

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter

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### Editorial

In our last editorial I quoted from the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of His ministry. This preaching of the Gospel was one of two commissions His Father had given Him to do, and now at about the age of 30 years He was ready to commence what He knew would bring great changes to His Father's dealings with mankind. So it was that Jesus spent the next three and a half years preaching in Israel, almost exclusively to His fellow Jews, telling them in more detail of the coming Kingdom of God. To support His teaching, He also spent much time healing the sick, raising the dead to life and other miracles thus proving Himself to be their Messiah. Yet for all the good He did which proved Him to be the Son of God, the Jewish authorities rejected Him. They did not believe He was the Son of God and were very jealous of His great following and were sure He was leading the people astray, so they went about to kill Him for speaking what they believed to be blasphemy. What a dreadful mistake they made.

Jesus knew the hearts of His true followers, as well as hearts of those who were trying to find fault with His teaching and His works, so as to accuse Him of falsehood and of misleading the people. These Scribes and Pharisees were amongst the crowds listening to all Jesus said and reporting back to the authorities who sent them. As an example of this we can read in the gospel of John in chapter 7, verses 45 to 49, of one occasion when the chief priests and Pharisees had sent officers to arrest Jesus, but they returned without Him, "Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spoke like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." On another occasion, "they took up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." (John 8:59). Jesus knew He still had much more work to do and would not let them stop Him until He had finished His preaching – His first commission

In spite of this persecution, or perhaps because of it, Jesus used parables in His teaching and when He was asked why, He gave an unexpected answer which we can read in Matthew 13:1 to 3, "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were

gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spoke many things unto them in parables,” Then verse 10, “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

The purpose of using parables was to separate Jesus’ true disciples from those with wrong or false motives for following Him. If we wish to understand more about what Jesus taught in His parables then prayer is by far the best way; indeed if we want to understand the whole of scripture teaching there is no better way than through prayer, for we read in Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Stop and think about this for a while and we realize this short statement is the very core of not only of what Jesus taught but also of what He achieved by giving His life for us. It is to reason about the Atonement.

This thought brings us to the other commission given to Jesus – to lay down His life to take away The Sin of the world, as John the Baptist said just before baptising Him; and Jesus Himself confirmed this when He said “I lay down my life as a ransom for many” The Ransom here is the price Jesus paid in order to redeem mankind and our Redemption took place the moment Jesus died on the Cross of Calvary.

In the paragraph above I refer to The Sin because in the original Greek it refers to one sin only, not all the sins of the world but to the sin of Adam who was told. That in the day he sinned he would die, i.e. put to death that day, but this sentence was never carried out and Adam was allowed to continue his life for many years and beget children by Eve.

When Jesus had completed His teaching He prayed to His Father as recorded in John chapter 17:4, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” I would ask you to notice the Greek word for “finish” is *‘teleo’* which means ‘completed’.

The next morning Jesus was crucified and in John 19:28 to 30 we read, “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” Why would Jesus again say “It is finished”? The Greek word has a wide range of meanings and on another occasion when Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum “they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?” (Matthew 17:24) and here the same Greek word is used to refer to a payment of a debt. But what debt did Jesus pay? Surely He did not owe anything to anyone. That’s true; but Adam did when he broke the law which God had given him – “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” and yet he did not die that day but he is the ancestor

of us all and the life he passed down to us is still under condemnation. So when Jesus said “It is paid” he was referring to the debt Adam owed and under which the whole human race is condemned. But Jesus said I lay down my life as a Ransom for many as we read in Matthew 20:28. “...the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many,” yet Paul wrote to Timothy – “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:5 & 6). For all or for many? Is this a contradiction? Not if we understand that while Jesus lay down His life to redeem all peoples of the world, it is not everyone who will be saved from condemnation but only those who come to Jesus Christ in response to His teachings.

. The life which Adam forfeited in Eden has now been redeemed for all who seek it by being baptised into Jesus death.

In John 3:16 to 18 we read, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (Greek, zoe). For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

This is the reason we are able to rejoice in the love of God and His Son, Jesus Christ

With Love in Jesus Christ to all our readers, Russell.

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### **After a forest fire in a National Park forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno’s damage.**

One ranger found a bird literally petrified in the ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he gently struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother’s wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise.

She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. Then the blaze had arrived and the heat had scorched her small body, the mother had remained steadfast because she had been willing to die, so those under the cover of her wings would live.

“My God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee... from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: – Psalm 91:3,4

“For my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast” - Psalm 57:1

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” - Matthew 23:37

Being loved this much should make a difference in your life. Remember the One who loves you, and then be different because of it.

Placed on an Internet forum

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#### **Part 4**

### **Veritas And His Friends.**

The observations which Veritas had made impressed the three listeners in various degrees, and in a somewhat different manner. Mentor seemed to be in an unknown region, and though he did not express surprise, yet evidently felt it. Dubitas, though quite incredulous, was interested. Pietas seemed baffled, and in the very slightest degree impatient.

He was the first to speak, "You will excuse me for writing while you were talking, but I was making a pencil memorandum of the reasons why you regard the Scriptures as trustworthy. Allow me to run through it aloud, that I may be sure I am correct."

"First. I think you said the natural religious instinct, maintaining itself through an age of culture and refinement, proves that religion must be a fact, and that somewhere its truths must be discoverable.

"Second. That in the judgment of critical experts, no 'sacred' literature is so full of sublime reason as the Christian Scriptures.

"Third. That the divine movement among men, which these Scriptures reveal, can be compared and checked with acknowledged history.

"I am not quite sure I understand you," he continued, "on this last point; but do those notes express the substance of what you have said?"

"Yes," said Veritas, "they contain substantially what I have said, though needing the clothing of thought which form their natural habiliment."

"Very well," replied Pietas; "and now what was the first step in your departure from the old lines?"

"Well, I was never mentally satisfied with respect to many things that I was taught from my childhood, to accept as true, and being of an earnest and inquiring turn, I was led to re-examine the Scriptures as the only sources of information on the subject. For a long while I had been aware that much in the Scriptures received no interpretation at all; a good deal more was glossed over by human tradition and treated allegorically, and being aware of this I was very uneasy. I did not at first know the huge extent to which this was so; my eyes gradually opened to it."

"But where did your explorations begin?" inquired Pietas.

"I think I have already said," Veritas answered, "that it was the doctrine of endless sin and endless torment that I was first led to examine."

"But no one believes in that now-a-days," said Pietas. Here Dubitas and Veritas both spoke together, the former observing that the doctrine was taught in the Bible anyhow, and the latter

saying that whether believed or not, it was still part of the creed of Christendom; it was still the rousing subject of the ignorant revivalist; and in the last few years philosophy, in the person of Joseph Cook, of Boston, had advanced to defend it. He added, "I don't profess to say whether anyone really does believe it, but I am sure I am incapable of believing it."

"But you believe the Bible?" Dubitas insisted.

"Yes, but the doctrine is not in the Bible, which knowledge was the first gracious result of my thorough searching of the pages of that book."

"I think I could show you that it is," said Dubitas, confidently; "I haven't many of the proofs at my fingers' Ends..."

"I can help you there," interrupted Veritas. "I have had occasion to refer to them so often, that they are as familiar to me as the alphabet."

"You seem pretty familiar with chapter and verse," said Pietas, smiling. "I don't think old Liber, the bookseller, would give much for that tattered Bible of yours."

"It isn't tattered; the edges are much worn, which must needs be, as I use it daily; but (turning to Dubitas) I can find any text you may rely upon as proof of your position. But before I do so, I think you will admit the justness of the remarks that in order to understand the Bible's teaching on a given subject, ALL the texts bearing on that subject should be examined."

"That would perhaps be a long business," said Dubitas, looking at the clock.

"It would," answered Veritas; "and I am not going to ask you now to undertake it with me; I would rather give you just an example of what I mean."

"Very well."

"If you will refer, then, to 2 Peter 2:12, you will find it saying of the wicked, 'these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and DESTROYED . . . shall UTTERLY PERISH in their own corruption.' If you turn again to Malachi 4:1, you will find it says 'behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh, shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them NEITHER ROOT NOR BRANCH.'

Gentlemen," said Veritas, forcibly, "what is the full import of such words as are contained in these two passages?"

No one answered.

"I grant," said Veritas, "there are passages which speak of 'unquenchable fire'; 'the worm that dieth not'; 'everlasting punishment'; and 'smoke of their torment ascending for ever and ever'; but I hold that while it is possible to construe this second class of texts in harmony with the first class, you cannot reconcile root-and-branch destruction with endless conscious suffering."

"As far as I am concerned," said Pietas, "you have the argument without any opposition."

"But for what reason?" quickly asked his friend.

“Is it not simply that your feeling recoils from the idea of endless suffering, which is so monstrous that a thousand bibles could not make you credit it? Would it not be better to look into the texts again to see if the hateful dogma has not been unwarrantably fastened upon them?”

Pietas looked uneasy and his eyes fell. Here Mentor came to the rescue by asking what was meant by the passage in Revelation 14:11, “and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.”

Veritas replied that during the age of ages, that is, the period of the King’s reign in the earth, they who are utterly contumacious and rebellious, will be taken and cast into the Gehenna of that age, the constant fires of which will be fed throughout the period with the fuel of base humanity. So that in a literal sense, the smoke of their torment will be constantly rising, throughout the age; not that each individual will suffer such prolonged pain, but that this Gehenna will be kept burning with its fresh consignments of human stubble.”

Dubitas had been looking into a bible at this passage, and said, “But that can hardly be, for the same verse goes on to say that ‘ they have no rest day nor night.’ “

“If you will notice the punctuation,” said Veritas, “you will see that ‘they’ is connected not with the first but the last part of the verse, and does not refer to the tormented, while tormented, but to the constant apprehension and dread of such as are exposed to this judgment.”

“What do you make of the phrase, the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched,” asked Mentor.

“The origin of the words guides us to their meaning,” Veritas replied. “That origin points to Gehenna, or the valley of the Son of Hinnom, where the refuse of the city of Jerusalem was received. Worms lived on this corruption, and fires were kept constantly burning to assist the decomposition. But instead of suggesting that in the ‘second death’ (of which Gehenna is made the type in the New Testament), men’s lives are preserved in prolonged suffering, its suggestions are just the reverse. The gnawing worm and burning fire teach us that in hell there is no life, but only the dead bodies of the wicked in a state of corruption and decomposition.”

(To be continued).

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**A Letter to The Nazarene Fellowship received a long time ago:**

.From time to time we receive letters from various parts of the world which we would love to share but as they are confidential we will not publish them, at least not for many years. So here is one such letter from our archives and is published for its encouragement to study prayerfully with the Bible in hand.

**To The Nazarene Fellowship :**

Dear Brethren, Greetings in Jesus Name.

I thank you very much for your letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> March and also for your literature which I received. Your letter was without signature so I do not know which brother wrote it. Consequently I just address my letter to the Nazarene Fellowship at the above address.

I was very grateful when I received your literature. I have read through all of it and also studied it together with the Bible. I am in agreement with all of it. I am very thankful that God opened my eyes to see the "Truth" and now to understand the sacrifice of Christ. I can fully see now that there is no such thing as sin the flesh and therefore obedience possible. I understand that the death of Jesus was the actual penalty incurred by sin and that it was for us alone.

As Son of God Jesus was free from Adamic condemnation. Also that as we are now the sons of God, redemption is a present reality. I also understand now that the dead shall be raised incorruptible. This will be the first resurrection and it will be only for the dead in Christ. The rest of the dead I believe then will not live again until the end of the thousand years will be finished, to appear before Him that will sit on a great white throne.

I am very thankful for this light. As you will realise now, I am fully aware of the fact that I was immersed into a "false" Christ. I want to be baptised again into Christ. I want to be buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so to walk in a real newness of life. As I know of no others of like precious faith in this country, I gather that I will have to perform this immersion alone.

When I wrote to you my first letter I also wrote to brethren X, and Y; their addresses I found in one of your booklets. I received some literature from X which are more or less the same booklets as yours. I will also write to him today.

From another brother I received a letter and a booklet called "Romans 11:36." I read it and scripturally I cannot refute it. At present I do not know what to think of it.

Now to tell you more of myself. I have been a Christadelphian for 5 years. I am quite fluent in English. My age is 31 years

I left the Christadelphian body about 4 weeks ago when I understood what the sacrifice of Christ really means.

I am interested to know who sent me literature first; you or Brother X, and where you got my address, because with the first literature I received there was no letter

Hoping to hear from you again, I close with much love and best wishes.

Yours in Christ, R. M.

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## **Christ Is Coming**

1 Christ is coming! Let creation  
From her groans and travail cease,  
Let the glorious proclamation  
Hope restore, and faith increase.  
Christ is coming! Christ is coming!  
Come, Thou blessed Prince of Peace.

2 Earth can now but tell the story  
Of Thy bitter cross and pain;  
She shall yet behold Thy glory  
When Thou comest back to reign.  
Christ is coming! Christ is coming!  
Let each heart repeat the strain.

3 Long Thy people have been pining  
For Thy peace and rest, and Thee,  
Soon, in heav'nly glory shining,  
Their Restorer shall they see.  
Christ is coming! Christ is coming!  
Haste the joyous jubilee.

4 With that blessed hope before us,  
Let no harp remain unstrung;  
Let the mighty advent chorus  
Onward roll on every tongue.  
Christ is coming! Christ is coming!  
Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come.

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### **COUNSEL.**

"Overcome evil with good " (Romans 7:21).  
"Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons "  
(James 2:1).

To seek to overcome evil by evil is to perpetuate it and increase it. It is adding fuel to the fire, and giving strength to the disease. You cannot get "straight" with your neighbour by becoming as crooked as himself. Like does not cure like in the moral world. The only weapons we are permitted to wield are mercy and kindness. When not using these, our attitude must be that of patience and endurance.

The worldly virtues of bravery, courage, and such like, explain a great deal of the mischief and misery of mankind. Evil has promoted evil. But goodness is stronger than it. Behold King David, with Saul's severed skirt, calling to the astonished king, and see in Saul's broken voice and tears, how utterly crestfallen and discomfited is evil in the presence of the good. (1 Samuel 24:17.)

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## **Did Jesus Die Instead of Us**

For many years the Christadelphians thought they had the answer to the teaching of 'substitution' by saying that if Jesus died as a substitute for us then He ought to have stayed dead, but He didn't; and if He died instead of us we ought never to die, but we do. Therefore they say 'substitution' is wrong. They also teach that Jesus rose again with His natural life and did not



receive zoe or spirit life until He ascended to His Father in heaven, but this too is not Bible teaching.

These matters are seldom mentioned nowadays so perhaps many have seen the light. For those who wish to know the answers they are here – First then, did Jesus die instead of us? There are two Greek words translated “life” in the New Testament which are ‘psuche’ and ‘zoe.’ As an example of this let us turn to John 12:25, “He that loveth his life(Greek - psuche) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life(psuche) in this world shall keep it unto life(Greek - zoe) eternal.” ‘Psuche’ then, refers to our natural life which we receive from our parents while ‘zoe’ refers to spirit life or eternal life which the faithful will receive in due time.

With regard to the animal sacrifices for sin offerings in the Old Testament, we read in Leviticus 17:11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Israelites always taught and believed these sacrifices were given in place of the sinner. This, of course, is in relation to the Law of Moses and this is the law which Jesus fulfilled. Matthew 5:17, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil,” and in Matthew 20:28, Jesus said, “even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Ransom is the price paid for redemption. Indicating the price which is paid is always in substitution of the purchase. Again, Acts 20:28, “to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” This He fulfilled when crucified. His blood in which was his natural or psuche life was shed when, on the cross, a spear was thrust into His side and He cried out “It is finished (or paid) – the last words which He spoke before He died.

Regarding the resurrection – are there any indications regarding whether or not Jesus rose again with His natural i.e. psuche life? Let’s turn to Luke 24:36 to 40 to first time Jesus met the Apostles after His resurrection - “And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.”

The reason for quoting this is to note that Jesus does not mention His blood but only His flesh and bones. It was Jesus’ blood in which was His psuche/life that made the Atonement for all mankind and which He never received back again. There is yet one more quotation I wish to turn to those who may still believe Jesus would take his psuche/life again and it is in John 12:25 where we read, “He that loveth his life (*psuche*) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life (*psuche*) in this world shall keep it unto life (*zoe*) eternal.” This is exactly what Jesus did.

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## **“The Israel Guys”**

Have you ever wanted to change the world? I think all of us have had that dream at some point in our lives, whether it was only as a small child, or continued throughout our adult life.

At some point in the journey, however, we realize that our part in changing the world is much smaller than we originally thought. It might mean being a good wife or husband, or a good mother or father, raising strong, godly children for the next generation. It might mean being there for your co-workers or your congregation. Whatever our part is, we do our best to fulfil the

personal mission that God has given us to make a difference for His Kingdom, and together, we are successful in changing the world.

Seventeen years ago, God placed a vision in the heart of my father-in-law, Tommy Waller, to serve the farmers of Israel. For years, he and his family journeyed to the Holy Land to harvest grapes, prune vines, and plant new vineyards. Others started joining them, and eventually thousands of Christians from more than 30 countries would journey to Israel to help dozens and dozens of farmers with their vineyards, olive groves, pomegranate orchards, and the list goes on. They would also plant thousands of trees to combat the desolation that Israel has experienced over the last 2,000 years.

Several years into this journey, another part of the vision was revealed. You see, most people have never been to Israel, much less to a place called Judea and Samaria. You may know it by one of its several other names, such as “biblical heartland,” “West Bank,” or “occupied territories.” Unfortunately, most people don’t know that the last two names are an inaccurate representation of this beautiful piece of real estate.

Most people also think that this is a place that you cannot visit, even if you are on a trip to Israel. Or they think that it is a war zone, completely unsafe to venture into.

Since God called Tommy Waller to Israel, and [HaYovel](#) was founded in Judea and Samaria, we have come to find out that the above assumptions are the exact opposite of the truth!

Here is what we have come to realize about Israel’s heartland:

It is home to 450,000 Jewish Israelis living in thriving, beautiful communities.

More than 80% of the Bible was written or took place here.

Biblical prophecy is being fulfilled here on a daily basis.

Of the one-two million Arabs that reside here, not all of them are terrorists, or want to kill the Jewish people! There actually is co-existence between some of the Arabs of Judea and Samaria and the Jewish people that reside here.

We know all of these things are true because we have been working here for the last 17 years. Unfortunately, most of the world’s media not only avoids these facts, but actually goes out of their way to report quite the opposite!

That’s when we knew that besides bringing Christians to volunteer for the farmers of Israel’s heartland, we also had to get the stories of these people and places out to the world.

After 10 years of producing documentaries, short films, a four-season TV show, podcasts, and launching a successful youtube channel that has garnered 2.3 million views, we decided that now was the time to take the next step in the journey.

This week, we launched a brand-new, unprecedented project called, “The Israel Guys.” In a world of negativity and fake news, we believe that you should connect to the true and authentic stories that are happening in Israel, especially the biblical heartland.

What is The Israel Guys project?

A Youtube channel with videos released every Monday and Thursday:

Monday: myth-busters, live programs and videos that take you to the front lines of the people and places in Judea and Samaria

Thursday: the latest Israel news filtered through a biblical lens

Israel news podcast, also released on Thursdays

Social media platforms with video shorts, thoughts, and commentary from Israel. Cutting-edge articles published every Friday with the latest Israel news, politics, and true and authentic stories of the people and places of the biblical heartland.

We have an ambitious goal. We want to combat the bias and media mis-information that floods the internet when it comes to Israel's land and people. We want millions of people to experience this place for themselves.

We decided to call the project "The Israel Guys" because we wanted there to be no doubt as to who we are and what we stand for. We are Christian Zionists who unequivocally and unapologetically stand with the land and people of Israel.

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## **THE ATONEMENT**

John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" and the Apostle Paul, "we have before proved both Jew and Gentile that they are all under sin." It is evident that Jesus did not take away the sins we still commit, and Paul's words cannot apply to character because a person of moral goodness is as much "under sin" as the worst sinner. The truth is that the whole human family is estranged from God because of sin.

Adam was created at the beginning a man of flesh and blood with the same corruptible nature as all other living creatures. In order to develop character he was placed under a law requiring obedience. He transgressed and incurred the penalty of sin. The account in Genesis is almost universally misunderstood and it is believed that sin made man corruptible and his eventual death the punishment. But what actually happened proves that this is not so. He had been warned that in the day he sinned he would surely die, yet he lived on for more than 900 years. What is the explanation? Did God change His mind? If we look up all the other instances of the same expression as that in Genesis 2:17 (e.g. 1 Kings 2:37-42) we find that it implies an inflicted death on the day of the crime. Similarly, every instance of the punishment of presumptuous sin was a judicial execution (cf. Genesis 20:7). This is what Adam incurred but it is clear that he was not put to death; but how could he possibly escape if God was not to be untrue to His word? The explanation is the plan of redemption whereby Adam died in law, but under a typical sacrifice his life was spared - he was delivered as Isaac was when Abraham was about to kill him - and he lived to become the father of the human race. God did not change His mind, but He made it possible in His own wisdom to open to man the hope of regaining, by faith, what had been lost by disobedience.

In Romans 5:18, 19 the Apostle Paul shows how God has chosen to regard all men as involved in the Sin of Adam. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." They were not made sinners in the sense of being created evil, or obliged by their nature to become sinful; the meaning is that we are legally classified as sinners in a similar way to that which we are by law citizens of the country in which we are born. The sentence of death incurred by Adam 'passes upon' all his descendants, since all who share his life would have perished in him if he had been put to death on the day of his sin. So that Adam is not only the man from whom we are all descended, but he is also appointed the federal head of all who are under the reign of Sin. This is the relationship of being "in Adam" and its vital importance is because if we remain in it, that is, unredeemed, we are inescapably destined to receive the wages of sin.

Sin is literally the transgression of the law and one has to know that a law exists before, in justice, one can be held guilty under it, so that those who are ignorant of God and His purpose are not accountable. But sin is also personified as a king, or master, holding man in bondage, and the reason for this is given in Galatians 3:22, "The scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

The meaning is that God has appointed a second federal head, Jesus Christ, and the only way we can demonstrate that we have the faith which will make us acceptable to God is to recognize that our relationship, by birth to the first Adam by which we are in bondage under sin, can only be changed by getting ourselves out of Adam and into Christ. To do this we have to believe and obey, dying in baptism a symbolic death to our former life and being re-born by faith as children of God.

Law is the basis of the Divine plan. It is God's will that we should not perish but have everlasting life, even though by our own efforts we cannot earn it. He wishes to be merciful and to show His love towards us, but He will not do so at the expense of the supremacy of law. So there is a double problem - to show mercy, and at the same time uphold a just law which must condemn sin - and it is solved in a wonderful way by the sacrifice of Christ.

Under the supreme law of a righteous God a man who is a sinner does not deserve to live, he has forfeited his life, which means that the death which came by sin is not so much a punishment as a debt. A sinner owes that which he cannot pay without perishing; he owes his life. The basis of the Atonement is that if someone else could be found with the means to pay the debt, and providing the supreme authority sanctions the transaction, the sinner might be free from his debt while at the same time the justness of the law is upheld. God brought Jesus into the world for this purpose.

When Jesus submitted Himself to the death of the Cross, He made Himself the sin-bearer, translating into reality the deliverance from the death foreshadowed in Eden when Adam was covered by skins of animals slain. His death was therefore an exact substitutionary sacrifice, not to appease the wrath of God by the infliction of undeserved punishment on the innocent in order that the guilty might escape; this would have been an injustice; but Jesus voluntarily submitted Himself to the condemnation passed upon Him by wicked men, because He saw Himself as paying the price of their redemption. He was wholly good and innocent; there was no cause of death in Him, but what Jesus knew was that He alone could pay the price of their deliverance. Why He alone?

This brings us to the vital factor in The Atonement which God kept concealed from the beginning - the fact that the Redeemer was to be His own Son. Most Christians believe what is revealed in The Gospels about His origin but they do not understand its true significance.

Born of a woman, He was the same natural flesh and blood as all other men, but as He was begotten by the Holy Spirit His life was not a continuation of the Adam-life but a new life direct from God. He was therefore born outside the state of captivity, not under the reign of sin but free, and therefore in a position to purchase the release of those who were enslaved. Jesus said (Matthew 20:28) that He came to give His life a ransom (*lutron*) for many; the word *lutron* means a price paid. The apostle Paul also wrote (Galatians 4:5) that Christ was sent to redeem (*exagorazo*) and this word means to acquire out of the forum, in the same way as slaves were bought, or prisoners ransomed. So this is how Christ redeemed mankind. We have been purchased out of bondage, the bondage of sin, by the payment of a price. It is a figurative

transaction, but it was completed by a literal price, the life of Jesus which He laid down for us on the Cross.

If Jesus had not proved Himself personally sinless, He could not have offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, because a sacrifice had to be perfect and unblemished before sin could be laid upon it. But, even though He had been sinless, if He had been the son of a human father it would have been impossible for Him to meet the legal claim of sin because his life would not have been His own to give; he would have been in the same hopeless condition as all in Adam.

Therefore, being the Son of God and having proved Himself obedient under temptation He was legally free and morally perfect. Though He could have claimed a kind of equality with His Father, he humbled Himself (Philippians 2:5-8) and became obedient unto death, suffering what was due to sinners, giving Himself the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.

The purpose of God in Christ is unique in history, in what it reveals of His mercy and love and in the logical perfection with which it meets man's needs, enlightens his mind and gives him hope. It spans the ages from the moment when God said "Let there be light" to the infinite future when He will declare "Behold, I make all things new." These are indeed things which even the angels desired to look into. Today they are open to us and they show the way to eternal life.

Ernest Brady. (1978)

Note To The Reader

If you have read this explanation of The Atonement and find it enlightening, please ask for copies and pass them on. If your views are different, we ask you to do as we have done – write them down at similar length and let us reason them out together.

If you publish a magazine, why not print them side by side and give your readers the opportunity to make up their minds. Truth has nothing to fear.

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## **Isaiah 12**

### **A Song of Praise**

In that day you will say: "I will praise you, Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation."

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: "Give praise to the Lord, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted.

Sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."