

# Satan in derision

or THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY

and other Bible studies

by C. R. STAM

*Satan In Derision*

or

THE HEART OF THE  
MYSTERY

And Other Bible Studies

by

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By

CORNELIUS R. STAM

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>Preface</b> .....	v
<b>Satan in Derision</b> Or, The Heart of the Mystery.....	6
<b>Murder, Manslaughter And the Mystery</b> Grace Abounding.....	14
<b>Re-thinking Isaiah Fifty-three</b> In The Light of the Mystery.....	19
<b>The Baptism of the Priest</b> And Our Baptism Into Christ.....	24
<b>The Rending of the Veil</b> Or, A New and Living Way to God.....	32
<b>Two Hungry People</b> And the Riches of God’s Grace.....	36
<b>The Haunted House</b> And the Dispensation of Grace.....	44
<b>Jesus Christ, Cornerstone and Stumbling Block</b> The Rise and Fall of Many in Israel.....	49
<b>Three Times When the Lord Wouldn’t Answer</b> The Paradox of Grace.....	58
<b>I Heard a Voice</b> How Salvation Went to the Gentiles.....	65
<b>It Was Added</b> The Bible’s Biggest “If”.....	71
<b>From Glory to Glory</b> An Exposition of II Cor. 3:6-18 .....	75
<b>The Trouble at Antioch</b> Who Was to Blame?.....	83

<b>The Man Who Fell Asleep in Church</b> And Fell From a Third Story Window.....	89
<b>That Precious Deposit</b> A Sacred Trust.....	95
<b>Buying Up the Time</b> A Warning Against Presumption.....	101

## PREFACE

Among the articles contained in bygone issues of the *Berean Searchlight* are some that drew particular attention and which many of our readers have asked us to publish in booklet form. There is a limit, however, to how long we should allow our list of booklets to become. We have felt, therefore, that it would be better to include these in larger volumes, each volume containing articles along the same general line. Thus our readers could have in their libraries, one volume on, let's say, *The Great Commission and Paul's Apostleship*, another on *The Rapture and the Lord's Return to Reign* and others on *The Ministries of John the Baptist, Christ, and the Twelve*, *Water Baptism*, *The Lord's Supper*, *The Mystery*, et al.

This present volume, *Satan in Derision*, has mainly to do with "the mystery" revealed through Paul, and contains articles by the author going back more than thirty years, articles which most of our present readers have not yet read.

Some of these articles have been slightly revised to bring them up to date and to avoid duplication, but the doctrinal and dispensational teachings contained in each remain the same.

It has been a great blessing to the author to work on this volume and to enjoy again those blessed truths which the Lord opened his eyes to see and his heart to receive many years ago.

We make no claim to special spiritual insight. Indeed we acknowledge that apart from enlightening grace we would be blind indeed to the things of God. On the other hand, we will never cease to praise God for the day when "the eyes" of our "understanding" were first opened to see the glories of "the mystery" revealed by our glorified Lord to and through the Apostle Paul, that sacred secret that explains so many seeming discrepancies, solves so many needless problems and answers so many objections raised by unbelievers against the truth of the Word of God.

And now it is our earnest prayer that *you*, beloved reader, may also rejoice as the Holy Spirit blesses these truths to *your* heart.

—Cornelius R. Stam

*Chicago, Illinois*  
*May 29, 1972*

# Satan in Derision

or

## THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY

What is the heart of the wonderful mystery which our glorified Lord revealed to Paul? The dispensation of grace? The Body of Christ? Our position and blessings in the heavenlies? Our baptism into Christ?

Before deciding, let us first consider a narrative of ancient Bible times—the story of one of the Pharaohs of Egypt.

### EGYPT AND ITS GLORY

How much God could have told us about ancient Egypt and its mighty Pharaohs! What exciting information He could have given us with regard to the Sphinx and the Pyramids—especially the Great Pyramid of Gizeh!

This last structure is a marvel of geometry, astronomy and engineering. Covering an area of more than 13 acres, and rising to a height of 481 feet, it has stood for more than 4,000 years. Classical writers have united in giving it first place among “The Seven Wonders of the World.”

It is evident that the Great Pyramid was carefully designed before its erection, for not only is it a permanent record of the basic geometrical facts; it is also a living proof that the ancients had an amazing knowledge of astronomy. The Great Pyramid is a sort of astronomical observatory which proves that its designers knew, among other things, that the earth is spheroid, that it rotates on an axis, that it travels an orbit around the sun and that the sun, along with our universe, travels an orbit of its own.

As to its construction, the greatest engineers still wonder how the ancients erected it, or how we could erect one today.

Little wonder that Acts 7:22 refers to “all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” and little wonder that Joseph A. Seiss calls the Great Pyramid “the oldest and greatest existing monument of intellectual man.”<sup>1</sup>

### ISRAEL IN EGYPT

But God did not write the Bible merely to interest us or to satisfy our curiosity, for He passes over all this history to deal with a group of seventy souls, the children of Jacob, who had come from Canaan to Egypt to be with Joseph, their brother (Ex. 1:5).

God had a promise to fulfill to this company of sojourners, and in Ex. 1:7 we find Him beginning to carry out this promise:

**“And the children of Israel were fruitful,**

**“and increased abundantly,**

**“and multiplied,**

---

<sup>1</sup> *Miracle in Stone*, p. 3

**“and waxed exceeding mighty,**

**“and the land was filled with them.”<sup>2</sup>**

### **A NEW KING**

It was after Joseph had long passed from the scene and the children of Israel had become a great multitude in Egypt, that “there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph” (Ex. 1:8).

This new king could not help knowing *about* Joseph, of course, but he did not recognize or show respect to the great savior of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> He did not, like that king, Ahasuerus, ask whether anything had been done to honor the benefactor of his nation. Rather, like Belshazzar, the last of the Chaldean rulers, this Pharaoh had been flattered and pampered and patronized until there was no character left, only ignorance and arrogance.

### **PHARAOH’S “WISDOM”**

Alarmed at the rapid increase of the Israelites among his people, this ruler felt challenged to “deal wisely with them” (Ex. 1:10). The measures he took, however, were masterpieces of stupidity utterly unworthy of one who had “all the wisdom of the Egyptians” at his disposal.

*Blunder No. 1:*

**“Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.**

**“But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew” (Ex. 1:11, 12).**

Of course! While the Egyptians enjoyed prosperity and luxury and became flabby and soft, their slaves, the Israelites, grew stronger every day from the toil and the burdens they were forced to bear, much as the soldier’s basic training strengthens him physically, and often mentally.

Pharaoh had complained: “*The people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we,*” but here he was doing the very thing that was bound to strengthen them and cause them to further “multiply and grow.”

When his subjects saw the results of his folly they actually pursued the same course more vigorously!<sup>4</sup> The record seems incredible, as we read on:

**“...and they were grieved because of the children of Israel.**

**“And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor:**

**“And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor” (Vers. 12-14).**

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<sup>2</sup> In this passage we have “the figure of the many ands” (Polysyndeton), used to convey strong emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> See Gen. 41:33-57.

<sup>4</sup> Doubtless in response to Pharaoh’s orders.

The course Pharaoh had taken was bound to produce three results: It would unquestionably toughen the Israelites, and embitter them further, and unite them as a mighty force against the Egyptians.

*Blunder No. 2:*

But Pharaoh had another plan—if anything, more ill-advised than the first.

**“And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other was Puah:<sup>5</sup>**

**“And he said, when ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live” (Ex. 1:15, 16).**

What fools “great” men can be! For three obvious reasons this plan, like its predecessor, was doomed to failure. Did this “wise” king forget that women have hearts? And these were *Hebrew* women! Would they kill Hebrew children? Moreover, they were *God-fearing* women. Did Pharaoh expect them to embark on a widespread campaign to murder babies for him! Thus the record goes on to say:

**“But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive” (Ver. 17).**

For this Pharaoh called them to account, but they explained:

**“...the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them” (Ver. 19).**

This was doubtless true, and it appears that Pharaoh must have accepted the explanation. Moreover, “God dealt well with the midwives,” so that we read again: *“and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty”* (Ver. 20).

But God dealt even better with the midwives for jeopardizing their lives in this way, for “He made them houses” (Ver. 21), i.e., He made them fruitful, so that they became the mothers of great households.

*Blunder No. 3:*

And now in desperation Pharaoh issues a decree as brutal and bestial as it is foolish.

**“And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying: Every son that is born [to the Israelites] ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive” (Ex. 1:22).**

The folly of such a decree is immediately seen in (1) the extreme improbability that it would be generally obeyed, and (2) the certainty that if it were obeyed it would incite active rebellion by a people who were already “more and mightier” than the Egyptians and bitterly resented them.

The most hardened of soldiers are slow to harm a child. How, then, did Pharaoh expect his subjects generally to begin killing children? But the very issuing of such an edict was certain to have an awful rebound.

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<sup>5</sup> Evidently the two chief midwives.



## A NEW KING

### A BRAVE COUPLE

As though proud Pharaoh could not make a great enough fool of himself, God now stepped in to help him. Not that God had not overruled in all that had transpired thus far, but at this point He set a most ingenious trap for Pharaoh, with a crying babe as bait!

In Exodus 2 we get our first glimpse of Amram and Jochebed, though they had been married for some years (Ex. 6:20) and already had two children, Miriam and Aaron. A brave couple, these two, to raise a family in times like these. And now that a child had been born to them under Pharaoh's awful decree, we might have expected that, like our Hebrew couples of their day, they would defy the cruel edict. Theirs was the courage of faith, for Heb. 11:23 declared:

**“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”**

Amram and Jochebed may have had many a fear for the child's life, but they did not hesitate to defy “the king's commandment” to preserve his life. First Jochebed hid him for three months, and when he became too old to hide, she “cast him into the river,” but oh, so gently!

### A TRUE PSYCHOLOGIST

**“...she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink.**

**“And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him” (Ex. 2:3, 4).**

Why Jochebed took this course is not difficult to learn. She surely did not leave the child there for just anyone to find. Obviously she put the ark, or basket, in a spot where Pharaoh's daughter might find it. This brave Hebrew mother was a better psychologist than the great Egyptian Pharaoh. She knew that *Egyptian* women *did* have hearts! And the record shows that she was right.

**“And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river’s side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.**

**“And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children” (Vers. 5, 6).**

Of course! Princess or no, Pharaoh's daughter was a woman, and her heart went out, not only to the weeping child, but to the mother who had so ingeniously sought to preserve its life.

### A PLANT

Is it not amazing that Moses' sister just happened to be around! Happened? We may be certain that Jochebed drilled little Miriam again and again and again in just how to act and what to say and do when the Princess found the baby. That mother, we may be sure, did not rest until Miriam had gotten it all just right. And she was rewarded, for the Scripture narrative relates how Miriam stepped out, as if from nowhere, to suggest that it might be well to get “a nurse of the Hebrew women” to nurse the child for a while; she just happened to know one!

**“And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child’s mother. (Ver. 8).**

Praise Jehovah! It had worked! And now for a bonus!

#### A BONUS

**“And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her [Moses’ mother], Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages...” (Ver. 9).**

Wages! Jochebed hadn’t thought of that, we may feel sure. What self-restraint she must have had to exercise as, time after time, she went to report to the Princess, to show how her foundling was doing in the care of his nurse! What laughter and glee there must have been in that Hebrew home each time Jochebed returned with her “wages”! Who would have thought that the child’s mother would have been paid a royal salary to nurse her own son!

#### THE SON OF PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER

At length the time came when the lad must be turned over to the Princess, but not, we may be sure, until Moses had been firmly grounded in the faith of his fathers. Then, and not until then, did he become “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

**“And she called his name Moses...Because I drew him out of the water” (Ver. 10).**

Little did this great Princess know that we would be writing and speaking about Moses today; that his name and deeds and writings would become topics of interest and discussion over all the world and for millenniums to come.

#### THE TRAP SPRUNG

Neither did the Princess know that ere long Moses would become Israel’s great deliverer, for God had used the baby’s tears to induce Pharaoh to raise, support and educate, in his own palace, the very one who, under God, was to accomplish what he dreaded most.

**“Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain” (Psa. 76:10)**

**“...For it is written: He taketh the wise in their own craftiness” (I Cor. 3:19).**

#### PHARAOH AND SATAN

We have seen the great Pharaoh taken in his own craftiness, so that God used him as the instrument in His hand to accomplish the very thing the proud ruler was determined to prevent.

Pharaoh had used every stratagem to keep Israel from becoming so strong as to escape his grasp. He had taken the most drastic measures lest the males in the captive nation should multiply to the extent that they might rise and “get them up out of the land.” But God used the tears of a helpless babe to beguile the great ruler into rearing and training Israel’s great deliverer in His own royal palace!

But Pharaoh is the familiar type of Satan, the world's cruel slave-master. As Pharaoh schemed to keep Israel in his grasp, so Satan, ever since the fall, has done all in his power to keep his hold upon mankind. Indeed some of Pharaoh's outrages against Israel were inspired by Satan, in his efforts to retain his control over fallen man. But God took Satan too in his own craftiness, using His proud adversary to bring about His own eternal purpose. In this connection we quote here from our book, *Things That Differ*.

#### SATAN'S APPARENT VICTORY

"Satan had, of course, worked long behind the scenes to prevent the coming of the Redeemer. He had opposed it by seeking the destruction of all the Hebrew male children in Egypt (Ex. 1:16, 22), by seeking the annihilation of the whole nation by Pharaoh (Ex. 14), by seeking to wipe out all the seed royal through Athaliah (II Chron. 22:10), by seeking the destruction of the race again through Haman (Esth. 3:12, 13).

"When the deceiver was overruled in these and other attempts on Christ, and the Lord after all appeared on earth, Satan redoubled his efforts to destroy Him. When but an infant, Herod sought the young child's life (Matt. 2); at Nazareth, His neighbors tried to throw Him over a cliff (Luke 4:29); a fierce storm on Galilee would have engulfed Him (Mark 4:37), etc.

"Finally it seemed Satan was winning. He had succeeded in turning Israel's rulers against Christ (John 7:48), then the masses (Matt. 13:13-15), then many of His own disciples (John 6:66, 67) and finally even one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 26:14-16).

"Some suppose that Satan sought to prevent the crucifixion, but we must not presume that Satan understood how the cross would accomplish his defeat and our redemption. We read distinctly that 'Satan entered into' Judas (John 13:27). Satan thought that the crucifixion of Christ would destroy Him. How he must have congratulated himself on his success as our Lord died in shame and disgrace on Calvary's cross!" (*Things That Differ*, Pp. 72, 73).

If ever Satan seemed to be really triumphant, it seemed so now, as the heavens were draped in blackness for three hours and the people returned to their homes in consternation, smiting their breasts (Luke 23:44, 48). How the angelic hosts must have looked on in wonder! Michael and his angels would have fought to prevent this (Matt. 26:53), but now the devil and his angels could boast to each other: "*He is dead! He is Dead!*"

#### SATAN'S DEFEAT

Ah, but Satan, like Pharaoh of old, was to be "taken in his own craftiness" and he and all his hosts were to find that their great "victory" was in fact their utter and ignominious defeat.

Imagine how Satan was held up to angelic ridicule as our Lord arose from the dead and the twelve, the one hundred and twenty, yes, and the "more than five hundred brethren" went everywhere, crying from the house tops: "*He is alive! He is alive!*" Diabolos, the great accuser, must already have read his ultimate doom in the resurrection of the One he had induced wicked men to crucify.

But if this was distressing and embarrassing to Satan, he was still to sustain a much greater shock, for imagine his dismay when he discovered that he had tricked himself by crucifying Christ—that God had actually paid for man's sin by the death of Christ so that He might save the chief of sinners and send him forth to offer "*redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*"! (Eph. 1:7).

Thus Satan reached the climax of his career of deception when he deceived himself at Calvary.

### THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY

Let us now return to our original question: What is the heart of the wonderful mystery which our glorified Lord revealed to Paul? Is it the dispensation of grace? The truth about the Body of Christ? Our position in the heavenlies? Our baptism into Christ by the Spirit? No, the *heart* of the mystery is *Calvary*, God's reply to Satan and His amazing disposal of Satan's opposition by using it to further His own eternal purpose.

Does some reader object that the cross was predicted in Old Testament prophecy and therefore cannot be any part of the mystery revealed to Paul? Ah, but prophecy and the mystery *both* center in the cross.<sup>6</sup>

“We must be careful not to assume that predictions concerning the crucifixion are the same as ‘the preaching of the cross’ or that ‘the preaching of the cross’ has nothing to do with the mystery simply because the crucifixion itself was prophesied.

“Predictions concerning the death of Christ are to be found in numerous Old Testament passages as well as in the four records of our Lord's earthly ministry, but never were the merits of Christ's death proclaimed as the ground of salvation until Paul. The difficulty is that so much has been read into these passages which is not there.” (Ibid., p. 74).

True, the cross was prophesied, but not the cross *as Paul preached it*. Even as late as Pentecost the cross was a matter of shame to be repented of (Acts 2:22, 23, 36-38), but with Paul it was a matter for great boasting (Gal. 6:14; cf. Col. 2:14, 15; Heb. 1:3; 2:14, 15; 10:11-14).

It was after Israel had turned a deaf ear to Peter's call to repentance that God unfolded a plan He had kept secret from eternity past.

Saving the leader of Israel's and the world's, rebellion against Christ, He sent him forth as both the herald and the living example of the riches of His love and grace.

Compare I Tim. 1:13-16 with Rom. 5:20, 21 and see how Paul was representative as “the chief of sinners” to whom “the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.” Surely for the world, as for Paul, “*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*”

Paul was sent to proclaim “the gospel [good news] of the grace of God,” with all that this included: forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, baptism into Christ and His Body, a position and all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies—all according to the riches of God's grace, apart from religion or works. All this and more is included in “the dispensation of the grace of God,” the “mystery,” made known by revelation to and through the Apostle Paul (Eph. 3:1-4).

But all this is based upon Calvary. God had held Satan in derision, for now Paul, the chief of sinners, saved by grace, could proclaim the crucifixion of Christ to all the world *as glad news*.

The “mystery,” then, concerns the over-abounding grace of God to man through the shed blood of Christ. Thus in the great Pauline message everything centers in the cross.

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<sup>6</sup> See the writer's book, *The Two-fold Purpose of God*.

“According to Paul’s epistles ‘we have redemption through His blood’ (Eph. 1:7), we are ‘justified by His blood’ (Rom. 5:9), ‘reconciled to God by the death of His Son’ (Rom. 5:10), ‘made nigh by the blood of Christ’ (Eph. 2:13) and ‘made the righteousness of God in Him’ because ‘God hath made Him to be sin for us’ (II Cor. 5:21).

“The covenant of the law was abolished by the cross (Col. 2:14), the curse of the law was removed by the cross (Gal. 3:13), the ‘middle wall of partition’ was broken down by the cross (Eph. 2:14, 15), and believing Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God in one body by the cross (Eph. 2:16)” (Ibid., Pp. 71, 72).

In the light of all this it is not strange that Satan hates and opposes the message of grace, the preaching of the cross as Paul proclaimed it, more bitterly than he hated or opposed the prophetic program. Nor is it strange that it is God’s purpose:

**“...that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known BY THE CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10).**

Our safety is sealed by the blood of Christ and Satan is a defeated foe. We need not fear him, but, strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might, and clothed with His “whole armour,” we can withstand him. And as we proclaim the grace that flows from Calvary, Satan and his hosts will see demonstrated in us the fact that the cross was their undoing.

**“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10).**

# Murder, Manslaughter And the Mystery GRACE ABOUNDING

In the nature of the case, most murder stories are called “murder mysteries,” and the question which keeps the reader occupied until almost the end is: Who did it?

The greatest murder mystery of all time, with the most amazing ending—an ending which no one could possibly have foreseen—is told by God Himself.

## MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER

God’s Word has much to say about both murder and manslaughter.

Along with Israel’s moral law God gave His people a civil code—a code on which the laws of Great Britain and the United States, have since been largely based.

This code contained clear statutes dealing with the manslayer (one who killed another accidentally) and the murderer (one who killed another intentionally).

Gracious provisions were made for the manslayer in Israel. In his distress he could flee from “the avenger of blood” to the nearest “city of refuge”—there were six scattered throughout Palestine—and could remain there safely until the judges had tried his case (Num. 35:12). If then found innocent of murderous intent his life was spared and he could remain in the city of refuge as long as the officiating high priest lived (Num. 35:25).

But the cities of refuge were for the manslayer only (Deut. 19:4; Josh. 20:3). The person found guilty of murder was turned out of the city to pay for his crime by death.

God’s laws concerning murder were severe and inflexible. Three times in Num. 35 alone He says: “*The murderer shall surely be put to death*” (Vers. 16, 17, 18). In Deut. 19:13 He says:

**“THINE EYE SHALL NOT PITY HIM, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.”**

This is by no means the only passage in which God warns Israel *not to pity the murderer, lest murder be lightly thought of and the land be “filled with blood.”*

## THE MURDER OF CHRIST

Let us now consider all this in connection with Israel’s trial and crucifixion of Christ.

Matt. 26:3, 4 tells how the Sanhedrin assembled together at the high priest’s palace “and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill Him.” Think of it! The supreme court of the land planning the death of an alleged criminal!

Next we learn from Lu. 22:3-5 how Judas went to the chief priests (who exerted the strongest influence in the Sanhedrin) and discussed with them the betrayal of Christ: “*and they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.*”

Next, at a so-called “trial,” we actually find the Sanhedrin seeking false witness against Christ to use as “evidence” for His conviction (Matt. 26:59). And after they had condemned the Lord to death, they had another meeting to insure, if possible, His conviction and execution by Pilate, the Gentile (Matt. 27:1, 2).

Meantime, Judas, tortured by a guilty conscience, returned to the council with the betrayal money, confessing that he had betrayed “innocent blood,” but the jurors replied: “What is that to us? See thou to that,” with the result that Judas “cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.” (Matt. 27:3-5).

Then came the awful trial before Pontius Pilate, the false accusations and the blood-curdling cries: *“Away with Him, away with Him; give us Barabbas.”*

But would they take the blame for executing one in whom the governor could find no fault? Indeed they would, for as Pilate washed his hands in protest they cried:

**“His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25).**

As Luke describes the scene:

**“...they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.**

**“And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required” (Lu. 23:23, 24).**

In the light of all this could the execution of Christ on Calvary be considered anything less than premeditated murder?

Little wonder our Lord, in one of His prophetic parables, called His rejectors “those murderers” and predicted that God would “burn up their city” (Matt. 22:7).

#### THROUGH IGNORANCE YE DID IT

Against this black background we find Peter declaring to a company of Jewish hearers:

**“And now, brethren, I wot [realize] that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers” (Acts 3:17).**

And with this he actually offers them the return of Christ and “the times of refreshing” if they will repent (See Vers. 18-21).

What! Will he now excuse his Lord’s murderers? Will he pronounce them innocent? No, but he will offer them *repentance* and *forgiveness* on the grounds of ignorance.

We must not forget that our Lord Himself had prayed from the cross:

**“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).**

To be sure, they were guilty of murder in the first degree. They had deliberately slain an innocent Person. But they did not yet understand whom it was that they were crucifying. True, they *could* have known, and *should* have known, but the fact remains that *they did not know*. Our Lord Himself had said to the rulers:

**“When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He” (John 8:28).**

The Apostle Paul adds to this the declaration that *“had they known...they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (I Cor. 2:8).

Thus in response to our Lord’s prayer on the cross, the charge was changed from murder to manslaughter on the basis that while they knew that they were killing an innocent Person, they did not know whom it was they were killing, and had they known this things might [theoretically] have turned out differently. In grace this technicality was used in their favor.

#### CHRIST ISRAEL’S REFUGE

Apprehending our Lord’s apostles, shortly after Pentecost, the high priest complained:

**“Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us” (Acts 5:28).**

The apostles might well have reminded the high priest of Israel’s response to Pilate’s plea, but instead they said, of Christ:

**“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Ver. 31).**

The crucified, risen, exalted Christ had become Israel’s City of Refuge. The very One whom they had murdered now stood ready to receive and protect them! He Himself had pleaded that the charge might be changed from murder to manslaughter!

The ancient cities of refuge were placed so as to be accessible to all Israel. Roads were built throughout Canaan to bring them within the reach of all. Along these roads ancient historians tell us, were signposts marked: *“Flee!”*

Yet these cities were no more accessible to the guilty nation than was Christ, their Prince and Savior, now exalted *“to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”*

And, should they flee to Him for refuge, how long would they be safe? Forever!

The manslayer could remain safe in the city of refuge *“until the death of the high priest”* (Num. 35:25). This was but typical of Christ, who is represented by both the city and the high priest. When will this great High Priest die? Let Heb. 7:23-25 answer:

**“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:**

**“But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.**



**“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”**

Thus the people of Israel could have found—and some did find—an everlasting refuge in the very One they had slain.

This is why, in His great commission to the eleven, our Lord gave the loving instruction to begin at Jerusalem (Lu. 24:47; Acts 1:8).

Contrary to the unscriptural tradition which begins the present dispensation and the Body of Christ with that “great commission,” our Lord plainly showed here that He was not yet ready to set Israel aside.

As Israel’s divine City of Refuge He was again offering salvation to His people, and saying: *“Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37).

### **THE MYSTERY**

But is not Christ also *our* City of Refuge”? Yes, but more—much more.

It is true that we too have slain a man “unawares,” for our sins helped to nail Him to Calvary’s tree. We must confess with Paul that we were enemies against Christ, though, like him, we can also say: “I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (I Tim. 1:13).

But let us proceed with Paul’s words here:

**“And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**

**“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.**

**“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting” (I Tim. 1:14-16).**

Note, here it is not even a question of whether murder or manslaughter should be the charge.

Another change is made. The “*You* did it,” of early Acts is changed to the “*He* did it” of Paul’s epistles. This “*He* did it,” proclaimed as a message, is part of the great mystery and dispensation of grace.

Never does Paul deal with the degree of man’s guilt in offering salvation. Rather he proclaims God’s grace in “the preaching of the cross.”

**“God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).**

**“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved [one].**

**“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace;**

**“Wherein He hath abounded toward us...” (Eph. 1:6-8).**

**“And you, that were sometime [Lit., “at one time”] alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled,**

**“In the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight” (Col. 1:21, 22).**

How many more such passages we could cite from Paul’s epistles!

#### WHO DID IT?

Israel did it. We did it. Yet God does not even charge us with our dreadful crime. “*I* did it,” says the Father. “*I* did it,” says the Son.

**“For God hath made Him to be sin for us [Him] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:21).**

**“[Christ]...when he had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).**

And Peter, having learned of this further revelation from “our beloved brother Paul,” later added his testimony:

**“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God...” (I Pet. 3:18).**

## Re-thinking Isaiah Fifty-three IN THE LIGHT OF THE MYSTERY

It is nothing short of amazing that more than seven centuries before Christ anyone could have described in such minute detail the humiliation, suffering and death of Christ, along with a prophecy about His subsequent exaltation.

Any honest person, knowing the details of our Lord's suffering and death, and then reading Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12, will hasten to acknowledge that the description fits one Person, and one only: the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is as if Isaiah had personally witnessed His life and death when he penned this well-known passage.

Yet it would be at least misleading to call this passage "the gospel in Isaiah," as some have done. One writer goes so far as to declare: "The gospel is here as clearly presented as anywhere in the Pauline epistles." This is far from correct and it ignores the principle of progressive revelation, which a comparison of Isaiah 53 with Paul's epistles would certainly emphasize.

We can *now* see that the Spirit's subject in Isaiah 53 was Christ, but no one would have guessed it at the time. As with other Old Testament prophecies about Christ, veiled language was purposely employed.<sup>7</sup> Purposely, we say, for (1) God would thus render impossible any claim that man had fulfilled His predictions for Him, (2) the full meaning of the cross was part of a mystery not to be revealed until "due time" through Paul (I Tim. 2:5-7; Rom. 3:24-26), and (3) He would thus give future generations of believers the joy of looking back and exclaiming: "*He had it in mind all the while!*"

We rejoice that the dispensation of grace was not some hastily-devised plan, drawn up in view of man's rejection of Christ. On the contrary, it was God's "*eternal purpose*," hidden in His heart of love from "before the beginning of the world," and such passages as Isaiah 53 prove this, though they say not a word about the purpose itself.

With this in mind let us now examine the passage again to find exactly what information it gave to those who read it before possessing the knowledge that we do about Christ and His finished work.

### OF WHOM SPEAKETH THE PROPHET THIS?

Ethiopia's treasurer, evidently a proselyte to Judaism, had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was now returning to his native country. Obviously he was also deeply sincere, for we find him pondering over a scroll containing Isaiah 53 as he rides along in his chariot. In response to his spiritual hunger God sends the evangelist Philip to instruct him. When Philip overtakes him he introduces himself to the prince with the question: "*Understandest thou what thou readest?*" to which the prince replies: "*How can I, except some man should guide me?*" and with this he invites Philip to sit with him in his chariot to give him what help he can (Acts 8:26-34).

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<sup>7</sup> There is not a single passage in all the Old Testament Scriptures which actually *says* that Messiah, or the Son of God, would die on a cross for the sins of mankind, though they do depict Messiah's suffering and the glory that should follow.

The prince's first question about the passage was: "*Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?*" (Acts 8:34). Many a present-day believer would say of this prince: "How blind!" Actually, however, this was an intelligent question, for the passage does not say to whom it refers, and this Ethiopian prince had not, evidently, been with the minority of Messianic believers at Jerusalem who had now learned the answer.

The words "*My righteous servant*" (Isa. 53:11) come nearest to identifying the subject of the passage, but other servants of God have been identified in this way. And as to this servant "justifying many" by "his knowledge," how could this Ethiopian of the year 34 A.D. be expected to read the truth of Paul's Roman epistle into this passage?

His question, then, was basic; the first that should be asked about the passage. And the next is equally important:

### **FOR WHOM WAS THIS SERVANT TO SUFFER AND DIE?**

The sixth verse of our passage reads thus:

**"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."**

We once heard a radio evangelist comment on this verse as follows: "Notice that this verse begins and ends with the word '*all*.' *All*, of course, means everybody; you, me, everybody. Now if we'll go in at the first '*all*' as lost sheep, we'll come out at the last '*all*,' with our sins forgiven."

But the evangelist had misinterpreted the verse, for the terms "*all we*" and "*us all*" do *not* mean everybody. If I say that "*we all*," or "*all of us*" are going on an outing, I do not mean that the whole world is going! Clearly Isaiah spoke as a Hebrew prophet when he used the terms "*all we*" and "*us all*." This passage, then does not present Christ bearing the sins of all mankind. Should the reader still question this he has but to glance down at Verse 8, which closes with the declaration:

**"For the transgression of my people was He stricken."**

All this harmonizes with divine revelation thus far, for Jer. 50:6 says: "*My people hath been lost sheep*," and many Old Testament passages agree with this. Indeed, we even find our Lord, years later, still declaring: "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matt. 15:24) and instructing His apostles:

**"...Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5, 6).**

This is not to deny, of course, that we Gentiles too have gone astray—and worse. It is simply to insist that Christ's death for *us* is not contemplated in Isaiah 53, even though the circumstances are similar.

A third important question which should be asked about this passage is:

## IN WHAT SENSE DOES ISAIAH SPEAK OF THIS SERVANT'S DEATH?

Anyone reading Isaiah 53 with an open mind must notice in its opening verses a tone of disappointment and frustration. Who will believe the prophet's report? Who will see "the arm of the Lord" (His power) in the appearance of this "servant"? He will appear as "a tender plant and as a shoot out of a dry ground." He will have "no form nor comeliness...no beauty that we should desire Him." He will be "despised and rejected...a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Men will "hide their faces from Him" and "esteem Him not."

Dress a man in gorgeous robes; place him on a throne in a palace with a thousand rooms, and pilgrims will come from the uttermost parts of the earth for the honor of kissing his toe! But who wants this one who is so unattractive? Who wants a "man of sorrows"? He will live rejected of men and will die the same.

We say all this to point out the fact that while many untaught believers consider substitution the very acme of Christian truth, it is actually but the very beginning.

Substitution in itself is not necessarily a glad theme. If we knew that one of our acquaintances was bearing the blame and penalty for what another had done, we would probably be outraged and would demand that the truth be told. And this is the sense in which Isaiah depicts the substitutionary sufferings of the "servant." "He is suffering," cries Isaiah, "but *we* are the guilty ones. Surely the Lord, who willed it so, will vindicate and reward Him."

In this connection we should further observe that our Lord is presented as a Victim in Isaiah 53. He is a voluntary Victim, to be sure (Cf. John 10:17, 18) but a Victim nevertheless. He is "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7). It is only *after* thus having laid down His life in humble submission that He is seen as a Victor.

## THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS BY PAUL

How much more glorious a light did the cross take on in "the gospel of the grace of God," proclaimed "in due time" by the Apostle Paul! Then, and not until then, was God's eternal purpose in the cross manifested. In II Tim. 1:9-11 the apostle says of God:

**"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,**

**"But is now made manifest by<sup>8</sup> the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:**

**"Whereunto I am appointed a preacher...."**

Nor is this good news confined to the people of Israel, for the apostle now says of God:

**"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

**"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;**

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<sup>8</sup> Not "at."

**“Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.**

**“Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (I Tim. 2:4-7).**

Furthermore, we now advance from the truth of substitution to that of *identification*. Christ represented me and identified Himself with me at the cross by an act of His will. And when I, by an act of my will,<sup>9</sup> look to Calvary and say: “That is not His death He is dying; He had no ‘wages of sin’ to pay; He is dying my death,” in that moment, by faith, I am identified with Him; “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20) “baptized into His death”—into Himself! Thus the apostle exclaims:

**“Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?” (Rom. 6:3).**

The place where the sinner becomes one with Christ is ever the cross. There is no other place. He is baptized into Christ by being baptized into His death. This is the baptism of the present dispensation and the believer who comprehends it is infinitely blessed.

Finally, in the Pauline epistles our Lord is no longer presented as a Victim, but as the Victor, not only *over* death, or *after* death, but *in* death. *His death itself is seen as a victory, a glorious accomplishment.*

In Heb. 1:3, for example, men are not doing anything to Him. *He* is doing something. There we are told that “*when He had by Himself purged our sins [He] sat down....*” He had accomplished “by Himself” a work which He had come to do.

Nor does Hebrews depict Him as being offered in sacrifice. He offers the sacrifice:

**“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;**

**“For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:12, 14).**

In Heb. 2:14 the apostle touches upon another phrase of this same glorious truth. There he declares that our Lord became a partaker of flesh and blood:

**“That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”**

Thus too, Col. 2:14, 15 depicts Him, not nailed to a cross, but rather, by His death, nailing the law to the cross and gloriously triumphing over Satan and his hosts “in it” (i.e., the cross):

**“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross;**

**“And having spoiled<sup>10</sup> principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”**

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<sup>9</sup> Inwrought, of course, by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>10</sup> Lit., “made spoil of.”

*How glorious!* Little wonder the apostle calls his “preaching of the cross” the gospel, or good news, “*of the glory of Christ!*” Little wonder he exclaims: “*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Gal. 6:14). And little wonder that “the god of this age,” always our Lord’s arch-enemy, seeks to blind the lost....

**“lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ<sup>11</sup>...should shine unto them” (II Cor. 4:4).**

This is the glorious good news which Paul by inspiration calls “my gospel”—a great advance over Isaiah 53. Indeed, an examination of Isaiah 53 in its light shows how infinitely grand was God’s secret, eternal purpose in the Christ of Calvary and how richly the humblest believer in this dispensation is blessed in Christ.

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<sup>11</sup> Not “the glorious gospel of Christ.”

# The Baptism of the Priest and OUR BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

In the book of Exodus there are two passages which should be prayerfully considered by those who hold to the practice of water baptism:

**Ex. 29:1, 4:** “**And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto Me in the priest's office....**”

**“AARON AND HIS SONS thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and shalt wash them with water.”**

**Ex. 19:5, 6:** “**Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine:**

**“And ye shall be unto Me A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”**

Before we consider the relation of these passages to each other, let us see how the former passage effects the basic arguments of those who hold to water baptism for the present “dispensation of the grace of God.”

## THE ARGUMENT FOR INFANT BAPTISM

How often have the champions of infant baptism argued that while circumcision was an Old Testament ordinance, baptism is a New Testament ordinance, and baptism has taken the place of circumcision!

The fact is that no part of this statement is strictly true, for while the first two assertions are at least misleading, the last is devoid of any semblance of truth.

### IS CIRCUMCISION AN OLD TESTAMENT ORDINANCE?

Circumcision was incorporated into the Mosaic law about 1500 B.C., but *it had been ordained by God some four hundred years before that and continued in force after the New Covenant was made at Calvary.*

Circumcision was instituted under the Abrahamic Covenant, not the Mosaic. In Gen. 17:14, four centuries before the law, we read that “the uncircumcised man child” should be cut off from God’s people. Some of our readers may be surprised to learn that Genesis has far more to say about circumcision than all the other books of Moses put together, and Genesis, strictly speaking, does not belong to the “Old Testament [Lit., Covenant].” The Old Testament, or old Covenant, is, of course, found in Exodus 20 but the first command of the Mosaic law regarding circumcision is not reached until Leviticus 12.



#### IS BAPTISM A NEW TESTAMENT ORDINANCE?

Even if it could be established that water baptism began with John the Baptist, it would still be incorrect to call it a New Testament ordinance, for John's baptism was carried on under the Old Covenant, not the New. The New covenant was not instituted until the last Passover (See Matt. 26:28).

But water baptism did not begin with John. It began many centuries before. Our Pedobaptist friends agree that water baptism symbolizes washing, not burial. Where do they get this from? They get it from such Scriptures as Heb. 6:2 and 9:10, where the washings of the Old Testament are called baptisms (Gr., *baptismois*).

Why, then, do they call baptism "a New Testament ordinance"? Surely not because persons were first baptized under John, for in the passage we are considering we have a clear case of the baptism or washing of persons. Nor is there any indication that the people of John's day were surprised at seeing the baptism ceremony practiced, as though it were something new to them. Indeed it is evident that they were familiar with the ceremony and expected it to be practiced more widely at Messiah's coming, for in John 1:25 we read:

**"And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizes thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?"**

True, as in the case of circumcision, water baptism was also practiced after the institution of the New Covenant, but this does not make it "a New Testament ordinance."

#### DOES BAPTISM TAKE THE PLACE OF CIRCUMCISION?

It is difficult to imagine where such a theory could have originated, for it is not supported by a single line of Scripture. Yet it has become the traditional belief of multitudes, including many Bible-believing fundamentalists.

It is clear from the Scriptures that the baptisms of the Old Covenant had to do only with circumcised seed of Abraham, and when John appeared, baptizing the thousands of Israel, circumcision, of course, also remained in full force. There is no hint of baptism taking its place. Indeed, only those of the Circumcision were eligible for baptism. Nor was there any change in this association of water baptism with circumcision until after the raising up of Paul with whom *both* circumcision and water baptism were gradually set aside.

This brings us to the writings of Paul, to whom God's program for this present age was committed:

In his epistle to the Galatians, for example, he says:

**"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2).**

**"And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased" (Gal. 5:11).**

**“As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ....**

**“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.**

**“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal. 6:12-15).**

After reading such Scriptures shall we take another physical requirement and put it in the place of circumcision?

The argument of Paul to the Galatians here stands in striking contrast to that of our Reformed and Presbyterian brethren.

Their argument: Not circumcision, but baptism.

Paul’s argument: *Not circumcision, but Christ!*

This great truth our brethren have missed. Agreeing that it would be most unscriptural, especially in the light of Galatians, to practice circumcision as a religious ordinance today, they have actually taken water baptism and substituted it as “an ordinance of the Church”!

But why was circumcision done away? *Because Christ is enough!* Then why, we ask, should water baptism be substituted?

#### **THE ARGUMENT FOR IMMERSION OF BELIEVERS**

Fundamentalists who hold to “believers’ baptism” generally agree with the Pedobaptists that baptism began with John the Baptist, although many believe that it changed its significance after Calvary with our Lord’s great commission to the eleven.

Their contention is that the word *baptizo* means “to dip,” that water baptism speaks of burial with Christ, and that therefore “immersion” alone is the Scriptural mode.

Failing to bear in mind that there are many baptisms in Scripture beside water baptism, many conclude that Paul’s declarations that “we are buried with Him by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:4), and that “we are buried with Him in baptism” (Col. 2:12), must mean that we are buried with Him in *water* baptism.

#### **DOES WATER BAPTISM SYMBOLIZE BURIAL?**

Nowhere in Scripture is water baptism either called burial or made to symbolize it. On the contrary, it is consistently used as a symbol of *washing*.

Nothing could be clearer than the fact that the water ceremonies of the Old Testament are called baptisms (Gr., *baptismois*) in Hebrews 6:2; 9:10 and other New Testament Scriptures. So plain is its meaning that our translators have rendered the same original word “baptisms” in Heb. 6:2 and “washings” in Heb. 9:10.

In Mark 7:1-8 we have even greater evidence that water baptism speaks of washings rather than of burial. Here the Holy Spirit in the original Greek, not our translators, uses a synonym to fix the meaning of the word. Referring to “the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and of tables,” this passage thrice employs the word *baptizo* or *baptismos* and thrice the word *nipto* (to wash, or rinse). Could there be clearer proof that these baptisms were considered washings, or to put it conversely, that the washings of the Old Testament were baptisms?

And this agrees with the sense of the passage. When Mark says: “Except they baptize they eat not,” he does not mean, “Except they *bury* they eat not,” but, “Except they *wash* they eat not,” just as it is translated for us in the *King James Version*. The “baptism of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables,” in this passage, surely does not refer to the *burial* of these items but to their ceremonial *washing*, just as we have it translated for us.

So with the priests to be inducted into office in Ex. 29. They were not buried. They were washed: “*Thou shalt wash them with water.*” This is one of the baptisms referred to in Heb. 9:10.

And so with water baptism in the Gospels and the Acts. When John the Baptist cried: “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins,” he did not mean: “Repent and be *buried*”; he meant: “Repent and be *cleansed*,”—of which baptism with water was symbolic. (Compare here Matt. 3:6 and I John 1:9).

When Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus: “Arise and be baptized,” he did not mean, “Arise and be *buried*,” for his whole statement reads: “Arise and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

In spite of these and other facts, some immersionists will still go on “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” and making the Word of God of none effect by their traditions, but let us be true Bereans, searching the Scriptures daily whether these things are so.

Some years ago we ran a “Wanted Column” in the *Berean Searchlight*. Among the ads were the following:

Wanted: A Presbyterian who can *prove* infant baptism *from the Scriptures*.

Wanted: A Baptist who can *prove* baptism by immersion *from the Scriptures*.

Wanted: A Presbyterian who can *prove from the Scriptures* that water baptism has taken the place of circumcision.

Replies: There were *none*, for there is *not one line of Scripture teaching any of these theories*.<sup>12</sup> They are all the *conclusions* of theologians. But the Church today seems as prone as Israel of old, to prefer the teachings of its “fathers” to the plain Word of God.

### THE BAPTISM OF THE PRIEST

Let us turn back now to the book of Exodus and see the harmonious development of the subject of water baptism throughout the Scriptures.

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<sup>12</sup> On this subject see the author’s booklet: *Just Asking*.

As we have seen, water baptism did not begin with John the Baptist. People, as well as things, were baptized in Old Testament times. Among the persons to be baptized the priest stood foremost. At his induction into the priestly office he was to be washed with water before proceeding with the rest of the consecration ceremonies. Later he was to be attired in gorgeous robes to minister before the Lord, but first must come the cleansing.

**“And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water” (Ex. 29:4).**

Later, of course, there was to be the daily cleansing of hands and feet at the laver (Ex. 30:19), but this initial cleansing of the whole body was of primary importance and reminds us of our Lord’s words to Peter:

**“He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit....” (John 13:10).**

#### ISRAEL TO BECOME A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

Those who are somewhat acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures will no doubt remember that the priests were a holy (separated) group, chosen from the people of Israel to minister before God in the tabernacle, and later in the temple.

How striking then, to read in Ex. 19:5, 6—the very heart of the Mosaic Covenant—the following words of God to Israel:

**“Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine:**

**“And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation....”**

This is God’s stated purpose concerning Israel. As the sons of Aaron were the priests through whom the people of Israel could approach God, so the people of Israel will one day be a kingdom of priests, an holy nation, through whom the Gentile nations will draw nigh to God. This they were to seek to attain to under the Old Covenant (Ex. 19:5, 6), and this they will attain to by God’s grace under the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

This is what Isaiah refers to when he says:

**“But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God....” (Isa. 61:6).**

All this, of course, will take place in the kingdom reign of Christ, when Israel is saved and the nations find salvation and blessing through her instrumentality.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN'S BAPTISM

It is not strange, then, to find that the forerunner of the King is John *the Baptist*, for if the people of Israel are to become "a kingdom of priests" they must be baptized at their consecration to the priestly office. First must come the cleansing; then the service.

Hence we read concerning John's ministry:

**"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,**

**"And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1, 2).**

**"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).**

Note, however, that John only proclaimed the kingdom "at hand." He did not yet *offer* it for their acceptance. Israel had failed under the Old Covenant, but the blood of the New Covenant was soon to be shed and then the kingdom with its "times of refreshing" would actually be offered to them. And it *was* offered, as we find in Acts 2:29, 30 and 3:19-21. The nucleus of the coming kingdom is to be found in the group of Jewish believers which our Lord called the "little flock" (Luke 12:32) and which, together with those added at Pentecost, actually practiced the kingdom program. Years later, Peter, assuring those dispersed by persecution that God had not given up His prophesied purpose, wrote to them:

**"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9).**

## WATER BAPTISM AFTER CALVARY

But where does the baptism of Gentiles under the "Great Commission" come in?

Here it becomes necessary to note that the priests were not the only persons to be baptized under the Mosaic law. There were also the unclean as, for example, the lepers. Physical healing was not enough to admit them back into the camp of Israel. Having been considered ceremonially unclean they must now be ceremonially cleansed. Not until the leper had been baptized with water was he pronounced clean.

**"...also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean" (Lev. 14:9).**

We have but to remember that Gentiles were considered "unclean" (Acts 10) to see the connection, for when our Lord sent the eleven forth after His resurrection, He sent them to "teach *all nations*, baptizing them" (Matt. 28:19).

Thus the people of Israel were baptized so that they might minister before God as His priests, while the Gentiles, as the unclean, were baptized for acceptance into His favor. Really, the baptism of Israelites was a confession that they, like the Gentiles, needed cleansing, just as the baptism of the priest was confession that he too was unworthy to minister in the things of God. The difference was one of position.

We know, of course, that Israel rejected her great opportunity to become the channel of blessing to all nations and that the kingdom has since been held in abeyance. But the time will come when the nation will be regathered from the remote corners of the earth. Then shall be brought to pass the prophecy of Rev. 5:9, 10:

**“...Thou are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;**

**“And hast made us onto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”**

This prophecy is certainly not being brought to fulfillment today.

#### **THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE**

It was when Israel of old rejected her great opportunity, that God raised up Paul, that other apostle, and sent him forth with *“the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24).

Under this program there is no priestly nation exalted above other nations. Indeed God has no special nation on earth today. Even Israel, for the present is *“Lo-ammi: not My people”* (Hos. 1:9).

**“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32).**

**“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.**

**“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:12, 13).**

God is now reconciling both Jews and Gentiles to Himself in one body, wholly and solely through the merits of Christ, and giving them a position in the heavenlies in Christ at His own right hand.

**Eph. 2:16-18: “And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:**

**“And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.**

**“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”**

Here there is no room for baptism performed by hands any more than for physical circumcision. We are God’s dear children, not by virtue of any human ceremony, but by virtue of our position in Christ, *“for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”* (Gal. 3:26).

**“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved [one]” (Eph. 1:6).**

**“And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power:**

**“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:**

**“Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead” (Col. 2:10-12).**

To Saul of Tarsus, Ananias said: *“Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

But years later, when Saul had become Paul, he wrote to the Corinthians, and to us:

**“...But ye ARE washed, but ye ARE sanctified, but ye ARE justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:11).**

Hallelujah!

# The Rending of the Veil

or

## “A NEW AND LIVING WAY” TO GOD

**“And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work; with cherubims shall it be made.**

**“And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars....**

**“...that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony; and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.”**

—Ex. 26:31-33.

The “most holy place” in the tabernacle of old was separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a heavy woven curtain or drape, called a “veil” in the *Authorized Version*.

Outside this “veil” was the “holy place,” with its golden lampstand, its golden table of showbread and its golden altar, but inside was the ark, or coffin,<sup>13</sup> of the covenant (the law), covered with a “mercy seat,” where God met with His people once each year through their high priest. (See Ex. 25:10, 16, 17, 21, 22; Lev. 16:2; Heb. 9:7).

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VEIL

The “most holy place,” or “holiest of all,” or “holy of holies,” as it is variously called, was thus closed off from the rest of the tabernacle because here God had chosen to take up His residence on earth, the shekinah cloud hovering above to proclaim the divine presence (Ex. 40:34).

Fallen human beings could not, of course, enter casually into the presence of a holy God. Even the high priest could not do this. On the contrary, he could enter only once each year, on a prescribed day, in a prescribed manner, and that “not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

**“But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:**

**The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into THE HOLIEST OF ALL [i.e., into the presence of God] was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing” (Heb. 9:7, 8).**

### THE TEMPLE OF CHRIST’S DAY

We have already seen that the glory of the divine presence filled the most holy place of the original tabernacle (Ex. 40:34). The same is true of the temple later built by Solomon (II Chron. 5:14) and perhaps also of the rebuilt temple, completed and dedicated still later, under Ezra and his colleagues (Ezra 6:15, 16).

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<sup>13</sup> The same Hebrew word is rendered “coffin” in Gen. 50:26.



But again the temple was destroyed, and it was not until about 20 B.C. that Herod the Great undertook to rebuild Israel's temple again. That God ever honored this temple with His presence is extremely doubtful. First, its builder was a usurper on the throne of Israel; an Idumean, outside the royal line of David. Second, Israel had so seriously defected from God and His Word, that the "feast of Jehovah" had to be called mere "feasts of the Jews" and the divinely established religion, "the Jews' religion" (John 2:13; 5:1; Gal. 1:14). The temple, which should have inspired Israel to become the world's benefactor (Isa. 56:6, 7) had now become "a den of thieves" (Mark 11:17).

#### THE RENDING OF THE VEIL

The "veil" of Herod's temple is said by Josephus to have been so heavy that two teams of oxen, whipped and pulling from either side, could not have torn it. It must have caused great consternation, therefore, when:

**"...behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent" (Matt. 27:51).**

*"From the top to the bottom"!* God himself had rent the veil. Why? What was this act intended to signify?

Much as we thank God for Dr. C. I. Scofield, we believe that he erred in answering this question, as do all who anticipate revelation and suppose that the cross, the "great commission" or Pentecost—or, in some general way, all three—mark the beginning of the present dispensation.

Over Matthew's record of the rending of the veil, the *Scofield Reference Bible*<sup>14</sup> carries this title: "The Dispensation of Law Ends," while a note at the bottom of the page reads, in part: "The rending of that veil...signified that a 'new and living way' was opened for all believers into the presence of God..." Another note, under Ex. 26:31, reads thus: "... Rent by an unseen hand when Christ died (Matt. 27:51), thus giving instant access to God to all who come by faith in Him, it was the end of all legality; the way to God was open..."

But how can this be?

If the rending of the veil of Herod's temple gave "instant access to God," would this not imply that God henceforth was to be found in the open sanctuary of that temple?

And if this event marked the historical end of the dispensation of law and the beginning of the dispensation of grace, should we not expect to find some more explicit revelation of this at that time than the rending of the veil in the temple?

The disciples at Pentecost and for some time after certainly did not consider the dispensation of the law ended, nor did God give them any revelation to this effect. They practically lived in the temple in those days. Ananias, who baptized Saul, was commended as a "devout man according to the law" (Acts 22:12) and as late as Acts 21:20, 21 we find the Jews of Judaea still "all zealous of the law."

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<sup>14</sup> The original *Scofield Reference Bible*.

Dr. Scofield himself, in the footnote last referred to, goes on to say: “It is deeply significant that the priests must have patched together again the veil that God had rent, for the temple services went on yet for nearly forty years.” But he failed to note that the twelve, “all filled with the Holy Spirit,” took part in the temple worship also (Acts 2:4, 46; 3:1; etc.) so careful were these Spirit-filled men not to start a sect separate from Judaism.

This confusion on the part of Dr. Scofield and others is what comes from anticipating revelation and reading Paul’s writings into the Gospels and the Acts.

What, then, did the rending of the veil signify at the time it happened?

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE TO ISRAEL AT THAT TIME

When the veil was rent from top to bottom, what did the priests see; what did they think? Did they see the glory of God? Did they think: “Now we are all free to enter into His presence”? Did God show them that the death of Christ at Calvary had abolished the law with its condemnation? Indeed not.

As that great curtain was rent and fell apart they could only view it as a judgment from God. And that judgment revealed the fact that the “most holy place,” which should have housed the divine Presence, had been forsaken by God and had become a barren empty place. The glory had long ago departed.

No other place had yet been appointed for the worship of God, and this is why the apostles and disciples continued to worship there, but be it noted that it was in this very temple that the apostles called upon Israel to repent, be baptized for the remission of sins, and accept the Messiah they had crucified—a very different message from that which many fundamentalists erroneously read into their words.

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE TO US NOW

True, it was *by* the cross that the dispensation of the law was brought to an end, but when Dr. Scofield taught that it ended *at* the cross, he erred. Not until some time later did Paul, that *other* apostle, arise to proclaim by divine revelation:

**“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...” (Rom. 3:21).**

Not until Paul do we hear “the gospel of the grace of God,” that glad good news in which God offers salvation by grace, through faith, without the works of the law—indeed, in which He *rejects* works for salvation (Rom. 4:5).

It is not until Paul that we find the great change from: “*You* did it. *Repent* and be saved,” to “*God* did it. *Believe* and be saved.” And with this revelation a new significance is attached to the rent veil.

The apostle points to the earthly tabernacle as “*a figure for the time then present,*” and the prohibition against free entry into the holiest, as symbolic of the fact that “the way into the [true] holiest [in heaven] was *not yet* made manifest” (Heb. 9:8, 9). Why? Because Christ’s death for sin had not yet been proclaimed as a message. Now that the “due time” had come to “testify” this through Paul (I Tim. 2:6, 7) the open way was manifested. The rent veil had taken on a new and grand significance.

Thus the apostle proclaims the glorious message:

**“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS,**

**“A NEW AND LIVING WAY,<sup>15</sup> which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, THAT IS TO SAY HIS FLESH....**

**“Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith...” (Heb. 10:19-22).**

Let us thank God that in His infinite grace He has rent this Veil also:

**“God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:21).**

Let us not, then, seek to patch it up again, going back under law, entangling ourselves again with the yoke of bondage, as though Christ had not paid the full penalty for sin to open the way to God for us.

Let us rather rejoice that in place of the fearsome and disappointing sight which the priests of old saw as the veil in the temple was rent, we see a broad way opened into the presence of God and especially “consecrated” to our use! That “new and living way”: the glorious, all-sufficient work of redemption wrought for us by our blessed Lord at Calvary, where His body was torn and His blood poured out in our behalf.

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<sup>15</sup> Neither *Stephens*’ nor *Nestle*’s texts contain the second “by.” The “blood of Jesus” is the “new and living way” by which we enter into “the holiest.”

# Two Hungry People AND THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE

## OUR LORD AND THE BARREN FIG TREE

**“Now in the morning as He returned into the city, He hungered.**

**“And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.”**

**—Matthew 21:18, 19.**

Why did our Lord curse the barren fig tree?

Mark tells us distinctly that “the time of figs was not yet,” but even if it had been the season for figs, is a tree to be blamed for not bearing fruit? And where is the man with such lack of self-control that he will curse a tree for not bearing fruit out of season?

Perhaps it is needless to point out that the whole story is symbolic—even our Lord's hunger. The fig tree is a familiar symbol of national Israel and the Lord had been hungering for fruit from His labors among the favored people.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees had come to John's baptism, hoping to become the leaders of a popular movement, John had called them a “generation of vipers” and had sent them back saying: *“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance”* (Matt. 3:8).

This is what the Lord had sought for so earnestly too. His hunger as He approached the fig tree was symbolic of the hunger that filled His heart for fruit in Israel and His reaction at finding no figs illustrates His disappointment at the spiritual barrenness of Israel.

True, “the time of figs was not yet”—Israel's conversion was still future and our Lord knew it, but this in no way excused them for their unbelief, nor did it mitigate His sorrow over their attitude toward Him.

See, in the words He uttered shortly before His crucifixion, how He loved them and how deeply they had wounded Him!

**Matt. 23:37: “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!”**

**Luke 19:41-44: “And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it,**

**“Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.**

**“For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,**

**“And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”**

How His heart had hungered for the fruit in Israel! And now they were about to crucify Him as a criminal. It is only in the light of these facts that we can explain His cursing of the fig tree.

#### **ISRAEL’S SECOND CHANCE**

But this heart-hunger is further emphasized in Luke 13 where the Lord uses the figure of the fig tree in one of His parables, and again fruit is sought in vain.

National Israel, like the barren fig tree, was to be cursed and would wither away, but in this parable we find a hint that this would not take place immediately—that the judgment would be delayed and mercy prolonged.

**“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.**

**“Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?**

**“And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:**

**“And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”**

**—Luke 13:6-9.**

Some believe that these three years refer to the ministries of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1, 2), the Lord Jesus (Matt. 4:17) and Peter (Acts 3:19-21), and that the added year refers to Paul’s ministry among the Jews.

This view, however, leaves questions which to us seem insurmountable. Paul may indeed have wished for fruit from national Israel and did seek it among individual Israelites, but the casting away of national Israel had already begun with the raising up of Paul. Indeed the raising up of Paul itself was a sign of her setting aside and of God’s purpose to usher in a new dispensation.

Israel’s leaders had committed the unpardonable sin. They had resisted and blasphemed the Holy Spirit. They had imprisoned, beaten and killed Spirit-filled men whom God had sent to call them to repentance. And now Paul, upon his return to Jerusalem after his conversion, is told:

**“Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me” (Acts 22:18).**

God is here concluding them in unbelief (Rom. 11:32) and wherever Paul goes from Jerusalem to Rome, the apostle finds this conclusion justified, for on every hand the Jews as a people, resist and blaspheme the Spirit-filled apostle.

Peter's ministry, then, had to do with the rise of Israel, her acceptance of Christ and His return to reign, but Paul's had to do with the *fall* of Israel, the *rejection* of Christ and His continued *absence*. Though confirming Peter's testimony as to Messiah's royal claims, Paul never once offered the kingdom so far as the record is concerned. It is clear that God sent him "to the Jew first" principally that Israel might be without excuse when the judgment finally fell.

We believe, therefore, that the three years in this parable refer, not to three different ministries, but to *three years*—the three years of our Lord's earthly ministry, and that the added year refers to the Pentecostal ministry of Peter and the eleven. The dresser's plea, "Let it alone this year also," reminds us of our Lord's cry on the cross: "*Father forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). And we know that our Lord's prayer was answered and national Israel *was* given another chance to bear fruit.

But still the nation remained barren. It was probably about a year later that Stephen was stoned and Saul of Tarsus began his fierce and relentless persecution against the Pentecostal Church. Israel, the nation, even under the influence of Pentecostal power, had failed to bring forth fruit. It had finally become necessary to cut the tree down. But this brings us to the story of another hungry person.

#### **PETER ON THE HOUSETOP OF JOPPA**

**"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:**

**"And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,**

**"And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:**

**"Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.**

**"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.**

**"But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.**

**"And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.**

**"This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."**

**—Acts 10:9-16.**

We are not left in doubt as to the meaning of Peter's vision.

The unclean creatures, as the rest of the story indicates, represented the Gentiles. Peter had thus far refrained from keeping company with them but, as he himself says, it was through this vision that "*God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean*" (Acts 10:28).

As in the story of our Lord and the fig tree, however, it is Peter's hunger that is generally left out of the interpretation of the passage.

We read that Peter was “very hungry, and would have eaten.” He would have eaten pork chops if it had not been unlawful! Indeed, the account of the vision suggests the possibility that he would rather have eaten pork chops than anything else, for as he fell into a trance there appeared before him all manner of creatures which to him were ceremonially “unclean,” and he was actually given permission to “kill, and eat!” Now, if these “unclean” creatures were significant and the permission to eat was significant, was not Peter’s hunger significant too?

### THE JEW FIRST

Before considering the significance of Peter’s hunger let us ask a few questions:

Why did our Lord say, while on earth: *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel?”* (Matt. 15:24). Why did He say to His apostles: *“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?”* (Matt. 10:5, 6). Was it because God did not wish Gentiles to be saved? Surely not. Scores of Scriptures testify to the contrary.

Why then did our Lord confine His ministry to the house of Israel and instruct His apostles to do the same? Simply because it was God’s revealed plan to bless the nations *through Israel*, and Joel’s prophecy was to be fulfilled when “that great and notable day of the Lord” should be ushered in. (See Acts 2:20, 21).

According to God’s prophetic program as outlined in the Old Testament the salvation of the Gentiles was to be brought about through Israel with Messiah as King. Israel was to become “a kingdom of priests” and the Gentiles were to find God through her (Ex. 19:6, cf. Jer. 31:31-33; Isa. 61:6). This is why we read in Rom. 15:8,9:

**“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy....”**

This is also why we read in Isa. 60:1-3:

**“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.**

**“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.**

**“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”**

This is why our Lord confined His earthly ministry almost exclusively to the nation Israel and why, in the so-called “great commission,” He instructed the eleven that *“repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47). This is why, in the Acts record of the same great commission, we read:

**“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8).

The reason the apostles were instructed to begin at Jerusalem is the same reason why our Lord confined His earthly ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. From the Abrahamic covenant right down to the end of Malachi it had been clearly revealed that it was God’s purpose that blessing should flow through Israel to the nations; from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

But Israel would not accept Christ. The apostles had pleaded with them in vain. The carrying out of the “great commission” was at a standstill. The twelve never got past Jerusalem, so far as the Scriptures are concerned. Their headquarters remained there throughout the period covered by the book of Acts.

The Pentecostal believers, indeed, had gone out from Jerusalem into Judaea and Samaria, but not because the “great commission” had commanded it. They had been *driven* there by persecution. Furthermore, “they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, *except the apostles*,” the very ones who had been commissioned to go to Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth! (Acts 8:1).

Were the apostles then unfaithful? No indeed! The reason the multitude had fled was the same reason the apostles had to stay. Jerusalem had not yet turned to Christ. The apostles’ work there was not yet done. The “great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem” was indication enough of this. The work of the “great commission” was not progressing. It had stalled.

### **PETER’S HUNGER**

Here is the spiritual significance of Peter’s hunger. He had gone to the housetop *to pray*. His *heart* was hungry, as the Scriptures clearly indicate. He was longing for Israel to repent. He was eager that the “great commission” might get under way so that the good news of Christ and His kingdom might be sent to all nations. He was hungering that the Gentiles too might hear the gospel.

Some suppose that the apostles were prejudiced against the salvation of the Gentiles, but this cannot be so in light of Acts 11:17-23 and 15:3, where we find those of the Circumcision rejoicing in the salvation of the Gentiles.

Consider the early chapters of the book of Acts and see Peter’s heart-hunger as he cries to the “men of Israel”:

**“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.**

**“Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:25, 26).**

If Peter’s vision means anything it means that he was hungering for the conversion of the Gentiles—that the good news of our Lord’s coming kingdom might go to them—as he prayed there on Joppa’s housetop. Why would not Israel accept Messiah? Why, could not the program go on? Why should obstinate religious leaders be permitted to hinder the blessing of the world?

### **PETER’S HUNGER SATISFIED**

But as he falls into a trance—what is this?

**“Rise, Peter, kill, and eat.”**

**“But Peter said, Not so, Lord....”**

**“And the voice spake ... What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”**



And the next thing Peter is instructed to go to a company of Gentiles, “nothing doubting” (Acts 11:12).

This is not to imply that he understood the reason for the command, but merely that it was indeed God’s will that he should go, whether or not he understood. As he said to Cornelius: “*Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying,*” and to the other apostles at Jerusalem: “*What was I, that I could withstand God?*” (Acts 10:29; 11:17).

Peter did not understand God’s secret purpose concerning the Gentiles, nor did he preach the mystery to them. Nevertheless, though he knew it not, this was one of the first steps in the unfolding of the mystery. Those who doubt this should consider the following facts:

1. Peter was sent to these Gentiles *after* the conversion and commission of Saul.

2. He was sent *before* Paul began his ministry among the Gentiles as recorded in Acts 13:2, 3.

3. We know of no Old Testament prophecy which indicates that the Gentiles should be saved through Israel’s *fall*, yet this is clearly the case with Cornelius, even though Peter may still have hoped for Israel’s repentance and salvation.

4. This is *the only recorded case* of Peter’s ministering to Gentiles. It was apparently the divine preparation for Paul’s subsequent ministry to the Gentiles in connection with Israel’s fall.

5. Here *for the first time* God puts “no difference between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles]” (Acts 15:9).

6. *Apart from this experience Paul probably never could have convinced Peter and the other apostles that God was going to the Gentiles while Israel still remained in unbelief.*

7. It was *on the basis of this experience* that the church at Jerusalem recognized the Gentile believers as brethren in Christ (Acts 15).

8. It was *on the basis of this experience* that Peter was later rebuked at Antioch. He knew that Jewish and Gentile believers, even then, were one in Christ (Acts 15:7-11; Gal. 2:7-12; 3:26-29), even though God allowed them to go on with two programs until the final sentence of blindness was pronounced upon Israel (Acts 21:20, 25; 28:28).

9. Had Peter been permitted to finish his discourse at Cornelius’ house he would no doubt have closed with an appeal similar to that of Acts 2:38. That is what he had been commissioned to preach (Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:47). *But he was interrupted.* “*While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished...*” (Acts 10:44, 45). There had been a change in the program.

Thus while Peter did not preach, nor even know God’s secret purpose, the mystery, his mission to the Gentiles was nevertheless a step in the unfolding of that purpose. The mystery must always stand in contrast to prophecy; it is the unfolding of God’s secret, eternal purpose *in overruling the seeming failure of prophecy.*

## THE MINISTRY OF PAUL

If our Lord hungered for fruit in Israel; if Peter hungered that Israel might accept Messiah so that through her the Gentiles might find salvation, God hungered for all this too. God delights in mercy. This is why, *delaying* the judgment that was to have fallen upon Israel for her rejection of Christ, He saved Saul, the leader of the rebellion, and made him the example and apostle of His grace.

It will be readily seen that Paul's message differed vastly from Peter's Pentecostal message. God was now to send salvation to the Gentiles in spite of, yes through, Israel's *unbelief*, not according to prophecy, but "*according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*" (II Tim. 1:9).

This secret, eternal purpose is most fully unfolded in the prison epistles of Paul, but the foundations are laid in his earlier epistles.

Compare Rom. 11:32 with Eph. 2:16:

**"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all."**

**"And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."**

If the mystery is the reconciling of believing Jews and Gentiles to God in one body, then we have the basic elements of this glorious truth in the early as well as in the later epistles of Paul.

**"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.**

**"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:12, 13).**

**"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles..." (I Cor. 12:13).**

**"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**

**"There is neither Jew nor Greek...ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27, 28).**

**"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.**

**"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

**"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:16-18).**

**"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled,**

**"In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight" (Col. 1:21, 22).**

**“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved”  
(Eph. 1:6).**

## The Haunted House AND THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE

**“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.**

**“Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.**

**“Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”**

—Matt. 12:43-45.

Much has been written on this puzzling passage of Scripture, but most of it has been in the way of application, and application is generally easier than interpretation. It is far easier to draw spiritual lessons from this passage than to explain, for example, just what our Lord meant when He said: *“Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”*

### A POPULAR APPLICATION

As to application, this passage certainly teaches the danger of reformation without Christ. A man may hear the gospel—the knowledge of Christ may drive the evil spirit out, so to speak—he may stop his wickedness, clean house, even adorn it and still be worse off than he was at first. He may stop his blasphemy and immorality and speak kind words and do good deeds instead, but this is not enough. Christ Himself must fill that empty life. If He does not take the evil spirit’s place, the “swept and garnished” house is just the place for more and greater trouble.

How many sinners have swept and garnished their houses only to invite something seven-fold worse! The poor, fallen creature who thinks he has overcome his sins and made something of himself invariably falls harder the second time, or becomes a smug, self-righteous man, which is worse. Cleaning house is not enough. Christ Himself must enter in, received by faith.

But all this is merely an application, a lesson we might draw from the passage. What is the interpretation? What was our Lord particularly warning these Hebrew leaders of? What did He mean when He said: *“Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation?”*

### A POPULAR INTERPRETATION

One of the most familiar interpretations is that our Lord referred to the spirit of idolatry which had been cast out of Israel by the Babylonian captivity. Since that time they had never again worshipped idols as such. But true worship of God had not displaced this idolatry, so that the Lord now warned Israel that they were ripe for worse evils, having in mind the return of idolatry, seven times worse, in the worship of Antichrist.

This interpretation has never fully satisfied us for several reasons: 1. Idolatry is not exactly demon possession. 2. This interpretation does not account for the restlessness of the evil spirit. 3. It does not harmonize with the context, for our Lord had not been discussing idolatry.

Let us look at the whole picture again and see what further light we might find.

## DEMON POSSESSION

When our Lord came preaching the gospel of the kingdom there was a great epidemic of demon possession. It seems clear that these demons sought to possess human bodies to use them as vehicles for their sins. So loathe were they to be disembodied that on one occasion they even requested the privilege of entering into swine.

Some of these demons were more wicked than others. We read of the one in this passage: “*Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself*” (Ver. 45).

In Matt. 17:21 our Lord Himself said of a certain demon: “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”

In Luke 8:2 we find that seven demons had been cast out of Mary Magdalene. Whether or not it is altogether just to associate her former life with impurity, as is so often done, this much is clear, that demons in Scripture are constantly described by such words as wicked, evil, foul, unclean [impure], etc. Probably they were guilty of all kinds of sin.

In the context of the passage before us it is important to notice that these demons were representatives of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. (See Matt. 12:25 and 27). Beelzebub is none other than Satan, for in answer to the Pharisees’ charge that Christ cast out demons by Beelzebub their prince, our Lord answered. “If Satan cast out Satan he is divided against himself. How shall then his kingdom stand?” (Ver. 26). And to this He added: “But if I cast out devils [demons] by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” (Ver. 28).

So then it was the kingdom of God against the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of heaven against the kingdom of hell. Our Lord was backing up His words with works. As He preached the good news of the kingdom he cast out demons, and every demon cast out spoke to the ultimate casting out of Satan himself by Christ, God’s anointed.

This exactly agrees with the stated purpose of Christ’s coming in I John 3:8 and Heb. 2:14.

**“...for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”**

**“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”**

Satan had wrested the authority from Adam and had ruined the world, but Christ had now been manifested to cast him out and destroy him.

How was our Lord to accomplish this? “*Through death.*” And when? In the shadow of the cross we find Him saying: “*Now shall the prince of this world be cast out*” (John 12:31). True, the cross would not yet spell Satan’s *complete destruction*—neither did the casting out of the demon in our passage, for he returned to his house and brought others with him. But Calvary *was* Satan’s undoing.

At Calvary Christ did for Israel—and Israel represented the world—what had been done for the demon-possessed man. He cast out Satan, stripping him of his rights, guaranteeing his ultimate destruction and proclaiming His own right to reign.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that “through death” Christ defeated Satan and his hosts. Referring to the crucifixion of Christ, Paul declares:

**“Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15).**

Since the death of Christ Satan has had no claim whatever to the title, “prince of this world.” Do you ask why he then controls the course of this world? It is because this age worships him as its god (II Cor. 4:4). Christ has stripped him of his rights but the people want him! They actually go on serving this wicked tyrant. They do not want a change in government. They have so long suffered and died for the glory of their rulers that they are too blind to recognize the love of the Ruler who suffered and died for them, to bring *them* to glory! Much less can they understand how His death was any display of power or how it could redeem for man his God-given authority.

Yes, Christ stripped Satan of his claims, but the people want him. Satan rules only by the permission of God and the will of the people, for while God “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” it is also a fact the He made man in His own image, with a heart and a mind and a will, and God does not merely manipulate man or mechanically force him to obey. Man’s stubborn, disobedient will will yet bring him to the place where he will be branded with the mark of the Beast and forced to worship Antichrist.

But let us get back to our passage. Our Lord said: *“Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”*

#### **SO SHALL IT BE TO THIS GENERATION**

The nations had long been alienated from God and for centuries only Israel sustained a covenant relationship to Him. Israel, as it were, represented the world before God. But as the Gentiles “did not like [wish] to retain God in their knowledge,” so Israel too, even now, was turning against God and His Anointed.

Satan was cast out for Israel at Calvary, and the resurrected Christ was offered to them as King. Peter declared that Christ was raised from the dead to sit on the throne of David (Acts 2:30, 31). He declared that if Israel would repent “the times of refreshing” would come and God would “send Jesus Christ” back to earth (Acts 3:19, 20).

But alas, Israel rejected the One who had cast out their oppressor for them! As they had closed their eyes to the powerful demonstrations of His earthly ministry, so now they closed their eyes to the resurrection itself and its demonstration of His power over death and the devil.

Satan was cast out but Christ was not accepted, and Israel (and the world with her) became a vacant house, open to far worse evils. Even to this day, the world, and especially Israel, remains a vacant house, haunted by Satan, who will surely return to impose a seven-fold tyranny.

Our Lord said: *“I am come in My Father’s name and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive”* (John 5:43). And such an one will come in his own name. Paul tells about him in II Thes. 2:3, 4:

**“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the Day of the Lord] shall not come, except there come a falling away<sup>16</sup> first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;**

**“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”**

In the Book of Revelation the dreadful picture is still more fully unfolded. There Antichrist is associated with none other than Satan himself, who is cast out “into the earth” and comes down “having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:8, 12).

Thus Israel brings upon herself, and the world with her, the fierce wrath of God. Before the lesson is learned no one less than Satan incarnate sits in the Holy Place of the temple and infernal hosts hold sway while sin and blasphemy hasten death and judgment. Christ has been rejected for Antichrist and this is the result. Surely the last state of “this generation” will be worse than the first.

We emphasize our Lord’s designation, “this generation.” The word “generation” in the original means breed, progeny, product, offspring, and is used to denote a class or type of people. Our Lord used it in this sense when He spoke of “an evil generation,” “a sinful generation,” “a wicked generation,” “an adulterous generation,” “a faithless generation,” “a perverse generation.” Our Lord and John the Baptist both called these very Hebrew leaders “a generation of vipers” and Peter at Pentecost pleaded: “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

#### **THE AGE OF GRACE**

*“This present evil age”!* (Gal. 1:4). How significant the phrase! Yet it is also the age of grace! *“Where sin abounded grace did much more abound”* (Rom. 5:20). Satan has been cast out and individuals may receive Christ into their hearts by faith.

**“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.**

**“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.**

**“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:10-12).**

Those who take their stand with the rejected Christ are *“translated...into the kingdom of [God’s] dear Son”* (Col. 1:13), *“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 3:24).

Thank God, those who trust Christ today escape the fate of “this generation,” *“for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Who died for us that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him”* (I Thes. 5:9, 10).

This world, and particularly Israel, is still a vacant, haunted house. “This generation” is ripe for Antichrist and the worship of Satan. A new generation must be born, and will be. A nation shall be born in a day! (Isa. 66:8). When regenerated Israel receives Christ as King then shall the promise be fulfilled (filled full) which God made to Abraham saying:

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<sup>16</sup> Lit., “the departure.”

**“And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 26:4).**



# Jesus Christ Corner Stone And Stumbling Block

## THE FALL AND RISE OF MANY IN ISRAEL

It is strange that the *Authorized*, or *King James Version* of the Bible, based on *Textus Receptus* (the *Received* or *Majority* text), renders Simeon's statement in Luke 2:34 thus:

**“Behold, this child is set for the fall and RISING AGAIN of many in Israel.”**

Here AV departed from *Textus Receptus*, which reads: “*Lo, this [child] is set for [the] fall and RISING UP of many in Israel.*”

*Nestle's Interlinear*, which appeared more than three centuries after *Textus Receptus* also reads “*rising again*” in the *English* wording, but the Greek is *anastasis*, “*rising up*,” as in *Textus Receptus*.

Whatever the reasons why AV departed from *Textus Receptus* in this passage, a careful examination of the facts will show that *Textus Receptus* must be correct—and will show incidentally that a knowledge of manuscript evidence and of the languages involved alone do not qualify one to translate the Scriptures. Logical and theological evidence too is important in the translation of the Holy Bible.

Simeon, in the passage above, was *not* predicting the fall and rising *again* of many in Israel, but rather the fall of some and the rise of others.

Since the Greek word *anastasis* (rising up) is sometimes used of resurrection, the *King James* translators probably concluded that at least a kind of resurrection was intended here. But the word *anastasis* itself does not mean rising *again*, but simply rising *up*. This, in addition to an examination of many translations and reference works on the subject, and especially an examination of related Scriptures, leads us to conclude that Simeon was predicting the fall of some and the rise of others *in* Israel. Otherwise the statement is not true, for those who fell in Israel did not, and will not, rise again.<sup>17</sup>

While our respect for the *King James Version* keeps growing the more we study the Word, we feel that this particular passage should be corrected to conform to the *Received Text*, the text upon which it was based to begin with.

## THE FACTS IN THE CASE

Only when thus corrected does this passage harmonize with the facts, for while it is true that Israel as a nation will rise again from her fall, those who fell *in* Israel will *not* rise again—at least not in the sense in which they have fallen—and remember, this passage deals, not with Israel as a nation, but with “many in Israel.”

That there was to be no rising again of those who thus fell in Israel is emphasized by our Lord's warning that those who should “speak,” “sin,” or “blaspheme” against the Holy Spirit would “never” find forgiveness, “neither in this age nor in the age to come” (See Matt. 12:32; Mk. 3:29).

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<sup>17</sup> The resurrection of *the dead* is not contemplated here, but rather the question of their rising from their fall.

This speaking, sinning and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is exactly what the Christ-rejecters of the Pentecostal period were guilty of. Theirs was an unpardonable sin. They will never rise from their fall.

But while some in Israel stumbled over Christ and fell, others rose as Simeon, by the Spirit, had predicted.

#### THE GOSPEL RECORDS

Hear John the Baptist as he sternly warns the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matt. 3:7-10.

**“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”**

**“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance;**

**“And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.**

**“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”**

Later this warning was changed to a prediction by our Lord Himself, when He said:

**“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.**

**“And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Matt. 21:43, 44).**

Note carefully that the doom of these Christ-rejectors is inevitable and final. Their falling on that Stone will “break” or injure them, and His falling on them will “grind them to powder.” They will not rise again.

But note also that the kingdom taken from Israel’s rulers was to be given to a nation—not nations, but “a nation”—bringing forth the fruits thereof.

This verse has been so carelessly dealt with that multitudes of believers suppose it refers to the sending of the gospel to the Gentiles. But are the Gentiles a nation? No. And have the Gentiles brought forth the fruits of the kingdom? Most assuredly not.

Nor could this “nation” refer to the Church of this age. The Body of Christ is not a nation and the members of that Body have not brought forth the fruits of the kingdom any more than have the Gentiles. Indeed, we have done very poorly at yielding the fruits of the Spirit, as the dark pages of our history testify.

To which nation, then, did our Lord refer? Luke 12:32 gives the answer:

**“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”**

The kingdom taken from the rulers of Israel was to be given to the little band who followed Him in His earthly ministry.

But did they constitute a nation?

Indeed! Besides promising them the kingdom, had not our Lord assured the twelve who were closest to Him that they would sit upon twelve thrones, reigning with Him over the twelve tribes of Israel? (Matt. 19:28). A government was already being organized for this new nation.

In Luke 22:28-30 we find our Lord saying:

**“Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.**

**“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me;**

**“That ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”**

Thus, because of Christ, some in Israel were to fall while others were to rise.

#### THE ACTS RECORDS

The book of Acts continues to relate to us in detail the story of the fall of Israel’s rulers and the rise of the “little flock.”

In Acts 2 and 3 we find the apostles accusing Israel and especially its rulers of the crucifixion of Christ and calling upon their nation to repent. This, of course, does not please the rulers. It grieves them deeply. Nevertheless three thousand are brought to Messiah’s feet, and before the passing of a few days the number has already increased to five thousand.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter we find the apostles arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin itself—the Supreme Court of their nation. But there, rather than offering any defense, they again accuse their rulers of the murder of Messiah, adding:

**“This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.**

**“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:11, 12).**

After private consultation the rulers call the apostles, threatening them and commanding them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

**“But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.**

**“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19, 20).**

Enraged, but fearing the people, and “finding nothing how they might punish them,” the rulers merely threaten them further and let them go.

It is easy to see who are the winners in the struggle. The very fact that the apostles are not held for contempt of court for thus defying their highest rulers is significant of the weakness of the Sanhedrin and the strength of the apostles.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, while believers are being “the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women,” we find the apostles again imprisoned but delivered by an angel and sent back unto the temple to teach.

Meanwhile the august assemblage of jurists convenes to try the apostles again. But when the officers return to report the prison empty, though securely locked and guarded, the rulers are thrown into a quandary, fearing “whereunto this would grow.”

Finding the apostles teaching in the temple, the captain and officers finally bring them, this time without violence, before the Sanhedrin.

Once more the judges find themselves on the defensive, for the apostles straightway press home the charge of Messiah’s crucifixion, assuring their questioners, however, that God has exalted Christ “to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

This time Gamaliel, a venerable doctor of the law, advises the council to “refrain from these men, and let them alone.” He argues that if this movement is not of God it will die out of itself while, if it is of God (as he seems to fear), they might be found fighting even against God. “And to him they all agreed.”

From now on the apostles are to receive what is sometimes called “the silent boycott.” The rulers say, as it were: “Let us ignore them. Let us never speak of them nor mention their names nor even take notice of them.”

But even Gamaliel’s advice does them no good, for while the Sanhedrin remains silent the apostles do all the talking and still more disciples are won!

Once more the apostles have won the day, for Acts 6 opens with the information that “the number of disciples was multiplied,” while Verse 7 of the same chapter says: “And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” The leaders are losing their power and influence, while that of the little flock is growing steadily.

And now Stephen appears on the scene—a man “full of faith and power,” doing “great wonders and miracles among the people.” Some enter into debate with him, but we read that “*they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.*”

How can the rulers longer remain silent?

In Chapter 7 Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin and the judges hear the testimony of a man whose face shines “as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). But it seems that he does not even have an opportunity to finish his address, for suddenly his tone changes—perhaps because he sees the fierce anger of the judges—and, losing no time, he brings against them the awful indictment that we find in Acts 7:51-53, in which he charges them with resisting the Holy Spirit as well as betraying and murdering the Son of God.

The rulers are “cut to the heart.” Stopping their ears, crying out with a loud voice and running upon him with one accord, they cast him out of the city and there stone him to death.

At first sight it may seem as though the rulers have won a victory in dealing this cruel blow to the followers of Messiah, but in reality they have dealt themselves a worse blow. They have lost their tempers because a man with a shining countenance has told them the truth. They are beside themselves with rage while he, gazing heavenward, exclaims that he sees the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. They are killing him with stones while he humbly prays that God might not lay this sin to their charge. They have lost another battle—a moral one.

In the next chapter we find Saul of Tarsus, not only consenting to Stephen's death, but leading a bitter persecution against the church at Jerusalem. This persecution is so violent that the believers are all "scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."

The outlook for the little flock is now dark indeed for in Saul of Tarsus they have an exceedingly bitter and relentless foe.

As for Saul, he makes havoc of the Church. Entering into every house and haling men and women, he commits them to prison. He scourges them in every synagogue in Jerusalem and compels them to blaspheme; he is exceedingly mad against them and pursues them even to distant cities. Later, writing to the Galatians, he says:

**"Ye have heard...how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13).**

But God has not been defeated. Indeed, He is now ready to deliver His master stroke. Reaching down from heaven to intervene in the crisis, He saves Saul, the blaspheming persecutor of His people, thus exhibiting the exceeding riches of His grace and incidentally leaving the opposition without its brilliant and aggressive leader!

A glorious triumph of grace: one which is to change the course of history, but another defeat to the leaders of Israel and all their followers. As they continue on their downward course we are reminded of the words of our Lord in Luke 6:39: "*Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?*"

In the same chapter which records the conversion of Saul we read these significant words:

**"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).**

The persecution has subsided. After the conversion of Saul the Pharisees and Sadducees creep into their holes again, as it were, and by the time we reach the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts we find the Jewish believers actually holding their own council at Jerusalem, utterly repudiating the spiritual authority of Israel's leaders.

Evidently the scattered believers have been returning, and in great numbers, to their native home and have become so strong there that the great Jerusalem council is made possible.

By the time we reach the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter we find James and his brethren saying to Paul:

**"Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20).**

What a contrast between the persecuted, scattered band of early Acts and this great throng!

It is clear that Israel as a government, as a nation, has not accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also clear that not enough individual Jews have accepted Him to warrant the establishment of the kingdom at this time. This must be postponed until a later date, but notice carefully who have been falling and who have been rising in Israel.

Just once more, in later Acts, we find the rulers, that “generation of vipers,” leaping out of the fire, as it were, to destroy Paul, whom God has raised up to make known to the world the exceeding riches of His grace.

Little wonder, for if they, and their father, the devil, have been opposed to the establishment of the kingdom, how must they now feel about the ushering in of the glorious dispensation of the grace of God proclaimed by this sinner, now saved by grace?

But the apostle shakes his assailants back into the fire, as he did the symbolic viper of Acts 28,<sup>18</sup> and feels no harm. In spite of all opposition the unfolding of the marvelous message of grace goes on as the apostle writes from his prison in Rome about the reconciliation of believing Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body by the cross, and about their glorious position and blessings in the heavenliness in Christ. The enemy cannot stop it. God is to show all men everywhere that He saves, not according to the will of men—not even Pharisees and Sadducees—but according to His own purpose, and grace, and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The rulers of Israel, in opposing the Lord Jesus Christ, fall, never to rise again, but the “little flock” is honored and, in fulfillment of His promise, will someday share the glory of Messiah’s reign.

#### THE EPISTLES

In Rom. 10:19 we read the following significant words:

**“But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.”**

Now this provoking of Israel to jealousy by a foolish nation must not be confused with Rom. 11:11 where we read that God sought to provoke Israel to jealousy by sending salvation to the Gentiles, for Gentiles are not a nation.

In Rom. 10:19 Paul quotes from Deut. 32:21, where we read that God was to use a nation—not nations—to anger Israel. Paul now applies this passage to the present situation. God has angered Israel and provoked her to jealousy. How? Again through a nation: the “little flock,” that “foolish nation.”

Imagine the rulers of Israel raging! “Who are these people? Do they actually suppose that they can uproot the government of Israel? Do they not know that the Sanhedrin is as old as Moses? The impudence! We will show them!”

Yet these leaders, as powerful and influential as they had been, were already beginning to fall, while that “foolish” little group was rising to ever-increasing influence and power.

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<sup>18</sup> Acts 28:1-6 is interesting to study in this connection.

This was the nation through which God was now angering Israel and provoking her to jealousy. Members of this nation who were out of Peter's personal reach were later addressed in his letters to the *diaspora*, "the dispersion," where they read:

**"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:**

**"Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (I Pet. 2:9, 10).**

How descriptive! Once "not a people"! Israel's rulers would surely have agreed to that! But God had made a people out of them! In this they foreshadowed the future redeemed Israel, for today God calls Israel "*Lo-ammi*"—"Not My people"—but one day "*it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God*" (Hos. 1:9, 10).

The above passage from Hosea is referred to by Paul in Rom. 9:25, 26 and is also thought by many to refer to the Gentiles because the preceding verse speaks of "us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

Here, however, the apostle merely *uses* the Old Testament passage to show that God can make those His people who formerly were not His people. It cannot be denied that the passage in Hosea refers to Israel. Furthermore, Paul himself also goes on to say in the next verse (Rom. 9:27): "*Esaias also crieth concerning Israel....*"

Returning now to Rom. 10, it is interesting to note that the chapter closes with four verses, each of which begins with the word "But," and each of which, upon investigation clearly refers to Israel.

The 18<sup>th</sup> verse begins: "*But, I say, Have they not heard?*" The answer is that since all the world has had a testimony, how can Israel, the custodian of God's Word, plead that she has not heard?

Verse 19 begins: "*But I say, Did not Israel know?*" The answer is that of course she knew. Had not God gone so far as to anger the rulers and provoke them to jealousy by that foolish nation, the little flock?

Verse 20 begins: "*But Esaias is very bold.*" Mark well: not very *kind*, but very *bold*. This vitally affects the rest of the verse, which some would again apply to the Gentiles. When he goes on to say: "*I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me,*" He refers, not to His graciously going to the Gentiles, but to His boldly appearing to the house of Israel, though unwanted, as He did through the apostles and the "little flock." The rest of the passage in Isa. 65:1 bears this out for it closes:

**"I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name."**

Read thus, Rom. 10:21 naturally brings us to the next and last verse of the chapter:

**"But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."**

The phrase "*But unto Israel He saith,*" does not indicate that in the preceding verse He had been speaking of the Gentiles, for Verses 20 and 21 are quoted from the first two verses of Isaiah 65, both which emphatically refer to Israel.

The use of the word “but” in all four of the last verses of Romans 10 is for emphasis. Israel’s guilt is being pressed home. *“But...Have they not heard?” “But...Did not Israel know?”* Perhaps there is some excuse. If only there were! *“But Esaias is very bold.”* He describes how God manifested Himself to Israel even though unwanted, and exclaims:

**“But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”**

Israel had been provoked to jealousy first by a nation and then by the nations. Compare Rom. 10:19 with 11:11. The former has to do with prophecy, the latter with the mystery revealed to Paul.

There was no excuse. Israel had “heard” and “knew” but was “disobedient and gainsaying.”

The fallen nation will rise again according to prophecy, but not the generation that fell. The position of those in the nation who fell or rose in the struggle over Christ remains unchanged.

There is a great spiritual lesson for us here.

While our Lord walked this earth *“there was a division among the people because of Him”* (John 7:43). Until the end of Acts it was still so. *“Some believed...and some believed not”* (Acts 28:24). Their attitude toward Messiah was a vital matter too, for it determined their destiny (See John 3:35, 36). Some rose, some fell, because of their attitude toward Him.

This has not changed today. He is now the glorified Lord and Savior in heaven, but still today it is our attitude toward Him that fixes our destiny. Some rise because of Him; others fall (See John 1:10-12).

And the lesson does not stop here. It affects God’s children too, for we must not forget that Israel and her leaders were God’s covenant people. Surely this lesson teaches us that God is no respecter of persons. How He brings the mighty down and exalts those of low degree! This applies even today among God’s people. Our Lord is set for the fall and rising up of many in the Church today. True, born again believers can never be *lost*, but they can suffer shameful loss at the judgment seat of Christ when the rewards for service are given out.

All of us who stand in the pulpit today are like Israel’s spiritual leaders of old, in a special sense the custodians of God’s Word. Let us remember, then, the words of Paul addressed especially to us Gentile believers in I Cor. 3:10, 14, 15:

**“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.”**

**“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.**

**“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”**

Within the professing Church today, as within Israel of old, there is a struggle over Christ. Today the question is: Is He enough or not? Is the believer really complete in Christ, or are certain human works necessary to make him so?



In this struggle some will rise; some will fall. Let us be sure we are in the right, for in the battle that rages over the truth the weakest are strong with God on their side, while the strongest are weak without Him.

Three Times  
When the Lord Wouldn't  
Answer  
**THE PARADOX OF GRACE**

**A GENTILE WOMAN IN TROUBLE**  
(Matt. 15:21-28)

Mark's account of our Lord and the Syrophenician woman describes how Jesus had sought to conceal Himself from the public but "could not be hid" because this woman, whose daughter was being tormented by a demon, had heard of His presence and had sought Him out.

In her distress she cried: "Have mercy on me," but she did not fail to recognize His royal position, addressing Him: "O Lord, thou son of David."

**"But He answered her not a word" (Matt. 15:23).**

He who had gone about the cities of Israel helping the oppressed; He who had always been so quick to respond to the appeals of the needy, did not even answer this poor soul. And He could be silent with emphasis! "Not a word" did she receive in response to her cries of distress.

His conduct was an open rebuff. He apparently did not mean to show kindness or even courtesy to this woman.

His disciples may have partly understood His action, for the woman was a Gentile. Nevertheless, interceding for her, they besought Him, saying, "Send her away,<sup>19</sup> for she crieth after us" (Ver. 23).

**"But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Ver. 24).**

Mark well, this was said to His disciples, for He still declined to speak to the woman. He was driving home a lesson she had to learn: that she had no claim on Israel's Messiah, no right to expect help from Him. God had given up the Gentiles long ago when, at the tower of Babel, they had made it clear that they did not even wish to retain Him in their knowledge.

**"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."<sup>20</sup> (Rom. 1:28).**

**"Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me" (Ver. 25).**

The word "worshipped," here, is a strong one in the original. Literally, the woman came and prostrated herself before Him. Falling down at His feet, she begged for His help.

At this pathetic plea the Lord was constrained to address her, but still by no means consented to help her. She must first learn the lesson He had begun to teach—yes, and we must learn it too; this is why this incident is recorded for us in the Scriptures.

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<sup>19</sup> From His reply it is evident that they meant that He should grant her request and dispose of her case.

<sup>20</sup> Lit., "becoming."

**“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles...were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:11, 12).**

This is why the Lord seemed so obstinate in His dealings with this Gentile woman. Even now, He addressed her only to point out why He should *not* help her. For the third time we find that negative word “but” used. First she had cried for help, “*but* He answered her not a word.” Then His disciples had interceded for her, “*but* He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Now she falls at His feet and begs for the help that only He can give: “*But* He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.

**“And she said, Truth Lord...” (Ver. 26, 27).**

Ah, she has learned the lesson and has frankly acknowledged her unworthy position. But here her faith shines as she points out that while, indeed, she has no claim on Him, He may, if He will, show mercy<sup>21</sup> to her.

Yes, we too must learn this lesson. As we have seen, the Gentiles are strangers from the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12). These promises pertain to Israel (Rom. 9:4). Even during the kingdom reign of Christ, when the nations are finally brought to Messiah’s feet, it will not be in fulfillment of any promises made to them. It will be in fulfillment of promises made to Israel. This is clearly brought out in Rom. 15:8, 9:

**“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision<sup>22</sup> for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:**

**“And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.”**

And so the woman continued pleading:

**“Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”**

It should be noticed that our Lord had really used the diminutive for dog, as the original brings out; the equivalent of our word “doggie.” This was the first hint of the compassion He had in His heart for her and she was quick to take it up. He had spoken of “casting” the children’s food to the little dogs. She, in turn, had acknowledged her place but had argued: Could not the master let a few crumbs “fall” from his bountiful table for the little dogs to enjoy? Did he not have a right to do this?

What a plea! What faith in both His love and power! Think of calling the casting out of a demon “crumbs from the master’s table!” She had shown a keener appreciation of Christ’s power to bless than could be found anywhere in Israel. How could we expect the story to close in any other way than it does?

**“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”**

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<sup>21</sup> The story is told of a woman whose son, a soldier in Napoleon’s army, had been condemned to death. As she pleaded with the Emperor to have mercy on her son, the Emperor said: “But he doesn’t deserve mercy. This is his second serious offense.” “But sire,” the woman came back: “it would not *be* mercy if he *deserved* it,” at which Napoleon issued her son’s pardon.

<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew race.

**A JEWESS IN TROUBLE**  
**(John 8:1-11)**

We pass not from the story of the Gentile woman to that of a Jewess, also in trouble, but trouble of a very different kind.

Our Lord had spent the night on the Mount of Olives, His customary place of prayer, and had come, early in the morning, to the temple, where the people gathered to hear Him teach.

The scribes and Pharisees had come early too, but from a very different motive. While the Lord had been on the Mount of Olives, praying, they had been engaged in the most disgraceful business.

**“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery: and when they had set her in the midst,**

**“They say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act” (John 8:3, 4).**

Had they had an honest zeal to “clean up Jerusalem,” there might have been some excuse for their conduct. But they had no such lofty motive. They had sought and apprehended this woman, not because they had been so shocked at her conduct or were so zealous for God’s holy law. They were out to “get” Him whose holiness had shown up their hypocrisy. And to attain their purpose they had stooped to this. These base characters, really farther from God than the woman they had caught in sin, now “set her in the midst” not mainly to humiliate her, but *Him!* What despicable iniquity the human heart, yes, the religious heart, is capable of!

Having set the woman “in the midst” they proceeded to remind the Lord that Moses had commanded that such should be stoned, demanding: “But what sayest thou?” (Ver. 5).

These men were diabolically clever. They reasoned: He is always talking about forgiving sinners. He says that the publicans and harlots will enter the kingdom of God before us (Matt. 21:31). Now we will force Him either to acknowledge that this woman should be stoned to death or to openly champion immorality by taking the part of a harlot against Moses.

Now this Jewess had a great initial advantage over the Gentile woman of Matthew 15. In Rom. 3:1, 2 we read:

**“What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?**

**“Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”**

It was a great honor to be entrusted with the written Law, the revealed will of God, but it was a great responsibility too; a responsibility which, if violated, would change her position from one of distinct advantage to one of distinct disadvantage. And this is exactly the situation in which this Jewess found herself.

Indeed, this was why the Law had been given to Israel. The Gentiles had already been proven hopelessly depraved; now God gave the Law to Israel to prove that the Jew was no better—that the sons of Abraham were, after all, the sons of Adam too! Thus that which had elevated her positionally above the Gentiles had brought her down again to the same level. She had broken the Law and it had condemned her.

**“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19).**

The Law is the great leveler of mankind. No one can boast in its presence.

Thus this Jewess now stood condemned before the holy Son of God. The Gentile woman had earnestly sought access to Christ’s presence, but to stand before Him was the very last thing this Jewess would have wished for.

Actually, it was a blessing in disguise for this woman that she had been made so conspicuous. It taught her, in another way, the same lesson which the Syrophenician woman had had to learn: that she too stood without claim before the Son of God, without a right to anything by His condemnation.

But our Lord proposed to teach her accusers this lesson too; these “just persons who needed no repentance” and had boasted again and again that they were the children of Abraham.

Ignoring their demands, He stooped to write on the ground, the woman all the while “standing in the midst.” What He wrote we are not told, but the act itself reminds us that the Ten Commandments, too, were written with the finger of God” (Ex. 31:18). But her accusers were not to be ignored and went on demanding that He give His verdict in the matter. “So when they continued asking”—*they got what they asked for!*

**“He that is without sin<sup>23</sup> among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (Ver. 7).**

Amazing reply! Withering rebuke!

Consider it carefully: He had not ignored the Law or taken a sinner’s part against Moses. He had not denied that the woman deserved death by stoning. He had simply pointed out that they were in a rather poor position to bring the charge, since their own hands were soiled. Yes, the woman should be stoned—*and so should they!* Thus they themselves were caught in the trap they had set for Him.

Having made His reply the Lord stooped down to write on the ground again and let that simple sentence do its work.

**“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst” (Ver. 9).**

What a combination we have now! A great sinner and a great Savior!

**“When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?**

**“She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (Vers. 10, 11).**

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<sup>23</sup> It is suggested that the words “without sin” here do not mean without any sin, but without the sin in question, i.e., “Let him that is free from her sin first cast a stone at her.” See Matt. 5:28.

What other course would one have expected the Lord to take? The scribes and Pharisees had brought this woman to Christ to judge, but now they were not even there to press the charge. They had left the courtroom in the middle of the trial!

**“Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more!”**

This was what really mattered. What the scribes and Pharisees said or thought about her really mattered nothing now; *He* had freely forgiven her. And thus she had received help from Christ, not because she belonged to the chosen race for, condemned by the Law, she had forfeited all claim to consideration on this ground. He had helped her, just as He had helped the Gentile woman—in His own sovereign grace.

But the question may well be asked at this point whether this free pardon of a convicted criminal was quite in accord with justice. And to bring the question nearer home: Is God’s free forgiveness, yea, justification of sinners who believe on Christ today, quite in accord with justice?

In Deut. 25:1 Moses, in the name of God, strictly charged the judges of Israel:

**“If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.”**

This is basic justice; the premise upon which the execution of law in any land is founded. It is so fundamental that one wonders why it need be stated.

In Job 8:20 we find Bildad the Shuhite saying to Job:

**“Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He help the evil doers.”**

And to this Job answered:

**“I know it is so for a truth” (Job 9:2).**

In Prov. 17:15 God tells us how He feels about those who violate this very foundation of justice:

**“He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abominations to the Lord.”**

This is why all the sinner’s turning over of new leaves, all his good works and religious performances, all his penances and tears and prayers fail to make him acceptable in the sight of God.

But what is this we find as we examine the rest of the record? Did not God condemn the righteous in the case of Christ? Is it not true that God allowed Him to die in shame and disgrace on Calvary’s cross for sins He had never committed? Do we not read that “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him” and that “He hath put Him to grief”? (Isa. 53:10). Is it not written that “[God] hath made Him to be sin”? (II Cor. 5:21).

And, what is more, does not God Himself justify the wicked every day and even offer them free forgiveness and righteousness, no matter how guilty? Do we not read in Rom. 4:5.

**“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, his faith is counted for righteousness.”**

How can God do this without violating the basic rules of justice?

This question brings us to still another occasion on which our Lord declined to answer. And here we will find *why* He could help both the Gentile and the Jew and why, even today, He can justify “him which believeth in Jesus” and still maintain perfect justice.

**THE SON OF GOD BEFORE HIS ACCUSERS**  
(Matt. 26:62, 63; 27:12-14)

This time it is the Lord Himself who is in trouble. He stands on trial for His life before the representatives of Hebrew and Roman Law. Think of it! *They* sitting in judgment upon *Him*!

First He stands before Caiaphas, the Jew, charged with all sorts of crimes.

**“And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?”**

**“But Jesus held His peace...”** (Matt. 26:62, 63).

Next He stood before Pilate, the Gentile, while the multitude, particularly Israel’s rulers, clamored for His death.

**“And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.”**

**“Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?”**

**“And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly”** (Matt. 27:12-14).

But why did He not answer? Why did He stand there speechless, taking the blame for sins He had not committed? Picturing the scene, one feels like crying: Lord, answer for Thyself! Tell them the truth! Expose the wickedness of these contemptible creatures!

Surely the Lord could have given a thousand answers and have tied His accusers up in knots. Knowing all about them, as He did, He could have uncovered evidence which would have sent them fleeing from the scene.

Why did He not do so? Because He had come into the world especially to die for man’s sin. As He had taken His place *with* sinners at His baptism by John (Matt. 3:5, 6, 13-15) so now He was to take the place *of* sinners in condemnation and death.

Some have wondered why Isaiah pictures Him as a sheep before His shearers, dumb and opening not His mouth when, as a matter of fact, He said many important things at His trials. The answer is that *when accused* He held His peace and took the blame. Indeed, had all the sinners of all ages been there and accused Him of their sins He would not have said one word in self-defense. Yes, and had you and I been there, charging Him with *our* sins, seeking to place the blame for our sins upon Him, He would still have remained speechless—so infinite was His love for us; so deep His determination to bear our judgment for us. See Him standing there! Yes, He is guilty; not in Himself but *as our representative*, for He stands there, not merely for us, but *as* us, taking the full responsibility for our sins. Thus God can dispense grace to sinners because he executed judgment upon sin at Calvary.

Neither the Syrophenician woman nor the fallen Jewess understood all this, of course, for it had not yet taken place. Indeed, God's great purpose in Calvary was to be "testified in due time" *through the Apostle Paul*, some years after the crucifixion (I Tim. 2:4-7). Nevertheless it was the basis on which He could justly help both women and it is the basis on which He has ever justified sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Unsaved friend, will you call upon God to save you for Jesus' sake?

He is ready to save you, but *you must call*. Will you do it now?

**"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

**"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets:**

**"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...**

**"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:**

**"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,<sup>24</sup> through the forbearance of God;**

**"To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**

**"Where is boasting then? It is excluded..." (Rom. 3:20-27).**

Hallelujah! The Law brings Jew and Gentile down to the same level and grace accepts them there!

**"...for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22, 23).**

**"...there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. 10:12).**

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. "But now" (Ver. 22) and "at this time" (Ver. 26). We *now* know how God could justly forgive "the transgressions that were under the first testament" (Heb. 9:15).



# I Heard A Voice

## HOW SALVATION WENT TO THE GENTILES

### A STATEMENT BY PETER II Peter 1:16-18

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice...we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.”

### A STATEMENT BY PAUL Acts 22:7, 14, 15

“And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”  
“And he [Ananias] said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.”

Both Peter and Paul saw the Lord in glory. Both heard voices from heaven. Both were sent to be witnesses of the things which they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20; 22:15), yet there was a distinct difference in the circumstances and the significance of their experiences.

Peter saw the Lord in His glory *on earth*. Paul saw Him in His glory *in heaven*.

Peter saw Him in *His kingdom glory*. Paul saw Him in *the glory of His grace*, at the Father’s right hand.

The voice Peter heard had the *acceptance* of Christ in view. (“Hear ye Him” Matt. 17:5). The voice Paul heard had the *rejection* of Christ in view. (“Why persecutest thou Me?” Acts 9:4).

Peter’s experience was a demonstration of “*the power and coming*” of Christ (II Pet. 1:16). Paul’s was a demonstration of the grace that caused Him to *delay His coming* (II Pet. 3:9, 15).

Peter’s experience harmonized with *his kingdom ministry*. Paul’s harmonized with his ministry as *the apostle of the grace of God*.

### PETER ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP

In Matt. 4:17 we read: “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*,” and the tenth chapter tells us how He sent the twelve forth with the same message.

How was the message received? See what happened some time later:

**Matt. 16:21: “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”**

Imagine the apostles' feelings now! Already they were discouraged over the negative response to their proclamation of the kingdom and now that the opposition of the rulers had become more acute the Lord had begun to talk about being killed.

What about His kingdom claims? True, He claimed He would rise again the third day, but that seemed too much to believe. Luke 18:34 tells us in three different ways that they could not take all this in. All they could see was His present rejection and the possibility of the collapse of their kingdom hopes. Notice Peter's reaction: "*Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee*" (Matt. 16:22).

Undoubtedly this attitude of doubt and fear was one great reason for the transfiguration of our Lord.

While telling them of His approaching death, the Lord was nevertheless to give them firm assurance that His promise would be fulfilled, for the very next chapter opens with the statement:

**"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:1, 2).**

That day they became "eyewitnesses of His majesty" and heard the voice of God Himself confirming what they saw.

How they needed this just before the cross! Now, no matter what might happen, they at least had no reason to doubt that Christ would eventually reign in glory.

#### SAUL ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

Strange to say, Peter and the rest of the apostles were unable to convince the nation that the resurrected Jesus was the Christ. The opposition of the government against their message became even more bitter than it had been before the cross, until finally "the blood of...Stephen was shed" and then more blood, and more and more.

This is where we first read of Saul of Tarsus, for it was he who inspired and led the "great persecution" against the Pentecostal believers.

Concerning the awful murder of Stephen we read: "And Saul was consenting unto his death," and in the same verse: "*And at that time there was [arose] a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem...*" (Acts 8:1).

That Saul was the chief persecutor there can be no doubt. In the Scripture record of the persecution he is placed in the foreground. Acts 8:3 says: "*As for Saul, he made havock of the Church...*," and the next chapter finds him "*yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.*" The Damascus believers spoke of him as "*he that destroyed them which called on this name...*" (Acts 9:21). Paul himself said, years later: "*I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women*" (Acts 22:4), "*and many of the saints did I shut up in prison...and when they were put to death, I gave my voice [vote] against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities*" (Acts 26:10, 11). To the Galatians he wrote: "*Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it*" (Gal. 1:13).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See the author's booklet, *Saul, the Sinner and Paul, the Boaster*.

Saul of Tarsus was unquestionably the representative of Israel's spirit of rebellion against Messiah, but on the road to Damascus, when the persecution was at its height, the rejected Lord Himself intervened, and Saul, like Peter, saw the Lord and heard a voice from heaven.

But how different were the circumstances!

Peter, as the Lord's apostle, had seen and heard that Jesus was indeed the Christ, but Saul had been Peter's bitterest enemy for proclaiming that fact. Peter was the leader of the Pentecostal Church. Paul was the leader of the persecution against the Church.

There are two things to notice particularly about the voice which Saul heard from heaven.

First, it should be noticed that the Lord's rejection by Israel was now assumed. Before the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Saul, it had been assumed that Israel would repent and accept Messiah (Acts 1:6-8; 2:14-21, 36-41; 3:19-21; 4:32-35), but now, with Israel waging a great persecution against the Church, and with Saul of Tarsus making havock of the Church, the rejected Lord calls from heaven: "*Why persecutest thou Me?*" After that the kingdom was never again offered to Israel as far as the record of Scripture is concerned.

Secondly, we should notice that while the Lord considers Saul His enemy, yet He deals with him in matchless grace, for instead of judging him, He *saves* him!

All this is deeply significant, for since Israel had turned to be God's enemy, God was now to conclude them, along with the Gentiles, in unbelief, "*that He might have mercy upon all*"! (Rom. 11:32).

Looking back, years later, Paul wrote of himself as one "who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," but he goes on to say that "*the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant,*" adding: "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*" But now notice most carefully the next verse:

**"Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (I Tim. 1:16).**

It is difficult to understand how anyone can read this portion of Scripture without realizing that God began something new with the conversion of Saul. Rather than judge Israel and the world immediately, God demonstrated "the exceeding riches of His grace" in the salvation of Saul, and so ushered in the dispensation of grace in which we now live.

### **THE SUFFERINGS AND THE GLORY**

In Matt. 19:28 our Lord had specifically promised that the twelve were to occupy twelve thrones with Him in His kingdom, and what Peter saw and heard "in the holy mount" concerned the glory which he himself was to share with Christ at His coming.

What *Paul* saw and heard, however, concerned the Lord's *rejection*, as well as his own. The rejected Lord said to Saul: "*Why persecutest thou Me?*" and He said to Ananias, concerning Saul: "*I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake*" (Acts 9:16). Christ was to be rejected still, but Paul, the sinner saved by grace, was to bear the sufferings of His rejection.

In Col. 1:24 the apostle says: “[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind [still remains] of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the Church.”

Now, in what sense did Paul fill up that which remained of the afflictions of Christ? Surely he could add nothing to the finished work of salvation. The point is, that though Christ’s vicarious suffering for sin was over, He was still rejected and in grace chose to remain so rather than judge His enemies immediately. So, putting off “the day of His wrath,” He saved Saul, His chief enemy. Saul, the persecutor now became Paul the persecuted. He himself was now suffering Christ’s rejection.

Someone asks: “But did not the twelve suffer for Christ too?” Yes, but always in the hope that Israel would yet accept Him. When Paul, rather than Peter, takes the place of prominence in the Book of Acts, it is because Israel’s rejection of Christ is now recognized as final. This does not mean, of course, that God immediately closed His dealings with Israel as a nation. This does not take place until the sentence of Acts 28:28 is pronounced.

Paul preached Christ in a Christ-rejecting world and suffered for it. In Phil. 3:17 he says: “Brethren, be followers together of me....” Paul was chosen of God to fill up that which remained of the afflictions of Christ, for His Body’s sake, and we are to be his followers in bearing “the reproach of Christ.”

Christ is still rejected, but who bears the sufferings of His rejection? His people on earth! We are in a world at enmity with God and His Son and we stand before men as the representatives of Jesus Christ. We cry: “We are ambassadors for Christ...we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:20, 21).

Like Paul, we plead with men and say: “Christ is not here; you did not want Him, but we are here in His stead to tell you that he loves you and died for you that you might be reconciled to God.” Israel and the Gentiles have both been alienated from God, but we are here as ambassadors in a foreign land pleading with enemy aliens to be reconciled to God through Christ.

Christ died in our place at Calvary and we should consider it a privilege to stand before men in His place, no matter how great the suffering involved. Paul said: “[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you...” (Col. 1:24). He called it “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10) and wrote to Philipians:

**“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29).**

## TWO MORE VOICES

We are loathe to close this study without pointing out that both Peter and Paul also heard voices from heaven while in trances.

Interestingly enough, it was Paul’s experience, this time, which concerned the Jews and Peter’s which concerned the Gentiles! But again we shall see that perfect harmony of the Scriptures in the unfolding of God’s purposes.

**PETER AT JOPPA**  
Acts 10:9-16

“On the morrow...Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.  
“And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.  
“And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.  
“This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.”

**PAUL AT JERUSALEM**  
Acts 22:17-21

“And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw Him [Christ] saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me.  
“And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: And when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.  
“And He said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.”

Here again, Peter and Paul both heard voices, but each this time while in a trance, and each while engaged in prayer.

Peter’s experience concerned God’s purpose to *go to the Gentiles*. Paul’s concerned God’s purpose to *turn from the Jews*. Both talked back to God.

Peter, in his abhorance of the unclean, objected that he had never eaten anything common or unclean. Paul in his eagerness to stay at Jerusalem and win his kinsmen according to the flesh, argued that they all knew that he had imprisoned and beaten the believers and had even had a part in the stoning of Stephen.

In each case, however, the Lord insisted on carrying out His purpose. To Peter He said: “*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common,*” and bade him to go to the Gentiles “*nothing doubting.*” To Paul He replied: “*Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*”

We are quite aware of the fact that Peter did not proclaim the mystery of God’s purpose of grace to these Gentiles. He did not even know it. He did not even know why God was sending him, and merely explained to his critics: “*What was I, that I could withstand God?*”

Nevertheless Peter’s commission was one of the first steps in the unfolding of the mystery of God’s plan to bless the nations in spite of Israel’s rejection of Christ.

While recognizing fully the kingdom aspect of Peter's visit to Cornelius' household, we should not forget that God did *not* send Peter to Cornelius because Israel was accepting Messiah and the good news of the kingdom could now go out to other nations. Rather, He sent him because Israel was *rejecting* Christ and the nations were now to be evangelized by grace, in spite of Israel's obstinacy and rebellion. In other words, Peter's visit to Cornelius was not the next step in the carrying out of the so-called "great commission," for Jerusalem itself had not yet been brought to Messiah's feet (Read carefully Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8).<sup>26</sup>

As to Paul's experience, it again emphasized that God was about to send the gospel to the Gentiles because of Israel's rejection of Christ. As Paul tells it, it took place upon his return to Jerusalem, shortly after his conversion. His experience shows again that Israel's rejection of Christ was now assumed to be final, for the Lord says: "*They will not receive thy testimony concerning Me.*" The rulers of Israel had not listened to the twelve; neither would they listen to Paul. God had concluded them in unbelief, and was about to break off His dealings with them.

But let us never forget *why* God thus temporarily broke off His dealings with Israel as a nation:

**"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.**

**"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:32, 33).**

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<sup>26</sup> See a fuller treatment of this subject on Pp. 40-43, under the chapter on *Two Hungry People*.

## It Was Added THE BIBLE'S BIGGEST "IF"

**“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto.”**

—Gal. 3:15.

**“Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions....”**

—Gal. 3:19.

There is a paradox for you!

The apostle has just pointed out that it would not be legitimate to tamper with a covenant after it has been confirmed—even a man would not do that. Yet in almost the next breath he declares that God added the Law to the Abrahamic covenant.

Yes, God added qualifying clauses, indeed a whole new covenant, to the covenant He had already made and confirmed with Abraham. He added an “if,” yes many “ifs” to the unconditional promises of the Abrahamic covenant.

Let us look at the problem as it is presented in the first two books of the Bible.

### THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

God had made a covenant with Abraham. It was unconditional. There were no strings attached.

Some of the clauses of the Abrahamic covenant read as follows:

**“I will bless thee” (Gen. 12:2).**

**“Thou shalt be a blessing” (Gen. 12:2).**

**“In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).**

**“All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Gen. 13:15).**

**“And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”**

**“And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7, 8).**

**“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).**

All this was unconditionally promised to Abraham and his circumcised seed.

### THE BIG "IF"

But now what is this God is saying to the seed of Abraham a few hundred years later?

**“Now therefore, IF ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant (this added covenant), then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people, for all the earth is Mine” (Ex. 19:5).**

But:

God *had made* a covenant in which He had said: “*I will* bless them,” “*I will* be their God,” “And in thy seed *shall* all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

Now, four hundred and thirty years later, He adds an “if”: “I will—*if*!” And this is a very big “if.” It includes a whole additional covenant; the covenant of the Law. “*If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant....*”

If we should gather together the qualifying clauses, the “ifs,” of the Law, they would undoubtedly run into the hundreds.

Can it be that God would be less just than men?—that He would actually make an unconditional promise and later add conditions?

#### THE LAW CANNOT ANNUL

Whatever the reasons for the giving of the Law, there is one basic point which the apostle by the Holy Spirit first drives home. It is the focal point of his argument in Galatians 3.

**“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul [annul], that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (Gal. 3:17, 18).**

Whosoever wrote the 130<sup>th</sup> Psalm understood this first simple fact, for he said, “*If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee...*” (Vers. 3, 4). He evidently realized that God would not finally deal with him on the basis of the Law.

Even those who lived when the Mosaic covenant was added should have realized this. Or at least they should have said: “Lord, under these conditions we can never inherit the blessing. Hast Thou not *promised* these blessings to us long ago?” That would have been the course of humility and of faith. But instead, in their folly and pride, they accepted the terms of the added covenant without a question. “*And all the people answered together, and said, all that the Lord hath spoken we will do*” (Ex. 19:8).

In all this God was demonstrating an important fact to them, for before Moses could even get down from the mountain they had flagrantly violated the terms of the Law, the added covenant, dancing like heathen about a golden calf.

As far as they were concerned they had thrown away all their chances of blessing under any covenant, for they had signed their names to God’s new proposition: “If ye will obey.”

But how fortunate that as far as God was concerned, things remained unchanged! He had promised: “I will.” He had promised—and He would fulfill, and any son of Abraham who really believed God could and did reap the rewards of his faith.



### WHEREFORE THEN SERVETH THE LAW?

If God did not mean the Mosaic covenant to make the Abrahamic covenant void, why did He give it?

Gal. 3:19 tells us: *“It was added, because of transgressions....”* This is in line with Romans 5:20, which says: *“Moreover the Law entered that the offence might abound....”*

God was showing Israel that man can never merit His blessing. He was not making the promise void. Indeed, He was using the Law to drive them back in faith to His promise: “I will.” Nevertheless they had actually entered into a covenant of law with God. That covenant too was binding. How could God justly overcome this obstacle? *Through Christ!* He was showing them at the same time their deep need of Christ, the Savior. Furthermore, He was using them as a historical demonstration of the fact that all blessing is wrapped up in Christ, who died for our sins, and who alone can redeem from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13).

### THE COFFIN OF THE COVENANT

It is interesting to notice that when God gave the Law (which in itself would *break* fellowship between God and Israel), He immediately began to make arrangements for a tabernacle, a place where He could *meet* with His people!

Another paradox!

God gives the Law which says: *“If ye will obey My voice indeed...then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me....”* God knows that they will *not* obey His voice indeed, yet proceeds with plans for a place where He may dwell with them!

This is quite simply explained, however, and fits exactly into Paul’s argument in Galatians 3.

The very first article of furniture which God commanded Moses to make for the tabernacle was—a *coffin*. It is a pity that the word has been translated “ark” in our versions. There are three words which have been translated “ark” and this one means simply “coffin.” The very same word is used in Gen. 50:26, where it is said of Joseph that *“they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin.”*

And why did God want a coffin in the tabernacle? To bury the covenant of the Law in! Note the Scriptures carefully:

**“And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them...And they shall make an ark [coffin] of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof....And thou shalt put into the ark [coffin] the testimony which I shall give thee. And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold...And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark [coffin]..And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat” (Ex. 25:8, 10, 16, 17, 21, 22).**

The phrase, “the ark of the covenant,” has become familiar to all Bible believers. But how much more significant this phrase would be if the one vague word were changed to coffin! *“The coffin of the covenant!”* This would make it quite clear why Israel was blessed, and prospered, and won battles when that coffin was in their midst, for it was only as God buried the Law that Israel could inherit any blessing.

This does not mean that the Law had historically been put away as yet. No, this blood-sprinkled mercy seat, this buried covenant was only a type. It was by the anti-type, a future transaction not yet understood, that believing Jews could find acceptance with God. But it did show that God had not meant in any way to make His promise void. He was merely teaching a lesson which all the world needed to learn.

The Abrahamic covenant will yet be fulfilled, because God buried the Mosaic covenant. Indeed, we today may be God's peculiar people (Tit. 2:14), and partakers of all God's blessings—in *Christ*, because God buried the Law:

**“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances [decrees] that was against us, which was contrary to us, and TOOK IT OUT OF THE WAY, NAILING IT TO HIS CROSS” (Col. 2:14).**

**“By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).**

**“Moreover the Law entered, that the offence might abound” (Rom. 5:20).**

**“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: THAT AS SIN HATH REIGNED unto death, EVEN SO MIGHT GRACE REIGN through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:20, 21).**

## From Glory to Glory AN EXPOSITION OF II COR. 3:6-18

**“...our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [covenant].”**

**—II Cor. 3:5, 6.**

### A TWO-FOLD DANGER

Much harm and loss has come to the Church because God’s “workmen” have failed to note the distinctions and divisions in the Word of truth. But serious harm can also result from a failure to recognize the unity of God’s great plan for the ages; from a failure to observe *connections* as well as distinctions.

For example, there are some who, reading such a passage as the above, immediately conclude that it has nothing whatever to do with the Body of Christ. The New Covenant, they argue, was made with Israel; what relation can it have to the Body?

From this they further conclude that Paul, when he wrote these early epistles, could not yet have come into his special Gentile ministry; that at that time he had a Jewish-kingdom ministry, working under the “great commission” and preaching “the gospel of the circumcision.”

And this when the apostle himself, in these same early epistles, makes it so clear that the gospel of the circumcision had *not* been committed to him, but to Peter (Gal. 2:2, 7-9); that he writes to *Gentiles* (Rom. 11:13; I Cor. 12:2); that these Gentiles were *members of “the Body of Christ”* (I Cor. 12:27) with a hope in *heaven* (I Thes. 1:10; 4:16-18)!

Thus our adversary again attacks the great Pauline message, seeking to keep us from rightly dividing the Word of truth and, if possible, robbing us of half our private mail.

### THE NEW COVENANT AND US

But let us face the question. If the New Covenant was indeed made only with Israel what relation can it have to members of the Body of Christ? Let us see:

First, is it true that the New Covenant was made *exclusively* with the Hebrew nation?

Yes, for Jer. 31:31 clearly states:

**“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.”**

What was the nature of the New Covenant?

It was all “spirit,” not “letter,” as the apostle points out in II Cor. 3:6. In it there are no legal stipulations, nor any mention of a land, a kingdom or a throne, but rather of the forgiveness of sins, of knowing the Lord and of an imparted desire to do His will.<sup>27</sup> What Israel had failed to do under “the letter,” she would be—and will be—impelled and enabled to do by the Spirit.

When and where was the New Covenant made?

At Calvary, for in Mark 14:24 it is written:

**“And He said unto them, This is My blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many.”**

The *making* of the New Covenant, however, must not be confused with the *fulfillment* of it, for it will not be fulfilled until all Israel knows the Lord, “from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”

Do members of the Body of Christ receive any of the blessings outlined in the New Covenant?

Yes, *all* of them.

Has He not written His law upon our hearts? Is it not our desire to obey Him? Do we not “know the Lord,” from the least of us to the greatest of us? Is He not our God? Are we not His people? Has He not forgiven our iniquities? Does He remember our sins against us?

Do we receive these blessings because they were in any way promised to us?

No; what was promised to Israel, we receive *by grace*. We receive these blessings because the blood of the New Covenant was also shed for the sins of the world.

**“That He might reconcile both [Jews and Gentiles] unto God in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2:16).**

Those who have difficulty seeing how the New Covenant affects us should carefully read Rom. 3:19 and reflect how the Old Covenant, though made only with Israel, nevertheless condemns all the world. And was not the New Covenant given to displace the Old? (Heb. 10:9).

The Old Covenant can only curse us, not because it was made with us, but simply because it proclaims the standards of God’s holiness, “without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). It was made with Israel because the Gentiles “did not like [wish] to retain God in their knowledge” and He had given them up (Rom. 1:28).

Likewise the New Covenant contains a list of blessings that we now enjoy, not because it was made with us, but because the blood of the New Covenant met the claims of the Old that the Old, which condemned us, might be taken out of the way.

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<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy that Paul is never called a minister of the Abrahamic, Mosaic or Davidic covenants, but only of the New Covenant.

Should some reader still have difficulty understanding how the New Covenant can affect members of the Body of Christ, he should remember the simple fact that what was promised to Israel under the New Covenant, we have received by grace, through the shed blood of Christ. Is it not significant in this regard that it is not Peter and the eleven, but Paul, who is designated an “able minister of the new covenant”? The “mystery” had to be revealed before these blessed promises could be fulfilled to Israel.

We must never forget that “the mystery,” or secret, revealed through Paul, is the secret of the New Covenant too. It is the secret of *all* God’s good news (Eph. 6:19). It explains how it is that God could promise such rich blessings to Israel of the future, *and* at the same time, how it is that we can enjoy these blessings now.

#### THE MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION AND DEATH

Contrasting the New Covenant with the Old, the apostle points out that “the letter” with its requirements and penalties, “killeth.” Therefore the dispensation of the Law is called “*the ministration of condemnation*” and “*the ministration of death*” (II Cor. 3:7, 9).

The ministration of the Law began in a blaze of glory. Mount Sinai was “altogether on a smoke...as the smoke of a furnace.” There were thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake. There was the sound of a trumpet, exceeding loud. There was the glorious Shekinah cloud in which *God Himself appeared* and “*spake all these words*” (Ex. 19:9—20:1).

But ere Moses had even come down from the mount with the tables of stone, the people were breaking the very first commandment, dancing like heathen about a golden calf.

From here on the ministration of the Law took on another aspect. Judgment had to be pronounced and penalties inflicted. Nor could any escape its just sentence of condemnation and death. What had begun in glory led but to gloom.

**“Because the law worketh wrath...” (Rom. 4:14).**

**“...For it is written: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10).**

#### THE MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIFE

But there can be no gloom associated with the ministration of the New Covenant, says the apostle, for under it righteousness and life are ministered to all who will receive them by faith. And this because the claims of the Old Covenant were fully met by Christ at Calvary. Thus the ministration of the New Covenant outshines the ministration of the Old in every respect.

**“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious...”**

**“How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?”**

**“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.**

**“For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.**

**“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (II Cor. 3:7-11).**

What emotions must have filled the heart of Paul as he was first sent, by the grace of God, to minister righteousness and life to men cursed by sin! It was a foretaste of what Israel will one day receive by promise, but all the more remarkable because ministered in “this present evil age,” entirely apart from the promises. Surely “*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*”

God still requires perfect righteousness, to be sure. His holy standards have by no means been lowered. But He has also provided righteousness and His servants minister it to those who will receive it by faith. How it should thrill our hearts to realize that this wonderful ministry has also been committed to us! Read again the wonderful proclamation and rejoice in it!

**“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;**

**“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith [fidelity] of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference;**

**“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

**“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

**“Whom God hath set forth...to declare His righteousness....**

**“To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He [God] might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:21-26).**

**“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).**

**“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).**

This, of course, is a judicial matter. Christ’s righteousness is counted as ours. Our faith is counted for righteousness. Nothing is held against us on the books, so to speak, and this is of primary importance. But as we have seen, God does more than this for us. He imparts *life* by His Spirit, thus enabling us to do His will.

#### THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT—LIFE IN CHRIST

**“For the law of the Spirit, [that] of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).**

In Romans 7 and 8 we find several “laws,” or fixed rules. There is first of all “The Law,” God’s holy rule of conduct. Then there is in each believer what the apostle calls “the law of my mind.” Our minds have been “renewed” and we *desire* to do God’s will. This, too, is a fixed rule. There can be no exception. Every true believer desires to do God’s will. But there is also “the law of sin which is in my members.” Even the most mature believer finds this law operating in him because he is by nature a son of fallen Adam. There is always in the old man that tendency toward sin. As Robinson put it:

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;

Prone to leave the God I love.”

Or, as the inspired apostle himself put it: *“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me”* (Rom. 7: 21).

Then there is also “the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). This, too, is a fixed rule. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23). *“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin”* (Rom. 5:12). *“Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (Jas. 1:15).

But there is still another law in operation in the believer: *“The law of the Spirit, [that] of life in Christ.”* And this law, says the apostle, *“hath made me free from the law of sin and death”* (Rom. 8:2).

Thank God for the law of the Spirit! It, too, is unalterable, for as surely as God’s Word from Sinai was an inflexible law, a fixed rule; as surely as it is a fixed rule that any true believer will desire to do God’s will; that sin, nevertheless works in our members; that sin brings death; so surely is it *a fixed rule, an unchangeable law*, that *“he that hath the Son hath life.”* “The law of the Spirit” is *“life in Christ Jesus.”* It is never otherwise. The Spirit imparts life to every believer in Christ. And it is only this quickening power of the Spirit that enables us to live pleasing to God.

In Rom. 8:11, 12 the apostle says:

**“But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.**

**“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.”**

This passage is sometimes erroneously applied to the future resurrection of the dead in Christ, but the word “mortal” relates to the living, not to the dead. It is this *mortal* body which the Spirit quickens and enables to do the will of God. Therefore we are debtors, not to the flesh, but to God.

Thus we, as followers of Paul, minister righteousness and life to all who will receive it—not because the New Covenant was made with them, but entirely by the grace of God.

### MOSES AND HIS VEIL

How often the mistranslation of a single word has obscured the meaning of a whole passage, or perhaps several passages of Scripture! The account of Moses and his veil is a case in point.

It is generally supposed that Moses, having come from the presence of God with the Law, had a countenance so glorious that he covered it with a veil in order to address the children of Israel.

This is not so. It is true that the children of Israel could not “steadfastly” behold Moses’ face, but he did not hide his glory from them.

This incident took place, it must be remembered, after the apostasy of the golden calf, as Moses brought down the Ten Commandments for the second time. It is true that Aaron and the children of Israel “were afraid to come nigh,” when they saw the glory of Moses’ countenance, *but he called them back.*

**“...and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.**

**“And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai” (Ex. 34:31, 32).**

Nothing is said here about Moses covering his face with a veil. Indeed, it is distinctly stated that when Moses came out from the presence of the Lord a second time,

**“The children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone” (Ex. 34:35).**

It was when he had *finished* speaking with them that he put the veil over his face, that they might not see the glory *fade*.

The misconception of this incident has no doubt arisen from one word erroneously supplied in the *Authorized Version*. Verse 33 in the *Authorized* reads:

**“And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.”**

The word “till” is not found in the original<sup>28</sup> and its injection tends only to confuse the picture. More correctly we might supply the word “when,” so that the passage reads:

**“And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.”**

It does not seem, however, that it is necessary to supply any word, for as it is the passage would read:

**“And Moses, done speaking with them, put a veil on his face.”**

The point is that Moses had no intention of hiding the glory of his countenance from the children of Israel, but rather wished them to see it. This is why he called them back when they fled. He put the veil on his face when he had done speaking, only that they might not see the glory *disappear*.

This explains II Cor. 3:7 and 13, where we read “*the glory of his countenance...was to be done away*” (Lit., “disappear”), and that he “put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly *look to the end of that which is abolished*” (Again, lit., “*which was to disappear*”).

The glory of the Law will never fade away; but the ministration of it, though begun in glory, ended in shame and disgrace, and this is what Moses’ transient glory typified. As he communicated the Law of God to the children of Israel his face shone, but this glory soon passed away and the further ministration of the Law brought judgment and death.

It is interesting to note that the dispensation of the Law began and ended as men with shining countenances addressed the people of Israel.

It began as Moses, with the glory of God upon his face, gave to Israel the divine commandments. It ended as Stephen, his face also aglow with heaven’s glory, charged Israel with breaking these commandments.<sup>29</sup> And the record regarding Stephen is no less significant than that regarding Moses.

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<sup>28</sup> The *Authorized Version* wisely indicates this by printing the word in italics.

<sup>29</sup> Sir Robert Anderson called this the “secret crisis” in Israel’s history, after which God raised up Paul to proclaim salvation by grace, apart from the Law.



**“And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15).**

And this man, with shining countenance, closed his address with the words:

**“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.**

**“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:**

**“Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it” (Acts 7:51-53).**

But the glory departed from Stephen’s face too; not because of any failure in him, but because of their wickedness, for in response to these words they dragged him out and stoned him to death. And so the ministration of the Law had indeed ended in gloom.

But Israel could not—and cannot yet—see it. As the apostle says: though the veil is off Moses’ face, it is still upon their hearts (II Cor. 3:15). They do not see that the Law can only condemn them.

**“For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.**

**“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:3, 4).**

#### UNFADING GLORY OURS

But we do not minister condemnation and death. We minister righteousness and life. Hence the apostle says:

**“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness [boldness] of speech.**

**“And not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished [was to disappear]” (II Cor. 3:12, 13).**

God is not today demanding obedience and prescribing penalties for disobedience. He is rather imparting life, through the Spirit, “and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” not bondage (Ver. 17).

The glory of this ministry will never fade. We may speak without reserve, not needing, as Moses did, a veil to hide the passing glory.

**“But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (Ver. 18).**

The glass here referred to is, of course, a mirror. We look into it, not through it. This mirror, in which we behold Christ, is the Word. Nor is this the only passage in which the Word is called a mirror. In James 1:23, 24 we read:

**“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:**

**“For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”**

Thus, in the divine Mirror we may behold *ourselves*, or we may behold *Christ*.

It is well to use it first to behold ourselves and see the ruin sin had brought. But let us not stop here. Let a man look into a mirror and find a bright light in it and the glory will be reflected in his face. And so it is with the Word. When we see ourselves in it we must necessarily be disappointed, but when we look for *Him* in the Word and find *Him* there, His glory casts its reflection upon us!

What need have we then to hide our faces? If David could say: “*They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed*” (Psa. 34:5), how much more should this be said of us! We know, or should know, more of Him than those of David’s day, and those Scriptures specially addressed to us send us forth, not to proclaim God’s righteous demands, but to proclaim Christ, the Righteous One, who met those demands at Calvary and offers justification and life to all.

And as, in our study of the Scripture, we turn from the shame of man to the glory of Christ; as we behold Him and see all we have and are in Him, His glory is reflected in us and we become gradually more like Him, “*changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*”

# The Trouble at Antioch

## WHO WAS TO BLAME?

### A PARADOX

Gal. 2:11-14

**“But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.**

**“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all....”**

How can we reconcile these two statements by Paul?

Did *he* show lowliness and meekness, longsuffering and forbearance, in his actions toward Peter at Antioch?

Was *he* “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”? Was he practicing what he preached?

Surely his behavior must have caused strained relations in the assembly at Antioch. Feelings must have run high as Paul, but lately recognized as an apostle, publicly rebuked the great leader of the twelve.

Was he not forgetting the dignity of Peter’s position? Was he not forgetting that Peter had been called as an apostle before him? Was he not forgetting that before he had even been saved God had used Peter to bring literally thousands of repentant sinners to Messiah’s feet?

Was not Paul guilty of disturbing the peace as he withstood the great apostle to his face and rebuked him before them all?

No, he was not, for the trouble was more subtle than appeared on the surface. The trouble was that Peter, to whom God had shown the oneness of Jewish and Gentile believers, in Christ, now “withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision” (Gal. 2:12).

### DOUBLE TROUBLE

Acts 11:2-4

**“And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them....”**

Eph. 4:1-6

**“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,**

**“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

**“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”**

Gal. 2:11-12

**“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed, for before that certain came from James he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.”**

Jerusalem was the headquarters of the Jewish Church.

Antioch was the headquarters of the Gentile Church.

When Peter was come to Jerusalem “they that were of the circumcision contended with him.”

When Peter was come to Antioch Paul “withstood him to the face”!

At Jerusalem he was rebuked because he had eaten with Gentiles.

At Antioch he was rebuked because he had *stopped* eating with the Gentiles.

At Jerusalem he rightly defended his action.

*At Antioch he had no defense to offer.*

God had clearly shown Peter that he could and should have fellowship with Gentile believers.

When Peter first said to Cornelius and his household: “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation” (Acts 10:28), he meant that it was wrong to have *fellowship* with them. The Pharisees and scribes of Jesus’ day murmured against Him, saying: “*This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them*” (Luke 15:2). Just so, in the case of Peter, “they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, “*Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them.*”

“But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them...” (Acts 11:4). He showed how God had sent him to these Gentiles by a special commission, even though Israel had not yet been brought to Messiah’s feet (Compare here Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8 and Acts 3:25, 26). Peter showed how God had told him to go “*nothing doubting,*” no longer calling them “common” or “unclean.”

It is not strange, therefore, that years later, at Antioch, Peter “did eat with the Gentiles.”

“As he had said at the great council at Jerusalem: “*God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel...and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith*” (Acts 15:7-9).

This is not to say that Peter preached to Cornelius and his household the mystery of God’s purpose in this dispensation of grace. He did not even know the mystery. But it was a step in the divine unfolding of the mystery. God was preparing the Jewish brethren for Paul’s ministry among the Gentiles. He was beginning to show them that He would send salvation to the Gentiles in spite of Israel’s rejection of Christ.

It is well to remember that before God sent Peter to the Gentiles, Israel had again officially rejected Christ in the dreadful murder of Stephen and was now waging “a great persecution” against the Church at Jerusalem (See Acts 7 and 8). At that time Peter was the leader of the Church and Saul of Tarsus was the leader of the persecution against the Church.

God answered Israel's stubborn rebellion in a most wonderful way—*by the conversion of Saul!* Saul's conversion was the first step in the unfolding of the mystery of God's purpose of grace. Read again his words in I Tim. 1:13-16: *"I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but...the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant....But for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."*

So God answered the stoning of Stephen and the awful persecution against His Church at Jerusalem by the conversion of Saul and the mission of Peter to the Gentiles, thus placing His stamp of approval upon Paul's subsequent ministry among the Gentiles and preparing the Jewish brethren for it, for Paul, not Peter, was to become "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13).

We must remember, too, that while the Jewish believers at Jerusalem went on with circumcision and the Law, God sent Paul to the Gentiles with a message in which neither circumcision nor the Law had any place.

It must not be supposed, however, that the Jewish believers immediately looked upon this with favor. It was not long before "certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren [at Antioch], and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). And remember, they had Scripture to back up their statements.

Nevertheless, Paul had received "*the gospel of the uncircumcision*" by revelation from the Lord Himself, and he refused to allow the Judaizers to bind circumcision and the Law upon the Gentile believers.

These Judaizers, it should be noticed, had not been sent by the twelve, for they knew better from Peter's experience (See Acts 15:24).

### **PAUL AND BARNABAS**

We must notice here how Barnabas had stood firmly with Paul against the innovations of the Judaizers. Acts 15:2 says: *"When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."*

At the Jerusalem council, again, there was "*much disputing,*" for "*there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses*" (Acts 15:5). Paul says concerning these men: "*to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour...*" (Gal. 2:5). Barnabas apparently stood firmly with Paul here too, for Paul's "we" follows his statement: "I...went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas..." (Gal. 2:1).

The outcome of this council at Jerusalem we all know.

Gal. 2:7-9: *"When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me [Paul] as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter...they gave unto me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship...,*" and once for all it was decided, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that the Gentiles were to go on under the teachings of Paul and were not to be bound by circumcision and the Law.

No such decision, of course, was made in regard to the Jewish believers. It is true that the Law was done away by the cross, but Israel's relation to the Law was not discussed.

Years later, when Paul came to Jerusalem again, the leaders there said to him: *“Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law”* (Acts 21:20). But see Verse 25: *“as touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing.”*

Because the kingdom had not yet been officially postponed and God was still dealing with Israel, He allowed these two groups to go on with different programs. But while outwardly separate, it was already becoming clear that they were one in Christ.

Before going back to the trouble at Antioch, it would be interesting here to note some of Paul’s comments on the oneness of Jewish and Gentile believers, written in his earlier epistles during the Acts period.

### **ONE BODY IN CHRIST**

**Rom. 12:5:** **“So we, being many, are one body in Christ.”**

**I Cor. 12:13:** **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.”**

**Gal. 3:26-28:** **“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek...for ye are all one in Christ.”**

Compare this with what we find in Eph. 2, written after the close of Acts.

**Eph. 2:14-16:** **“For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross....”**

Is it not plain that Paul’s ministry in the book of Acts tells the story of the breaking down of the middle wall or partition? Is it not plain that the oneness of Jewish and Gentile believers, in Christ, was already being demonstrated before Acts 28, while God was in the process of setting Israel aside as a nation?

A study of Acts 15 will show that Peter had had no small part in swaying the council at Jerusalem toward the recognition of Gentile believers. He had shown how God had put *“no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith”* (Acts 15:9). He had even added: *“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we [Jews] shall be saved even as they [Gentiles]”!*

As the leaders of the twelve extended “the right hand of fellowship” to Paul and Barnabas it became evident that the Jewish believers could now have fellowship with Gentile believers.

Peter had seen this very clearly and had come to rejoice in it, “for before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles...” (Gal. 2:12).

### **THE TROUBLE AT ANTIOCH**

Picture that scene, before the Judaizers arrived! Believing Jews and Gentiles all together, rejoicing in Christ.

**“But....”**

**“But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.”**

Here was the real trouble at Antioch.

Peter had been taught of God that he should have fellowship with these Gentile believers, but “he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.”

And see the results:

**“And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation” (Gal. 2:13).**

Even Barnabas! Great, spiritual Barnabas! Barnabas, who had fought with Paul again and again, against the innovations of Judaism. Now he is carried away with the throng. Yet all of them know they are wrong. The Word of God says: *“they walked not uprightly.”* They were guilty of “dissimulation,” hypocrisy. And Peter had started it all.

It is easy to see what would have happened if Paul had not spoken out. See what had already happened!

It was no longer a question of “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit.” The unit of the Spirit had been broken, at least the enjoyment of it, and must be restored, and it was no lack of humility on Paul’s part when he withstood Peter to his face and rebuked him before them all. This was the only right and honest thing to do, and it was necessary since the whole assembly had been affected by Peter’s action.

Though the results of Paul’s rebuke may not have appeared immediately, it was nevertheless a lesson to them and to us as to the importance of “keeping” the unity of the Spirit.

### **THE CHURCH TODAY**

As we consider the story again, we think of the Church today, and serious thoughts fill our minds.

The Church of our day, even Fundamental Protestantism, is disintegrating. It is falling to pieces.

God says “there is one body,” yet in the United States alone there are more than four hundred denominations.

What should our attitude be in the midst of this situation?

When we speak out, some remind us of Eph. 4:2, 3: *“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

We do want to have the lowliness and meekness and longsuffering of our blessed Lord, yet there is a time when silence becomes unfaithfulness.

One widely known Bible teacher writes us: “With all the many divisions in the Church, the most important thing now is to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit.” But how can we keep the unity of the Spirit in a divided Church?!

This is the trouble. The unity of the Spirit has already been broken. One after another, believers have “withdrawn and separated themselves” from other believers as sincere as they. Great spiritual men like Peter have started it, and great spiritual men like Barnabas have been carried away with it. Nevertheless it is wrong.

Many of our Fundamentalist leaders are actually opposing the great truth that “*by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*” (I Cor. 12:13), for while they continue to practice water baptism they ostracize and disfellowship those who believe that the “one baptism” of I Cor. 12:13 and Eph. 4:5 is enough. Yet they well know that water baptism and denominationalism go together. They know too that the “one body” and the “one baptism” go together and form part of God’s seven-fold basis for the enjoyment of the unity of the “One Body” (Eph. 4:4-6).

Some years ago a leading Fundamentalist declared that to hold to the “one baptism” and to deny that water baptism is included in God’s program for today, is “*sufficient ground for a refusal of Christian fellowship,*” and warned spiritual leaders to keep out of the Christian pulpit those who believe this.

Another prominent Fundamentalist of the Middle West has said of those who believe this: “*Have nothing to do with them.*”

Bible Institutes and Colleges in various parts of the country have taken decided stands against these truths, yet cannot discuss them openly in their classes.

Years ago an American group of independent fundamental churches passed a resolution which excluded from their organization sincere believers who do not subscribe to some form of baptism by water. Just “some form”!

As in Paul’s day it is the leaders who are “to be blamed.”

And shall we be silent as more and more “withdraw” and “separate themselves”? Surely silence here would not be humility. Silence now will not “keep the unity of the Spirit.” The Church is disintegrating before our very eyes, while at the same time the new evangelicals ask us to forget our differences and evangelize!

The “dissimulation” must cease. We must courageously withstand and rebuke those who say they believe in “one body” and “one baptism” and yet deny it by their actions.

We must withstand and rebuke them even though their names be Barnabas and Peter. If we are not faithful in this the defection will go on and the Church will lose all its power.

It is true, we cannot stand in Paul’s shadow, but we have his message and his responsibility. He is not here, but he wrote to the Philippians: “*that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:27).

May God drive us again to our knees and to our Bibles—from the greatest spiritual leader to the most obscure believer. May God hasten the day when the unity and the power of the true Church shall be restored.



# The Man Who Fell Asleep in Church AND FELL FROM A THIRD STORY WINDOW

**“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.**

**“And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.**

**“And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.**

**“And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”**

**—Acts 20:7-12.**

What a privilege it must have been to sit at the feet of Paul!

He had once been the archenemy of believers.

Before his conversion he had “made havock of the church” (Acts 8:3), “breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1). He had “punished them” and “compelled them to blaspheme.” He had “shut [them] up in prison,” both “men and women,” pursuing them “even unto strange cities,” “and when they were put to death,” he says, “I gave my voice [vote] against them” (Acts 22:4; 26:10, 11).

In Gal. 1:13 he says: “beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it [laid it waste].” And his conflict with Christ was the more tense because it was so sincere, for, years later he said to King Agrippa:

**“I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9).**

And this was the man who was now preaching Christ in the upper room at Troas!

God has stopped him in his wild career and had saved him by grace. Paul could never forget that day, on the road to Damascus, when he had met his Enemy face to face, astonished at the glory of the rejected Savior, and still more astonished at the tenderness in that plea: “*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*”

The glorified Lord could have crushed His blaspheming enemy that day, but instead He had saved him and Paul never got over it. The love of Christ had revolutionized his life.

Who couldn't listen to such a man preach, even if he "continued his speech until midnight"! Who, in any congregation, could even become drowsy as Paul told them of the love of God and explained how God had saved *him*, the chief of sinners, to "show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern" to those who should thereafter turn to Christ for salvation?

And yet someone did fall asleep in that audience—someone named Eutychus. Of course, he was a "young man." Perhaps he had been working hard that day. Besides, there were "many lights" in the place of meeting and probably a good-sized crowd, for this young man "sat in a window." All this might tend to make one's eyes heavy.

It is hardly probable that Eutychus meant to allow himself to fall soundly asleep. Doubtless he fought sleep at first and then merely indulged in a little dozing, but the fact remains that it was not long before he had "fallen into a deep sleep; and as Paul was long preaching, he sank down with sleep." And the results were not amusing, for, losing his balance, he fell from his position in the window sill to the ground, three floors below, "and was taken up dead."

Eutychus means *Fortunate*, and fortunate he was that Paul was the preacher that night, for by the power of God the apostle restored him to life and brought him again to the place of meeting on the third floor.

What an interesting narrative!

But why does God record it? Surely the stories of the Bible were not told merely to keep us interested. There must be some spiritual significance.

Let us now consider this story in the light of the truth which God has since revealed in His word, noting especially the following facts:

1. Paul was the preacher.
2. He continued preaching for a long time.
3. Someone fell asleep under his preaching.
4. The sleeper fell out of the third story window, where he was sitting, and was "taken up dead."
5. Paul, by God's power, restored him to life again and to the place of meeting on the third floor.

#### **PAUL IS PREACHING TODAY**

Our Lord had sent the twelve out after His resurrection, telling them that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

They had begun at Jerusalem, crying to the "men of Israel: *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*" (Acts 2:38).

Shortly after Pentecost Peter had said to them:

**“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:25, 26).**

It was clear from Peter’s word as well as from the Scriptures already written, that it was God’s revealed purpose to bless the nations through Israel as the seed of Abraham. This is why our Lord sent the twelve to “all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*”

But Israel as a nation spurned the call to repentance, continued to reject her Messiah, and even organized an opposition against *Him*. The leader of the rebellion? *Saul of Tarsus.*

It was then that God showed “the exceeding riches of His grace,” as well as “the exceeding greatness of His power” for, saving Saul, He actually sent him forth as the ambassador of reconciliation, God’s offer of grace to a world at enmity with Himself.

Gal. 2:7-9 records how the twelve, who at first had been sent to “all nations,” now handed over their Gentile ministry to Paul. The “great commission” had stalled because of Israel’s rejection of Messiah, but God’s purpose of grace could not be thwarted. He had “concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32).

Let us remember, then, that though the twelve had been sent “into all the world” “beginning at Jerusalem,” Paul now was to take their place as the apostle to the Gentiles in view of Israel’s rejection of Christ. See his own comments on this:

**Rom. 11:13: “...I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.”**

**Eph. 3:1-3: “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery.”**

**Rom. 3:22-24: “...For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”**

When such verses as these are contrasted with Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and Acts 21:18-22 it is clear that Paul is God’s preacher to the lost world today, and that the “great commission” has given place to the greater commission of II Cor. 5:16-21.

But let us continue with our story and note further that

#### PAUL HAS BEEN PREACHING LONG

even as he was “long preaching” at the Troas meeting. Paul has preached even longer than Moses. Moses preached for about fifteen hundred years; Paul has been preaching for nearly two thousand. The Law reigned for about fifteen hundred years; grace has been reigning for nearly two thousand. How great is the longsuffering of the Almighty! Let us compare here what Paul and Peter have to say about the longsuffering of God.

**Paul, in I Tim. 1:16: “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”**

**Peter, in II Pet. 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, [the promise of His return to judge and reign] as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”**

**Peter, in II Pet. 3:15: “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.”**

Remember that in Paul first, or chiefly, God showed forth this “all longsuffering,” and then reflect that God is still waiting—waiting before He judges the wicked, Christ-rejecting world and sets up His Son as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Still the day of His wrath has not come.

Still the message of grace goes forth.

Paul is still preaching.

But as Eutychus fell asleep, even under Paul’s preaching, so

#### THE CHURCH FELL ASLEEP UNDER PAUL’S PREACHING

not all at once, to be sure, but the fact remains that the Church lost hold, one after another, of the glorious truths which are so distinctively Pauline: The “mystery” of the Body of Christ and its heavenly calling and position, the rapture, the blessed hope of Christ’s return for His Church, and justification by faith alone.

During the dark ages the Church had fallen into “a deep sleep” and had “sunk down with sleep,” and like Eutychus,

#### THE CHURCH FELL FROM ITS POSITION IN THE THIRD LOFT

Paul speaks of being caught up into the third heaven (II Cor. 12:2). This is the highest, as far as Scripture is concerned, and it reminds us that when God raised Christ from the dead He “set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, [Gr., *epouranios*—“upper-heavenlies”]” (Eph. 1:20). It reminds us too that God “*hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places [the upper-heavenlies] in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2:6), and that He “*hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [the upper-heavenlies] in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3).

As the Church fell asleep under Paul’s preaching, the realization and appreciation of all this was lost, and the life of the Church was gone. Could it be awakened from the sleep of death? How it needed someone, in those dark ages, to cry: “*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*”! (Eph. 5:14).

*Eutychus! Fortunate!*

Surely it was only infinite grace that raised up men like Martin Luther to awaken the Church and restore it to life again. But in a deeper sense, who was it that God used? Who was it that went down to restore Eutychus to life? It was Paul, and

#### GOD USED PAUL TO RESTORE THE CHURCH TO LIFE AGAIN

Luther did not preach his own ideas but the great Pauline message of justification by faith. The very theme of his message was *Sola Gratia—grace alone*. And with Luther's preaching the awakening had only begun. Luther did not see grace in all its purity. Emerging from the dark ages, as he did, he still clung to many of the errors of Romanism which were directly contrary to the grace he taught. But he was true to the light he had, and soon others followed with more light on God's precious Word. Centuries later, under John Darby and others, the "blessed hope" of the Lord's return for His own was recovered for the Church and today the "mystery" is gradually being recovered, to the spiritual enrichment of multitudes of believers all over the world.

Let us note carefully that as Paul was used to restore Eutychus to life, so it is the recovery of Pauline truth that has begun to restore the Church to life. God's message of grace has undoubtedly sent more missionaries to foreign lands and has produced a greater body of believers in the world than ever in the history of man.

One thing still remains to be done to complete the picture. Eutychus must be restored to his position in the third loft. The Church must once more be brought to a full appreciation of her position in heavenly places in Christ.

There are still many thousands of sincere believers who do not fully appreciate the glory of their position in Christ. May God help us to show it to them from the Word, and may He open their eyes to see it.

**“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him [so] no more.**

**“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”**

**“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, [Him] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:16, 17, 21).**

Crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

Buried with Him (Col. 2:12).

Raised with Him (Col. 2:12).

Seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).

Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Complete in Him (Col. 2:10).

This, Christian friend, is your position in Christ. And if God says this is your position you should *occupy* it. Do not allow Satan to keep or drive you from it. *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against wicked spirits in heavenly places,”* who would fain drive us from our God-given position in the heavenlies.

Our adversary, the Devil, would make us “dull of hearing” and “slow of heart to believe.” He would lull us to sleep while he robs us of the blessings which are ours in Christ. But “we are not ignorant of his devices,” and we have “the whole armor of God” to help us to *“withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*

## That Precious Deposit A SACRED TRUST

**“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:**

**“Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.”**

**—I Timothy 6:20, 21.**

**“For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.**

**“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**

**“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.”**

**—II Timothy 1:12-14.**

### AN IMPORTANT FINANCIAL TERM

At the risk of causing the reader to lay this book aside at this point we are going to discuss a few interesting Greek words. In this way we will be better prepared to appreciate the above passage from the pen of Paul.

The careful student of Scripture will soon notice that in addition to its general phraseology the Bible—especially the so-called New Testament—employs many special technical terms. There are, for example, the political terms used by Matthew, the former publican, and the medical terms used by Doctor Luke. Luke also employs nautical terms in his accounts of Paul’s voyages and Paul, in turn uses legal, military, architectural and other special terms, doubtless the result of his familiarity with Hebrew and Roman law, the Roman soldiery, Greek architecture, sports, etc.

Among the technical terms often passed over by commentators are those which have to do with business and finance.

One of these is the word *trapeza* which, when it refers to the low tables at which men ate, is translated simply *table*. Sometimes, however, the word refers to the table, or bench, at which the money changers, or bankers, conducted their business. Indeed, our English word *bank* has come to us through the German *bank*, which means *bench*.

Thus we read that our Lord overthrew the “tables,” or benches, of “the money changers” (Mark 11:15; John 2:15). Thus too, the unfaithful servant in the parable of the nobleman is asked why he did not place his lord’s money in the “bank” (Gr., *trapeza*) so that it could draw interest (Luke 19:23). Likewise the “wicked and slothful servant” of a similar parable is told that he should have placed his lord’s money with the “exchangers”<sup>30</sup> (Matt. 25:27).

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<sup>30</sup> Lit., bankers, *trapezetees*, so called from the benches at which they conducted their business.

A glance at *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* will reveal that our word bankrupt comes from the fact that when an ancient banker became insolvent his bench was broken; he was bank-rupt.

In the passages we are considering we have another interesting and important financial term. Three times in the *Authorized Version* it is designated as that which is committed to one's trust. In the original the word is *paratheekee* (Lit., "to put with") or *parakatatheekee* ("to put down with"). Whether in its shorter or longer form, the word simply means *deposit*, that which is committed and entrusted for faithful keeping.

Some have been puzzled over the fact that the phrase rendered "that which I have committed unto Him," (II Tim. 1:12) in the *Authorized Version*, is rendered "that which *He* hath committed unto *me*" in some other versions—exactly the opposite! This is not so disturbing, however, when we note that in the original the words are simply "my deposit," and Paul's declaration that the Lord is able to keep his deposit, corresponds with his exhortation to Timothy to keep that deposit "*by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*" (Verse 14).

In this connection there is one more word to consider before going into the above passages.

In II Timothy 1:14 this deposit is called "good" (Gr., *kalos*). Now, in what sense is it good? In any complete English dictionary there are at least a dozen different definitions for the word *good*, and it is the same in the Greek. Thayer says that the word was "applied by the Greeks to everything so distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be pleasing." The word, then, has a broad usage and, as in English, the sense in which a thing is good must be determined by the nature of the thing so called.

Thus the "good Shepherd" is the *kind* Shepherd; a "good soldier" is a *brave* soldier and one who willingly endures hardship; a "good foundation" is a *solid* foundation; "good measure" is *abundant* measure; "good works" are works which are *morally right*; "good fruit" is *sound, healthy* fruit; a "good steward" is a *faithful* steward; "goodly stones" and "goodly pearls" are stones and pearls of *high quality*, hence *valuable* or *costly*. In each case the subject referred to as *kalos*, or *good*, excels in its own particular way.

Thus the phrase, "that good deposit," means literally, "that *precious* deposit," and it is so translated in several versions. This definition of *kalos* here is consistent with the word *deposit* as well as with Paul's earnest exhortations to Timothy to "keep" (guard, defend) it, and with his declaration that in all his persecutions he is trusting God to keep that deposit safe.

#### WHAT IS THIS DEPOSIT?

What the divine deposit is, to which Paul refers, should not be difficult to determine, for both the immediate and the larger context make this abundantly clear.

In I Timothy 6:20, 21 above, the apostle declares that those who "opposed" that which was thus deposited with Timothy, had "erred concerning the faith." The deposit referred to, then, must be "the faith" which had first been committed to Paul and then, through him, to Timothy: the "one faith" of Eph. 4:5.



“The faith” here is not the mere act of believing, nor is it all that the saints of other ages have believed. It is the special message committed by revelation to the Apostle Paul. Comparing it with that which saints of former ages had known and believed, Paul calls it “*the faith which should afterwards be revealed*” (Gal. 3:23). He emphasizes the fact that it was “*testified in due time*”—through him (I Timothy 2:6, 7; cf. Tit. 1:2, 3) and that he was divinely appointed as the apostle to make it known (II Timothy 1:9-11).

Then, between Verses 12 and 14 of II Tim. 1, in both of which verses this “deposit” is mentioned, the apostle exhorts:

**“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (Ver. 13).**

This “precious deposit,” he goes on to say, Timothy must keep by the Holy Spirit who indwells him (Ver. 14).

Could the apostle have stated any more clearly or emphatically that the deposit to which he referred was the distinctive message, yes, the very words, which he had proclaimed and had charged Timothy to proclaim? In Rom. 16:25 he calls it “*my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.*” In Ephesians 3:1-3 he explains how this “mystery”—“the dispensation of the grace of God”—was made known to him “by revelation.” In Col. 1:25-27 he insists that after it had been “hid from ages and from generations” God had chosen him to make it known and that it was God’s will that “the saints” should appreciate and rejoice in “*the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles.*”

“That precious deposit,” then, which Paul fought and suffered to keep inviolate, and which he so earnestly besought Timothy to guard and defend, was the special message committed to him by revelation—“the mystery.”

#### THE SECRET

The Greek word *musterion*, rendered “mystery” in the *Authorized Version*, is simply our word *secret*. Like our English “secret,” however, *musterion* has a two-fold meaning. It may mean that which is kept hidden, as in: “He keeps his whereabouts a secret,” or, it may mean that which is understood only by the initiated, as in: “the secret of his success.” Indeed, sometimes both meanings are blended together in Paul’s writings.

Now, the mystery, or secret, proclaimed by Paul had indeed been kept hidden until it was given to him to make known. This he insists upon again and again (See Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:1-9; Col. 1:26; etc.). But even after the apostle had proclaimed it widely, it still was understood and appreciated only by the initiated. Hence Paul’s earnest prayers for the saints, that they may be given “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph. 1:17) that they may be “*filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*” (Col. 1:9) and that they may possess “*the full assurance of understanding...the full knowledge of the mystery*” (Col. 2:2).

#### THE SECRET OF THE GOSPEL

The above phrase, found in Eph. 6:19, deserves our most careful consideration. Here the apostle, by the Spirit, refers, not to the good news of the secret but to “the secret of the good news”—*all* the good news which God ever did or ever will proclaim to man.

God had proclaimed gospel, or good news, to man all down through the ages, but *what was “the mystery of the gospel”*; *what was the secret of the good news? How could a just and holy God proclaim good news to sinners?*

When God told Abel he could offer a blood sacrifice for his sins,<sup>31</sup> that was gospel; it was good news, but what was the secret of this good news? Did it lie in the sacrifice itself? No, for *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Heb. 10:4). The secret of the good news was bound up in Calvary, though Abel did not yet know it.

What was the *secret* of all God’s good news to Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Daniel? It was the finished work of Christ as later proclaimed by Paul in his “preaching of the cross.” There never could have been one word of good news to any son of Adam apart from what Christ was to accomplish at Calvary.

What was the secret of Gen. 3:15; Ex. 25:16, 17; Lev. 17:11; Psa. 8:3-5 and a thousand other Old Testament riddles? Go to Calvary—as Paul presents it—and you will find the answer.

Indeed, our Lord’s death, as Paul proclaimed it, is the secret of all the rich blessings which are associated with this present dispensation of grace. We are “justified freely by His grace *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 3:24). We are “reconciled to God *by the death of His Son*” (Rom. 5:10). We are “made nigh by the *blood of Christ*” (Eph. 2:13). We are joined together in “one body *by the cross*” (Eph. 2:16).

There is not one detail of “the gospel of the grace of God,” nor a single one of our “all spiritual blessings” that must not be explained by Calvary—not as Peter referred to it at Pentecost, but as Paul later proclaimed it in his “preaching of the cross.”

To those whose eyes have been opened it is indescribably blessed to see the cross as Paul proclaimed it by revelation: the key to every blessing, and solution to every problem, the reply to all opposition.<sup>32</sup>

That Calvary, as “the secret of the gospel,” was not proclaimed until it was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul is clear from any passages of Scripture.

The prophets knew nothing of it, certainly, for we read in I Pet. 1:10-12 that they “*inquired and searched diligently,*” but in vain, to discover “*what...the Spirit...which was in them did signify* when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.”

That the apostles, as they minister with Christ on earth, did not know this secret is equally clear, for they did not even know He was to die! (See Matt. 16:21, 22; Luke 9:22, 44, 45; 18:31-34; 24:25, 26).

Nor did the apostles know this secret at Pentecost, or Peter would have proclaimed the crucifixion as good news instead of charging his hearers with the death of Christ and demanding repentance and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:22-24, 36-38).

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<sup>31</sup> Heb. 11:4 tells us he brought the sacrifice “by faith” and Rom. 10:17 that “faith cometh by hearing,” so God must have instructed Abel (and Cain) to bring the sacrifice.

<sup>32</sup> For a fuller discussion of this subject see the author’s book, *Things That Differ*, Chapter III.

This great secret is what Paul by inspiration calls “*the faith which should afterward be revealed*” (Gal. 3:23). It was to be revealed “*in due time*” and *through him*, as he declares in I Tim. 2:6, 7. No one until Paul could or did bring men from the shadows of the Law into the sunlight of grace with the words: “*But now...I say at this time* [we declare] His righteousness: that He might be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:21-26).

#### THE GOSPEL OF THE SECRET

But the Pauline epistles unfold the good news of the secret as well as the secret of the good news, for the apostle designates “the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery” as “my gospel” (Rom. 16:25).

The proclamation of the cross as the secret of all God’s good news was itself good news—the most blessed news that has ever been proclaimed by God to man. And the unfolding of this wonderful gospel was accompanied by the revelation of *a purpose hitherto kept secret*.

Salvation was now to come to the Gentiles through Israel’s *fall* (Rom. 11:11). Indeed, God was to conclude all in unbelief “*that He might have mercy upon all*” (Rom. 11:32) and “*that He might reconcile both [Jews and Gentiles] unto God in one body*” (Eph. 2:16) and give them a position *in the heavenlies* (Eph. 2:4-6), there to be blessed with “*all spiritual blessings*” (Eph. 1:3).

#### GUARD THAT PRECIOUS DEPOSIT

All this and more is included in the “deposit” committed to Paul, to Timothy—and now to us. “The riches of the glory” of this “precious deposit” is so fabulous that the worthiest of its custodians must feel like teen-agers guarding millions. Indeed, it should both humble and encourage us that:

**“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;**

**“And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are:**

**“That no flesh should glory in His presence” (I Cor. 1:27-29).**

**“...we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (II Cor. 4:7).**

Thus the apostle exclaims:

**“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep my deposit” (II Tim. 1:12).**

Thus he exhorts:

**“Keep that precious deposit by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (Ver. 14).**

Thus he challenges:

**“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**

**“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (II Tim. 1:7, 8).**

In the light of all this not one believer is exempt from his responsibility to guard that precious deposit, yet none can boast if successful. Though all about us Galatians lapse into legalism, Corinthians fall into immorality and Colossians embrace heresy; though on every hand God’s people are either indifferent or cry “Back to Moses!” and “Back to Pentecost!” it is ours to keep the great Pauline revelation pure and unadulterated.

Ben Locke, an engineer who had done fifty-seven years of service with the Lackawanna Railroad without ever receiving a single mark of demerit, was forced to leave Scranton twenty-five minutes late on his last run into Hoboken. As he stepped into the cab he removed his cap and uttered his usual prayer for a safe run, adding this time: “Lord help me to bring her in on time.” He couldn’t gain a second on the steep climb up the Pocono Mountains. In fact the climb seemed steeper and slower than ever. But once over the crest of the mountain things began to break just right. He just held the throttle steady and the train seemed to fly down the mountain. Finally the Hoboken train shed loomed into sight and Ben looked at his watch and saw that they had made it—just on the dot. As he stood there wiping the sweat from his face there was the tap of a cane on the outside of the cab. When Ben looked out, there stood the president of the road, all smiles, saying: “A good run, sir! A very good run!”

That pleased Ben more than anything else that could have happened on the last run, and to him it was symbolic. “When I come to the close of this life,” said Ben, “and pull into the Great Terminal, if I can just hear Him say: ‘A good run, sir! A very good run!’ ”

That was Paul’s great desire too, and shortly before his death he was able to say:

**“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:**

**“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown...” (II Tim. 4:7, 8).**

God help us to meet this challenge by His grace, giving our all to reach others with the unadulterated gospel of the grace of God and guarding that precious deposit whatever the cost, so that when this short life is over and we stand before Him we may receive His commendation and the victor’s crown!

## Buying Up the Time

### A WARNING AGAINST PRESUMPTION

**“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”**

**—Eph. 5:16.**

Few people really understand what is meant by the phrase “redeeming the time.” They know, to be sure, that it has to do with buying up the opportunities to work and witness for Christ, but unless the mystery of God’s purpose and grace is understood, most of the meaning of this phrase is lost.

#### **THE WRATH OF GOD**

The Old Testament prophets had clearly and emphatically predicted that God would judge the world for its rejection of Christ.

Look at the Psalms alone.

**Psalm 110:1: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”**

**Psalm 2:1-5: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people [“of Israel,” See Acts 4:25-27] imagine a vain thing?**

**“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying,**

**“Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.**

**“HE THAT SITTETH IN THE HEAVENS SHALL LAUGH...”**

Yes, He shall laugh! This does not at all imply that He is pleased, either with their folly or their calamity, for the next verse speaks of His “sore displeasure.” We laugh at the ridiculous. We laugh at jokes, and God laughs at the vain attempts of Christ-rejecting nations to get along without His Son! He laughs, as selfish, jealous rulers try to talk peace while they reject His Anointed, “the Prince of Peace!” To think of it!

**“HE THAT SITTETH IN THE HEAVENS SHALL LAUGH; THE LORD SHALL HAVE THEM IN DERISION.**

**“THEN SHALL HE SPEAK UNTO THEM IN HIS WRATH, AND VEX THEM IN HIS SORE DISPLEASURE.”**

## THE STAGE SET

At Pentecost, as far as prophecy was concerned, the stage was set for the day of God's wrath to begin. When Peter quoted Joel's prophecy concerning "the last days," he said: "*This is that,*" and he was right. As far as God's revealed plan was concerned the last days had begun. The sufferings of Christ were over and all was in readiness for the glory that should follow (I Pet. 1:11). The rejected Messiah had ascended to the Father's right hand; the next number on the program was for God to make Christ's enemies His footstool. The signs of Pentecost were to be followed, as far as prophecy was concerned, by the signs of the "great tribulation," which should usher in "the great and the terrible day of the Lord" (See Joel 2:28-32).

## THE MERCY OF GOD

But God is longsuffering. He is "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy."

He had said, to be sure: "*Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool,*" but He had not made known whether He would subdue Christ's enemies *immediately* or at some later time. He had never intimated how long a period would elapse between our Lord's ascension to His Father's right hand and the judgment of His enemies. The prophets had testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, but they did not, indeed could not, tell how soon after the sufferings the glory should come, even though they "inquired and searched diligently" to find out.

They could not find out, because God had a secret purpose which He could not yet divulge; a plan which, purposely, He had "kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25).

Thus it was that something amazing took place which the prophets had never uttered nor even known. Interjected into the midst of the prophetic scheme was a whole new dispensation, a whole new order of things, a new divine administration!

Delaying the fearful judgments He had predicted, God ushered in a period of grace. He concluded all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all (Rom. 11:32), simply and only through the merits of His crucified, risen, glorified, Son.

## THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE

Just as surely as the dispensation of the grace of God was hidden from the prophets, so surely was it revealed to and through the apostle Paul—not the twelve apostles.

See Paul's words to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Colossians. Read them, carefully, prayerfully.

**"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,**

**"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that BY REVELATION HE MADE KNOWN UNTO ME THE MYSTERY...which in other ages was not made known...THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST...THE MYSTERY WHICH FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD HATH BEEN HID IN GOD...THE ETERNAL PURPOSE which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:1-11).**

**“Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to MY GOSPEL, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25).**

**“But we speak the wisdom of God in A MYSTERY...THE HIDDEN...which God ordained before the world unto our glory.” (I Cor. 2:7. The words “even” and “wisdom” are in italics and are not found in the original).**

**“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST... and I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them [the leaders at Jerusalem] that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain” (Gal. 1:11, 12; 2:2).**

**“Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill [complete] the Word of God: Even THE MYSTERY WHICH HATH BEEN HID FROM AGES AND FROM GENERATIONS, BUT NOW IS MADE MANIFEST to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:25-27).**

**“Praying always...for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph. 6:18-20).**

**“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST, for which I am also in bonds:**

**“That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak” (Col. 4:3, 4).**

#### **HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

Since the dispensation of grace was not prophesied, no one can tell how long it will last. There are no signs to mark the time of its termination and the rapture of the Church. Believers from Paul’s day until now were told to be *“looking for that blessed hope,”* and *“to wait for His Son from heaven,”* and unbelievers are not given the slightest assurance that it will last for another day, or that judgment will not strike tomorrow!

It is an astonishing fact that “this present evil age” is also the age of grace, yet this fact merely emphasizes the true character of grace. It is a testimony to the infinite mercy and longsuffering of God that this dispensation of grace has lasted longer than any other.

St. Peter, speaking of the delay in Christ’s return to judge and reign, says:

**“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9).**

It is not slackness on God’s part that causes Him to postpone the judgment; it is the very opposite. It is *longsuffering*. He controls and restrains Himself because He is loathe to judge. Thus Peter adds:

**“Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you” (II Pet. 3:15).**

#### BUYING UP THE TIME

But as the evil of this “evil age” increases it should remind us that the time may be very short. Every moment is a moment of grace. No one can tell how soon the day of grace will give place to the day of wrath.

It is the extreme uncertainty of the duration of the dispensation of grace that caused Paul to write:

**“We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain...behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:1, 2).**

It was this that caused him to write:

**“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15, 16).**

It was this that caused him to solicit the prayers of the Colossians that he might be given opportunity and boldness: *“to speak the mystery of Christ...as I ought to speak,”* urging them too, to *“walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time”* (Col. 4:1-5).

Our Lord may come before these words are finished and then our opportunities to toil and testify for Him will be over. Yet we often act as though we were sure that God will linger in grace for a long time to come.

May God awaken us all to see the value of this moment—*now!*

May He awaken us to an appreciation of His longsuffering and grace, that we may indeed *“walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time”!*

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If this book has proved a blessing to you,  
why not help us get it out to others.