much valued by the Israelites was the almond. It was the earliest harbinger of spring, bursting into blossom in late January, before its leaves appeared. The fruit is a great favourite, it can be eaten green before the shell hardens, and when ripe, is used as a sweetmeat. Its oil is also highly prized. Its

fruits were also used as a model when designing the golden candlesticks for the Tabernacle, “And in the candlestick shall be four bowls like unto the almond”.

Almonds were included in the present Jacob sent to Joseph in Egypt. He instructed his sons to carry down to Joseph a present, a little balm, a little honey, spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds. A present no doubt appreciated by Joseph for the almond does not flourish in Egypt.

When trouble arose among the leaders of the twelve tribes in the wilderness, Moses was instructed to take rods, one for each tribe, and lay them before the testimony in the house of meeting. These must have been from the almond tree for we read “on the morrow Aarons rod had budded and brought forth buds and blossom and bore ripe fruit”, thereby dispelling any idea of fraud by Moses that he had removed Aaron's rod and substituted another, for to bear fruit, blossom and buds was an impossibility in the natural order of things.

The great cedars of Lebanon come into focus again when we move on to the building of Solomon's temple. From the details given in the book of Kings, although the outer walls of the temple were made of stone, it was necessary to line its interior with timber to facilitate the ornamental carvings overlaid with gold. In chapter 6 we read “and there was cedar on the house within, carved with knops and open flowers, all was cedar, there was no stone seen. And the whole house was overlaid with gold until the whole house was finished.” Considering the size and the complexity of the temple it is amazing to read that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building. I very much doubt whether any of our modern construction companies would undertake such an erection under these restrictions. In the Holy of Holies Solomon had carved two cherubim with outspread wings to cover the Ark. These cherubim were carved not from cedar or acacia but from olive wood, a tree frequently used in reference by the prophets as a figure of righteousness, individually and collectively. Entirely appropriate when we consider that the cherubim are the guardians of the tree of life and the spiritual truth. The Psalmist refers to them “as bearers for the Lord God Almighty”, and again, “I called upon the Lord and he heard my voice, and he rode upon a cherub and did fly”, and in a later Psalm, “give ear, oh Shepherd of Israel, that sitteth between the cherubim and shine forth.”

Throughout the scriptures trees are used illustratively of rulers and nations, whether they thrive and bring forth fruits, or wither and are cut down. When the wrath of the Lord was turned against the King of Assyria, Isaiah prophesied that the glory of his forests would be consumed and his fruitful field, both body and soul. “Behold, the Lord of Hosts shall lop the boughs with terror and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down and the lofty shall be brought low. And He shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron.”

And Daniel records Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a mighty tree cut down, and the interpretation. The tree represented the King in all his might, but when he became boastful, personally claiming the glory for his achievements, the Lord punished him, making him no better than a beast of the field.

When we turn our attention to the Israelites, the Lord's chosen people, we find references to a particular tree, the olive tree. Rather appropriate when we consider the importance of the olive to their every-day existence, for it provided oil for cooking and lighting, was useful as a medicament and for anointing the body, keeping the skin moist through the heat of the summer, and also as a salve on bruises and wounds. A single olive tree could supply a whole family with fat for a year. The tree also provided some welcome shade and its wood was the main source of fuel. Indeed, many eastern Mediterranean nations recorded their wealth by the abundance of the olive harvest. The olive trees were part of the bounty of the land of Canaan promised to the Israelites. “And it shall be, when the Lord shall bring you into the land, which He swore unto your fathers, Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee, great and good cities which thou buildest not, and houses full of good things which thou fildest not, and cisterns hewn out which thou hewdest not, and vineyards and olive trees which thou plantest not, and thou shalt eat and be full.” (Deuteronomy 6:10).

The olive tree was the first to bring new hope to Noah and his family in the Ark, when the dove returned with an olive leaf. This tree with the vine is linked throughout the Old Testament with the house of Israel and the blessing of the Lord. Jeremiah records, “the Lord of Hosts had planted thee a green olive tree, fair with good fruits.” And again, in Hosea, “I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall blossom as a lily and cast

forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree.” The oil was also used for anointing kings, and was used by Samuel to anoint Saul and, later David.

Reading through the scriptures we find the olive tree is synonymous with spiritual righteousness, and as we move into the New Testament we find reference to the grafting into the olive tree of new shoots as the gospel of salvation is preached to the nations. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, wrote, “Thou, being a wild olive, was grafted in among them and did become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree.” This is rather unusual, for here we have a wild olive being grafted onto a good tree, the reverse of the natural run of events where grafts are taken from a selected fruitful olive and grafted on to less fruitful stock, thereby increasing the harvest.

Herein is shown the merciful grace of the Lord, as Paul puts it to the Ephesians, “God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye have been saved. That ye were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that were once afar off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:12).

What man is unable to do, God is easily able to achieve, and does so through Jesus Christ His Son.

The olive tree provided a setting for other momentous events in the time of our Lord. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, that He retired from His disciples, to commune with His Father shortly before His arrest. It was on this same mount that His disciples witnessed His ascension into Heaven.

There is another hint of grafting in when we come to Christ's words “I am the true vine and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit... I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for apart from me ye are nothing.” With grafting there is a blending together, a closeness, and integration, and without it the graft does not take and the scion withers and dies, but the good graft will develop, taking its vigour from the main stock to the benefit of both.

This bonding to the true vine in Christ is essential to our salvation, for the fruits which we produce now are to the glory of God, as Paul wrote to the Romans, “When ye were servants of sin, ye were free in regard to righteousness. What fruits then had ye at that time, in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of all things is death. But now being free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification and in the end, eternal life.”

The fig, another fruitful tree of the eastern Mediterranean, appears very early in the scriptures for we are told Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to make aprons to cover their nakedness. An obvious sign of disobedience.

The fig also was counted as part of the abundance of the land of Canaan, for the spies Moses had sent into the land came back with branches bearing clusters of grapes, pomegranates and figs. In Deuteronomy, where the land is referred to as a good land, “a land of brooks of water and fountains and depths springing forth from the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates and olive oil and honey.

Whilst the Israelites were an obedient nation their fig tree brought forth plentifully, but when they departed from the way of the Lord, their fig trees dropped their young figs. The fig tree is rather unique in that it produces two crops in the year. The first young figs appearing in March and then the leaves. Many of these early figs do not reach maturity being easily blown off in gusty weather conditions. Those that do not fall reach maturity in early June and are especially esteemed for their delicate flavour. The prophet Micah writes, “My soul desireth the first ripe fig.” In June the main crop begins to form and steadily grows to produce mature figs in August.

Whereas the olive tree stands for the spiritual Israel it would appear that the fig represents natural Israel, which gives the explanation of Christ's curse on the unfruitful fig tree shortly before His arrest and crucifixion. As the Passover is early in the year, our Lord would not have expected to pick mature fruits as we are told in the narrative "the time of figs was not yet", but He would have anticipated picking the young delicate fruits, and to see evidence of a greater harvest later. But as we read in Mark's account "and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves. He came if haply He might find anything thereon, and when He came to it He found nothing but leaves, and cursed it, causing it to wither." It was the want of promise of future fruitfulness in the nation that was condemned in the parable of the fig tree. Natural Israel was shortly to condone the putting to death of God's Son, saying, "His blood be upon us and on our children". Until our Lord's return they will remain barren and then will He make Himself known to them and they will acknowledge their guilt and repent. And God will again bless Israel and make them fruitful once more. "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn as one mourneth for his only Son," and, "I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and keep my judgements. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field." And from Joel, "For the tree beareth fruits, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord, for He giveth you the former rain in just measure. He causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the later rain in the first month. And the floor shall be full of wheat and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil." (Joel 2:23).

The Palm tree. According to Josephus, the palm tree was plentiful in the land, covering the Jordan valley from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. For the Jews the palm had both practical usefulness and symbolic significance. Its Hebrew name is Tamar, and symbolises grace and elegance. A single trunk rising up to a hundred feet topped with a crown of fan shaped leaves beneath which hang clusters of succulent dates. This is a particularly valuable plant for it provides starch, sugar, oil, wax, and fruit, and its leaves are suitable for weaving into mats and containers. Paper and thread are made from its fibres and liquor is extracted from its sap. When viewed in the desert it indicates water. We read that the Israelites in their travels came to Elim where there were twelve wells of water and three score and ten palm trees.

Its large feathery leaves were used as emblems of victory and triumph. When our Lord entered Jerusalem, riding on the colt, the people took palm leaves and strewed them in the way. Carvings of these trees were used to adorn Solomon's temple, and again appear in the details of Ezekiel's Temple - "The space above the door even unto the inner house and without, and by all the walls round about within and without by measure. It was made with cherubim and palm tree, and the palm tree was between cherub and cherub, every cherub had two faces, so there was the face of a man towards the palm tree on one side, and the face of a lion on the other side, and thus was it made through all the house. And the door to the sanctuary cherubim and palm trees like as were made on the walls." The juxtaposition of the cherubim and palm tree emphasises the sacredness of this tree and it has persisted through the ages up to our present time. Modern Jewry waves palm leaves in their synagogues today when celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. Palm leaves will be waved as a sign of triumphant rejoicing in the new Jerusalem "for after these things I saw and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all the tribes, and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands. And they cried with a great voice, saying, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb."

With our Lord's return peace and righteousness will be established and desecration of the land will cease, as recorded in Micah, "In the latter days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all people shall flow unto it. And he shall judge between many people and reprove strong nations afar off and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and 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 own vine and under his own fig tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken it."

Here we have come full circle from the righteousness in the Garden of Eden to the righteousness in the kingdom. With the Holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. "And the river of the water of life, bright as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. And on this side of the river and on that, the trees of life, bearing twelve manner of fruit and yielding its fruits every month, with its leaves for the healing of the nations."

It is up to us now to take note of the admonitions we read earlier in the chapter from Isaiah, "Incline your ear and come unto me. Hear and you shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. For ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace, the mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Brother Jeff Hadley,

Understanding The Sacrifice of Christ.

Introduction

When Adam disobeyed the Almighty's first commandment, God did not turn away in disgust from His creation; He lovingly and with exquisite Justice instituted a plan of salvation to ensure humanity's survival. Survival even into eternity if they so desired, where there would be beauty and peace: where there would be no more death and where all tears would be wiped away.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save it and all who would be born into it. We cannot begin to comprehend the anguish God suffered seeing what His beloved Son had to endure at the hands of wicked men; but suffer He must have for He was a loving Father with a Son full of grace and truth in whom He was well pleased

Jesus loved us before He knew us and died that we might live. So the story of God's dealings with His people begins with love and continues with love as it will surely end with love when Messiah returns to the earth to be all in all. As the old hymn has it "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all."

Here are the words of love and life, words that can make anyone wise unto salvation; he who has ears to hear let him hear.

Helen Brady

* * *

If we do not understand how and why the death of Jesus Christ, by crucifixion saves us how can we say we believe? We ought to devote time and prayer to the matter so we can be fully persuaded in our own minds independent of others, especially of those who would say these doctrines are too deep, or require long experience or training to understand them. This is not so for the truth is straight forward and easy to follow, and once we grasp it clearly in our minds we can go on to plumb greater depths of Scriptural truths with clarity of thought and conviction.

Follow Scripture carefully and prayerfully; the path we take from Eden to Gethsemane has to be straight and true for we must understand what happened in Eden to understand the sacrifice of Christ, then the message of the Cross gives great comfort to the heart and steadfastness to life.

To fulfil His purpose God is calling out a people for His Name, people who will strive to do what is right in His sight, even if necessary to the giving up of their lives, to bring honour and glory to Him. Such people are the children of God. These are "True worshippers" who "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." (John 4:23).

As parents we love our children. We set them rules of acceptable behaviour and when a child makes a mistake we do what we can to make matters right again and encourage him or her to do better in future. All is done out of love to help the child make right choices and develop good character. This is the pattern of God's dealings with His children. Adam was God's son by creation and he made a mistake; he made a wrong choice. Our story starts here and shows how God, his Father put matters right for him, and for us.

The Law of Sin and Death

Adam was created from the dust of the ground and was a living soul, or person dependent on the natural processes common to all animals and therefore corruptible. The difference between man and the lower animals is that God endowed him with the intellectual powers of a reasoning mind and free will so when placed under law he could choose, and so develop good character well pleasing to his Creator.

In Eden Adam was placed under law which required perfect obedience, whilst disobedience would incur the penalty of death. Forgiveness had no place in the law of sin and death in Eden and should Adam sin the debt of life owed to the law had to be paid. So when Adam transgressed the law he incurred judicial death as the penalty and was in dire straits and could do nothing to regain his freedom from the death penalty, while any hope of eternal life was also lost. Perfect obedience from that moment on would not have sufficed, for the requirements of the law would not have been met as his life was already forfeited. Even the giving of his life would not have been sufficient payment for he now had only an imperfect life to offer, and an imperfect life was not equal to the perfect life he had forfeited. Indeed being forfeited his life had no value.

The Scriptures teach that there was a change in Adam's relationship to his Creator when he disobeyed the law. This was a legal matter. His legal position changed, previously he was innocent now he was guilty; he had been free of condemnation, now he was under condemnation; he was no longer free and his life was in pledge to sin; no longer a Son of God but a bondservant of Sin, for when he transgressed he sold himself to another owner, he became the servant of Sin and had left the house wherein he was a Son of God and sold himself into slavery (John 8:34, Romans 6:16). Yet he did not suffer the penalty for his sin, that is to say, that the penalty of "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die" was not carried out.

The First Sacrifice

God in His mercy and love provided a way in which the requirement of the law would be met and Adam redeemed from his death sentence. In the first instance we learn that an animal was slain in Eden. Instead of Adam perishing an animal perished, and the death of the animal provided a covering for him, a covering he wore as a constant reminder that the animal had died in his stead. The slain animal was the first sacrifice and it was symbolic of the one great Sacrifice to follow. It was a type of the Lamb of God who was to come to take away the Sin of the world – "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" as foretold in Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head while the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel; the head wound to the serpent being destructive of its power was to free man from bondage to the law of sin and death which bars the way to eternal life. It is law that reigns and in it we see the loving-kindness, mercy and justice of God.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," His closest possession, to be the sacrifice for the Sin of the world so we might be persuaded of His love "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3; 16). A sacrifice in which Jesus Christ voluntarily offered Himself; who said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). His Father asked of Him the willingness to give His own life to take away the Sin of the world and thereby deliver the human race from bondage to the law of sin and death. In doing this Jesus showed great strength of character, determination and courage.

Jesus Christ The Antitype

Before Jesus Christ could offer Himself as the sacrifice to take away the Sin of the world it was needful He be "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He had to be tried under law, like Adam, and prove Himself to be perfect for had He failed He would have been in the same position as Adam after he sinned, and quite unable to save anyone. Having served His years of probation and the time having come for Him to be received up, Jesus Christ was "rich" with His own perfect character in His natural life and could have entered into eternal life without dying, but how then would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? In Jesus own words "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone" and that would have been His position, abiding alone for eternity - but out of His love for us He chose to take Adam's place by dying the judicial death due to Adam. It was a life for a life. It was an equivalent perfect life to the one Adam had been given as Son of God at creation and which he had forfeited. The equivalent price which Jesus paid for Adam's redemption – "They that hated me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine

head; they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty; then I restored that which I took not away” (Psalm 69:4). He restored life to the human race and with it the opportunity of eternal life.

But how did the one life of Jesus Christ, given in place of Adam’s life, save all? The Apostle Paul explains in his Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere:

The Federal Principle

The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 3:22, “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” That is to say we are all included in the Sin of Adam so that the one sacrifice which redeemed Adam and thereby gave him the opportunity of eternal life by faith does the same for us. The Federal Principle is seen in Romans chapter 5 where the Apostle Paul shows how through the one transgression of Adam all were constituted sinners. Not made sinful, but were sold to the power of “Sin” which he personifies elsewhere as a slave-owner; and through the righteousness of one, Jesus Christ, the faithful are constituted righteous. We see then the two Federal Heads - Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam is the Federal Head of all under the law of sin and death while Jesus Christ is the Federal Head of all under Grace:-

In Adam	In Christ
<p>Romans 5</p> <p>v.10 When we were enemies</p> <p>v.12 By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in whom (margin) all have sinned.</p> <p>v.15 Through the offence of one many be dead</p> <p>v.16 Judgment was by one man to condemnation,</p> <p>v.17 by one man’s offence death reigned</p> <p>v.18 by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation</p> <p>v.19 by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.</p> <p>v.20 the law entered that the offence might abound</p> <p>v.21 sin hath reigned unto death</p>	<p>Romans 5</p> <p>We shall be saved by His life.</p> <p>Much more by the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.</p> <p>But the free gift is of many offences unto justification.</p> <p>...they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.</p> <p>By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.</p> <p>By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.</p> <p>But grace did much more abound.</p> <p>Even so grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.</p>

We see then that Adam’s sin was imputed to those in him, while Christ’s righteousness is imputed to those in Him.

Ransom

No one of Adam’s line could successfully lay down his life as a ransom. It had to be a life free of the condemnation under which all in Adam lived and in order to meet this necessity a ransom had to be paid by someone of the same flesh and blood as Adam yet with a life free from condemnation and this is the reason why Jesus was born the Son of God; He was given a new life direct from His Father, not through the line of Adam; and was related to the race being born of a woman. We have the illustration of Moses.

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you” (Acts 3:22). Why did Moses say “like unto me”? It was because Moses was the only Israelite who was not a slave - not in captivity to the Egyptians - and therefore free to mediate with Pharaoh; likewise Jesus was the only human being not inheriting Adam’s bondage to Sin and therefore free to give His life a Ransom for many. God’s principle of Redemption is further illustrated in the law God gave to Moses regarding slavery for we read that where it was impossible for a bondservant to buy his own freedom because of poverty, the law gave the right to a near kinsman to pay the price of his redemption and so free the bondservant and his family from their servitude. The near-kinsman to Adam (who was in bondage to Sin), was Jesus Christ who was free of any bondage. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9); rich with His own life whereas we are poor. He was strong whereas we are weak, and being obedient all His natural life He gave the “wealth” of His natural life as the exact equivalent price to redeem Adam and all in him.

A Man who was tempted in all points as we are and made as we are of the same flesh and blood Jesus Christ was touched with the feeling of our infirmities and learned obedience by the things which He suffered. We see Jesus Christ then of His own free choice, determined to please His Father, accepting the task of redeeming mankind from annihilation, going voluntarily and courageously to His death on the Cross and giving up His natural life for the sake of and in the place of His brother Adam; a life for a life, the Just for the unjust, one person paying the debt owed by another, the innocent person paying the debt owed by the guilty sinner.

It was of course substitution, as is any purchase; we have been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and it was necessary for our salvation for had not Christ died on the Cross we would not have been redeemed and would still be in our sins. It was a matter of a righteous man freely paying the debt of life owed by the guilty because the guilty could not pay it.

Was it unjust for Jesus Christ to give His life and die for us in this way? No, He voluntarily paid it as the debt owed by another and no one took His life from Him. He laid His life down of His own free will for the joy that was set before Him in bringing many sons to glory. The Cross speaks of Love while at the same time establishing the principles of justice. Jesus Christ came into the world to give us our natural life and with it the opportunity of life more abundant, eternal life, which is the gift of God to all who love and honour the Son.

There was no commandment demanding Jesus Christ lay down His life which, had He failed would have made Him a sinner. He voluntarily laid down His life – “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself” John 10:18. The very fact that He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from crucifixion had His courage failed proves this could not have been sin had He not died, for God would have saved His life by providing the angels. But He did not flee in the face of evil. He gave His back to the smiter, He hid not His face from shame and spitting, He was wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah shows beyond all cavil that Jesus Christ died in place of us. His life for ours.

Out of Adam and Into Christ

Jesus Christ suffered for us so that we can come out of Adam and into Christ by baptism into Him. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death...?” (Romans 6:3). We do not have to die for sin except in symbol in the waters of baptism, from which we rise, no longer in bondage to sin; no longer under the condemnation of the law of sin and death but under the law of life by Grace through Jesus Christ.

In the foreknowledge of God He saw that His Son, Jesus would take Adam’s place in death so that Adam need not die for his transgression, and thereby we, in due time, have received our natural life from Adam, and indeed more than this, for we also have received the opportunity of eternal life through Jesus’ death. And so now, if we choose to do His will and keep His commandments, we shall have that life more abundantly, for our eternal life is dependent upon our baptism into Him and so coming into covenant

relationship with God by this means, we ought then to respond with praise and thanksgiving for His love for us.

“Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:13, 14). Jesus Christ asks perfection of us – “be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” - Matthew 5:48 - it is His command for us.

Having been redeemed by Jesus Christ and baptized into Him, should we fail to do whatsoever He commands us - fail in that perfection asked of us, we can receive forgiveness for our sins through Him. “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Psalm 130:3, 4).

“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” - 2 Timothy 2:5.

Brother Russell Gregory.

Isaiah 40:1 and 2

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’s hand double for all her sins”.

UNDERNEATH JERUSALEM

One day, about 150 years ago, a man was taking his dog for a walk around the walls of Jerusalem when near the Damascus gate it vanished into the thick undergrowth. Dogs are sometimes very useful animals, with their tendency to explore and follow exciting trails. His owner went to find him and after searching for a while he was surprised to see the dog apparently crawling from underneath the high walls of the city, through a small hole hidden by dense bushes and the accumulated rubbish of centuries. Very intrigued by this, the next day the man returned with a search party and lanterns; they widened the opening and found themselves in an immense cavern stretching away into the gloom. They had discovered King Solomon's quarries!

Even today the opening is comparatively small and the yawning black emptiness ahead is not very inviting. The Arab at the entrance reluctantly let us in after much persuasion, and we cautiously entered stepping carefully on the slippery wet ground. There were no other tourists there, just two of us in this eerie underworld of another age.

From the entrance the broad uneven path led steeply down into an enormous cave like a cathedral, high passages led off in many directions. Here and there in the darkness a few lights cast great shadows; there were long flights of steep steps with no handrails; deep black holes with only wooden planks across. The rock fell away to lower workings, to more distant and deeper caverns disappearing into the endless darkness. And, worse, it was very wet and dangerous underfoot.

The entrance is near the Damascus Gate, in the north wall of the Old City, and the quarry runs southwards for a distance of about 250 yards right through a cliff and right under the densely populated Old City of Jerusalem. It ends close to the large platform area on which the Dome of the Rock now stands and where King Solomon so long ago built his temple. The quarry cavern is 350 feet wide and the roof is supported by large pillars of rock. It is thought that the vast amount of stone used for the Temple, its foundation and the royal apartments nearby came from here. The stone is pure white, soft to work but hardening rapidly when exposed to the air. Josephus, the Jewish historian, when speaking of the Temple says that it was like a mountain of snow and was built entirely of white stone. How beautiful it would look

in the bright clear sunshine against a brilliant sky, high up and dominating Jerusalem, a constant reminder of the true worship of God and of the many blessings he had given His people. A white Temple showing the purity of God.

God chose Jerusalem as the place where his Temple should be built, and in the Bible plans are given in great detail from every aspect so that we can imagine the building quite clearly. The materials used were the finest available in wood, stone and metal, gold, silver, bronze, iron and all sorts of precious and coloured stones and marble. These were collected over many years by David so that his son could build the Temple to God's honour and glory.

One verse, which has always seemed hard to understand, says, "When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry; so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the Temple, while it was being built." (1 Kings 6:7). The building was to be a work of God "fitly framed together."

Considering the amount of noise thousands of hewers of stone would make while busy at work, it might be thought that the stone was prepared a long way from Jerusalem, and that large heavy blocks of prepared stone had then to be hauled to the city. But, in His wonderful forethought, God had placed the white stone which was to be quarried for the eventual building of His holy Temple practically underneath the site where it would be erected ~ on Mount Moriah!

That foresight is demonstrated in every aspect of God's dealing with His people - the Jews - and in all that has happened to them as part of the Divine purpose which is leading up to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as King. There is a pattern, and a purpose in the world events that are now coming to their climax. Soon it will become apparent to all that God has been quietly preparing a new people, from Israel and from all nations. Like prepared stones (1 Peter 2:5), when the time is right, they will be found ready to be fitted together, to comprise a new dwelling place for the God of Israel.

Selected from Glad Tidings magazine.

Isaiah 25: 6 to 9

“And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”