

The Berean Expositor

Acts xvii. 10, 11

“Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the Word of truth”

II Tim. ii. 15

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Dear Fellow-members,

When Paul wrote the second letter to the Corinthian church, he stressed above all things the glory of Christ, which Satan does his best to veil. To this end he blinds the minds of unbelievers and keeps them occupied with an hundred and one things of little importance (II Cor. iv. 3, 4). But as believers we have “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. No wonder Paul proceeds to call it “treasure” (verse 7) and this treasure is at the heart of the revelation of the Mystery (Ephesians and Colossians).

However, to balance this, we are reminded that we have this treasure “in earthen vessels”, and pottery is notoriously frail and brittle. This represents ourselves and gives God’s purpose in so working, in order that “the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of ourselves”.

Our witness is continuing its work and has been sustained by the Lord without elaborate organization. We give all the glory to Him, at the same time, thanking our fellow workers for all their loyal support.

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Meditations in the Word

“All Our Righteousness are as filthy rags” (Isa. lxiv. 6).

p. 160

Here we have the contrasted confession of every sinner in whose heart the Lord begins His work. The word righteousness is in the plural, meaning in Hebrew, all the very best and holiest of thoughts and deeds. The words “filthy rags” more literally, are “fading coverings”. Look further on, “we all do fade as a leaf” not the same word, but a similar meaning.

The allusion to Gen. iii. seems very clear. There, the guilty man and woman sought to make a covering of fig leaves, fading coverings, but the Lord made them *coats of skin*, a coat which involved the sacrifice of the animal first. This is the lesson, our good works will not stand, they fade; we ourselves are similar, we fade, unless we are covered with the *robe of righteousness* (Isa. liii. 10, 11), we shall perish. Isa. lxiv. is primarily the heart confession of the elect remnant of Israel, who are beginning to realize their sin and that they are without hope; to such the Lord Jesus comes when He comes again, they look on Him Whom they pierced and mourn for Him (Zech. xii. 10) and are converted. Rom. x. 1-3 shows their boast; Rom. x. 4 shows their righteousness.

On The Threshold

**“Nevertheless afterwards, it yieldeth
the peaceable fruit of Righteousness” (Heb. xii. 11).**

p. 200

This chapter continues on from chapter xi. where we have the list of those examples who walked by faith. Sonship here in this world of sin, and in our present condition, entails not only that our Heavenly Father supplies our need, but that also we are corrected and checked, else we shall become spiritually unruly and undisciplined. No chastisement seems pleasant here and now, but we are directed to see beyond, to the fruit, Righteousness and Peace, these are their practical outcome. “The wicked are not in trouble as other men are” yet when we, like Asaph, “go into the sanctuary” we can understand their end. How contrasted with the end of the children of God it is, instead of Peace and Righteousness there is nothing but darkness and death. May we count it a mark of love when we feel the Father’s hand.

The Basics of the Berean Trusts

No.1. Why the Name? pp. 121, 122

“The *What Expositor?*” is the frequent response to the question, “Would you like to read a copy of *The Berean Expositor?*”. Few have heard the word *Berean*, even less know that it is a place mentioned in the Bible and less still are aware of its significance (Acts xvii. 10, 13 and xx. 4).

Berea was a town in Greece, towards the south of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was situated on the eastern slope of the Olympian mountain range, about 35 miles west of Thessalonica. The town is still in existence today, with the name Veroia, and is on the main road linking Athens, in the south of Greece, and Thessaloniki in the north.

When we read the Acts of the Apostles the journeys of Paul seem so familiar and yet we can so easily miss one outstanding feature, the opposition of Paul’s own people, the Jews. At the beginning of his first missionary journey, at Paphos, he met opposition from a Jew named Elymas (Acts xiii. 6-12). From there he went to Antioch, via Perga, and as was his custom he went first to the synagogue of the Jews but “on the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying” (Acts xiii. 44, 45). “They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region” (verse 50).

From there they journeyed to Iconium “but the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds” (xiv. 2). This led to a plot to ill-treat and stone Paul and Barnabas (verse 5), who fled to Lystra but even there “some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead” (verse 19).

It seemed as if things were to be no different on Paul’s second journey. At Thessalonica “the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some of the bad characters from the market-place, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd” (xvii.5). But, “as soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea” (xvii.10). However, here we find a different story:

“On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men” (Acts xvii. 10-12).

How encouraged Paul must have been. At Berea he found Jews who “received the message with great eagerness”, Jews who “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what he said was true”, Jews who believed.

Do we read the Acts of the Apostles and note how Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ. He based his arguments upon the Law of Moses and the Prophets (e.g. xxvi. 22 and xxviii. 23). The foundation of his case was the Scriptures, and the Jews knew their Scriptures, but note how frequently they opposed him. Only of the Bereans was it said that “they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true”.

So it is that this Bible study magazine is called *The BEREAN Expositor*. It is hoped that all who read it do receive the message “with great eagerness”, with all readiness of mind. It is hoped that every reader will examine the Scriptures regularly to see if what is written in *The Berean Expositor* is correct. No writer can claim to have the apostolic authority of Paul and so human error can creep in. The Bereans were highly commended for searching and checking on Paul, the Apostle. How much more, then, should people today examine the Scriptures to search and see if what we say is true.

All quotations in this article are taken from the New International Version (N.I.V.).

For further reading on this subject we recommend
The History and Aims of the Berean Trust by Michael Penny and
Why Berean? By Stuart Allen.

No.2. What! No Membership? pp. 141, 142

Most Christian organizations have both a statement of faith and a membership. It is often the case that anyone wishing to join has to sign a statement agreeing with the beliefs of the organization. There is no membership roll for either of the Berean Trusts. Anyone can join the mailing list to receive *The Berean Expositor* and we hope that they will search the Scriptures to see if the published expositions are in agreement with *all* that the Bible teaches on the particular subjects under discussion.

But some will ask, have the Berean Trusts no statement of faith? After all a creed is of value, allowing people to see, at a glance, the *main* doctrines of an organization. It enables others to identify the organization's priorities. Both The Berean Forward Movement Trust and The Berean Publishing Trust are registered charities which have to report to the Charities Commission. As such each has to have a Trust Deed and embodied in each deed are the following four basic tenets of faith:--

- (1) The full inspiration of the Scriptures (II Tim. iii. 16).
- (2) The Right Division of the Scriptures (II Tim. ii. 15).
- (3) The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. xvi. 16; John vi. 69; xx. 28).
- (4) The all sufficiency of His One Sacrifice (Acts iv. 12; Heb. x. 14).

From these it will be seen that the Berean Trusts are evangelical (teaching that salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's offering for sin on Calvary's cross), and fundamental (teaching that the Bible is God's inspired Word). These are the basics of the Trusts.

Now some claim that one purpose of a statement of faith and membership is to ensure that the original aims and doctrines of the organization are not altered or ignored. In this way, they claim, truth is preserved. Would to God that this was true! Without being critical one has only to look at the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England and ask how many of its clergy and laity fully support all thirty-nine to realize that both a statement of faith and a membership can be powerless. In fact the longer the statement the sooner, and more likely, the organization will run into difficulties in maintaining it. Thus the basic tenets of faith of the Berean Trusts were kept to a minimum, yet none are imposed upon the readership or supporters. If this is the case, how are the tenets upheld? The Trust deeds of both Berean Trusts state:

“The statutory power of appointing new Trustees shall be applicable to the Trust *provided* that no person shall be eligible to be appointed a Trustee unless he shall satisfy the persons in whom the statutory power is vested that he is a person whose beliefs and practice conform to the said basis tenets.”

“The Trustees shall have power to appoint a principal or minister councils and committees to assist in their work *provided* that every principal or minister and every member of any council or committee so appointed shall satisfy the Trustees that he is a person whose beliefs and practice conform to the said basic tenets.”

“The Trustees shall also have power to appoint a treasurer and if thought fit a secretary *provided* any treasuree or secretary so appointed shall satisfy the Trustees that he is a person whose beliefs and practice conform to the said basic tenets.”

The safeguard of the original aims and doctrine rests first and foremost within the Trust Deeds themselves and with the Trustees, who would be in breach of the law if they failed to act in accordance with the Deeds. Thus any new Trustee must not only *state* that he believes and accepts the four basic tenets but his life must also conform to them. In practice he must reflect them. The same is true of anyone appointed as a principal or a minister, or of anyone appointed as a treasurer or secretary, or of anyone asked to serve on any council or committee. In this way the original aims and doctrines are preserved and the Berean Trusts have never wavered in their teaching of salvation by grace through faith, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures and the right division of the Scriptures.

For further reading on this subject we recommend
The History and Aims of the Berean Trust by Michael Penny.

No.3. What Must I do to be Saved? pp. 161, 162

To be saved! Saved from what? What does it mean, to be saved? When the Scriptures use this expression it is referring to being saved from the consequences of sin, that is separation from God through death.

What must I do to be saved, saved from sin and separation? That surely must be *the* most important issue confronting every individual and yet so many refuse to face it. Some think that a person's life should consist in an abundance of material possessions. They are concerned about obtaining plenty of good things and saving money for the future so that they can take life easy and eat, drink and be merry. But what if God says to them at this very moment, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you" (Luke xii. 16-21). Their material possessions or their position in a secular society will be of no value after death. They go no way towards gaining eternal life.

If possessions and position do not secure life after death, can a person obtain eternal security through self-sacrifice and the good works performed in this life? Paul was a Pharisee who had kept the law and from that point of view he was faultless. He had suffered the loss of everything. Surely here was a man who had worked his way into heaven—but no! He wanted to be found in Christ, *not* having a righteousness of his own, one that comes from obeying the law, but wanting that righteousness which comes from God (Phil. iii. 5-9).

Every human being has a righteousness of his own, for he does show some good works and tries to keep most of the law most of the time. If we compare ourselves with others we may assess ourselves better than our neighbours, better than our workmates, better than our brothers and sisters. But when we compare ourselves with God, His eternal existence and His righteousness, then man's life is but a breadth and man's glory is as insignificant as the flower of grass. If we are to be saved then we need to be linked with God's immortality and His righteousness, but how can man achieve this? How can he get immortality and righteousness? He gets them by accepting them from God.

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"
(Rom. vi. 23).

All a person needs to receive this gift is faith; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He needs to believe that:

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. xv. 3, 4).

Do you believe that Christ died for *your* sins? Do you believe that He received the punishment for *your* sins? If you do, you are saved. You have the gift of eternal life—and more. All believers can say, with Paul, that we do not have a righteousness of our own,

“but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Phil. iii. 9).

We have this because “God made Him Who had no sin to be sin for us, *so that* in him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Cor. v. 21). Notice the ‘so that’. This is how we get eternal life and righteousness. God made the Lord Jesus Christ a sin offering for you and for me and if we believe it, God will credit us with His righteousness. A person who has faith in Christ’s offering for sin is credited with righteousness by *God!* This must be one of the most amazing gifts of all time; truly amazing grace. Our good works have a place *after* salvation, but not before. The Lord Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin is *all* sufficient. Nothing can be added to it. No amount of good works will do in its place. No rites or ceremonies can be a substitute and “salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts iv. 12).

So human works, human merit, human achievement play no part in salvation. In fact it is the very opposite for the first step is the admission of personal inabilities and inadequacies. It is recognizing that no matter how hard we try and no matter how much we improve our lives, we will never be completely righteous. Even if we gain some measure of control over our words and works, our thoughts still let us down. The first step recognizes that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 23). So what must I do to be saved from the consequences of sin? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts xvi. 31). The all sufficiency of His one sacrifice for sin is one of the four basic tenets of the Berean Trusts and is arguably the most important one for it deals with questions concerning life and death, sin and salvation.

The Book of RUTH

No.1. i. 1 - 13.

pp. 195 - 200

Tucked away in the O.T. Scriptures between Judges and the First Book of Samuel is this tiny Book of Ruth. The Books of the O.T. in the Hebrew Canon of Scripture, you will remember, are divided into three—the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms or Writings. In the Jewish Scriptures Ruth is placed among the Psalms, and together with the Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther, form the Megillath or Scrolls. These Books were and are today always read in the synagogues at feast days. The Book of Ruth placed second is always read at Pentecost, the period of harvesting in Israel, the reason being that it is concerned with reaping and gleaning.

In the O.T. there are two Books with the names of women, Ruth and Esther. Ruth, a Gentile, married a Hebrew husband. Esther, a Jewess, married a Gentile.

In the Greek translation of the Hebrew O.T. Scriptures, the Septuagint, Ruth is placed after the Book of Judges, as we have it in our Bibles today. It would seem to be the right place for it, as in chapter i. 1 we read:

“Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled”.

This Book of Ruth therefore describes events which took place during the period covered by the Book of Judges. In the last verse of the last chapter of Judges, the Book ended on a tragic note indeed:

“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges xxi. 25).

It would be difficult to exaggerate the deplorable condition of the nation of Israel during the intervening periods not covered by the men God raised up to lift the people from their unbelief and idolatry as recorded in the Book of Judges.

On the other hand, while one of these judges ruled over the nation, the events recorded in the Book of Ruth took place. In fact, they must have taken place during the early period, because we read that the mighty Boaz was the son of Salmon and Rahab. There can be no reasonable grounds for NOT supposing her to be the Rahab of Jericho who so greatly helped the men Joshua sent to spy out the land, before his conquest of Canaan. Rahab also is recorded in Heb. xi., where only two women are included in the list of those who lived in O.T. times, whose outstanding faith in the Word of God receives such honourable mention. Sarah, of course was the other noble lady. What a truly great woman Rahab must have become in Israel.

The Book of Ruth fulfills several purposes, including:

- (1) It reveals that even during the dark days of the Judges, there were some who lived their simple lives in the fear of the Lord.
- (2) The example of utter faithfulness presented by the story of Ruth the Moabitess, stands out boldly against the dark background of the times, and gives encouragement to us in our own day of darkness and apostasy.
- (3) The Book supplies an important link in the genealogy of Christ as the Son of David.
- (4) The introduction into that genealogy of a Moabitess illuminates the character of the God of all grace, prefiguring the acceptance of the Gentile, and indicating something of the gracious work of the Saviour.
- (5) Most important of all though this tiny Book reveals to us more clearly than any other that most important typical figure, the Kinsman-Redeemer.

“In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. i. 7).

Here we have the Greek word “*aphesis*” which is translated forgiveness meaning “setting free from bondage”, “setting at liberty”.

In verse 14 however, sin and bondage are not in view:

“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Eph. i. 14).

The figure here is an earnest, or a pledge, *now*, in view of a possession *then*, and as the possession has been forfeited, redemption is essential.

In verse 7 is revealed redemption from bondage. In verse 14, redemption of a possession. It is this second aspect of redemption that finds so beautiful an illustration in the Book of Ruth, and makes its study so profitable.

The central and longest portion of the Book revolves around the figure of Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer. The Hebrew word used here is “*goel*”. Its derivatives are variously translated by “redeem”, “right to redeem”, and “kinsman”, and occur no less than twenty times in these central chapters.

So we find in this Book that aspect of the work accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ when He came in the flesh to redeem His people from the bondage of sin and death, to make them a purchased possession with a most glorious inheritance.

In the opening verse of the first chapter we read there was a famine in the land. This was Canaan, the land when the Children of Israel came in to possess it which was flowing with milk and honey. Here was one of the judgments God had threatened to bring upon this people before they entered, should they forsake Him and His law.

“And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your

heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: and your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits” (Leviticus xxvi. 18-20).

How well He knew their hearts, as indeed He knows ours.

During the period covered by the Book of Judges how many times the nation as a whole, except for a faithful few, turned away from the God Who had so faithfully watched over them and blessed them. So He punished them by allowing the heathen tribes they had allowed to remain around them to over-run their land, and reduce them for a time to become terror-stricken serfs. For a total period of 93 years God withdrew Himself from His rebellious people, they became “lo-ammi”, not my people, as indeed they are today, and have been for nearly two thousand years.

Here, “a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the land of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons” (Ruth i. 1). Bethlehem, which signifies the “House of Bread” had none! A fruitful land was turned into barrenness to correct and restrain the materialism, wantonness, idolatry and unbelief among the nation God had made His own.

“And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there” (i. 2).

Elimelech meaning “my God is King”, was a splendid name to bear during the dark days of the Book of Judges, when there was no king in Israel. It balances the end of the Book of Ruth, where in the last verse we read of David, the first king of God’s choice.

Naomi means sweetness, and from the record, as we shall see, that was exactly what she must have been.

The two sons were most probably the reason for the move, for there must have been many families similarly stricken by the famine, yet who remained in Bethlehem and managed to live through it somehow. The names of both sons indicate that they were very delicate, for Mahlon means “sickly”, and Chilion “pining”, one commentator says “consumption”. They were evidently physically ailing, and there could not have been any dearth of famine in Moab. This temporary move could well have been done, therefore, for the sake of the boys’ health. Whether it was the right thing to do is another question. Some would doubt this, especially as we find they stayed on for some considerable time in this country. Then the husband Elimelech died.

“And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years” (i. 3, 4).

Who were the Moabites? They were the descendants of Moab, who was the son of Lot and his elder daughter. Despite their sinful origin, the Lord did not forbid inter-marriage with the Moabites as He did with the nations of Canaan. He does however lay down instructions regarding children of such a marriage, where the father was a Moabite and the mother a Jewess.

So Mahlon and Chilion marry two local girls, Orpah and Ruth, Ruth signifying “beauty” and Orpah a “hind or fawn”.

Then both young men are stricken and die. In both cases the marriages were childless, and now the three widows were faced with a serious problem. The inheritance of Elimelech which passed on to Mahlon and Chilion would die too, a dire tragedy to every family of Israel.

Naomi now takes the decision to return to her own land. This would involve hardship, and possibly danger, but the famine was over, and doubtless she felt alone in a foreign country. Her kith and kin were in Israel, and that was the obvious place for her to go.

“Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her, and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah” (i. 6, 7).

A number of commentators point out that the plight of Naomi was God’s judgment on her for being the one mainly responsible for her husband emigrating from Bethlehem during the famine. On the other hand it could have been the leading of the Lord in view of what happened later.

Evidently they all three started the journey together, both daughters-in-law clearly ready to go all the way, and not merely to escort Naomi a short distance. She had won their deep affection, and there was no question of either staying behind. Naomi must have been a most loveable character, for it is most evident that both girls were completely devoted to her. Unselfishness and courage were two traits she must have possessed in plenty, and above all complete trust in the Lord. These things are revealed in the narrative.

“And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people” (i. 8-10).

What a help those two young women would have been to Naomi on the long trek back to Judah, and yet she now urged them to leave her and return to their own homes. How noble was her complete unselfishness and self denial. She dismisses them both with generous commendation and her blessing. Her faith had remained firm and unswerving to the Lord despite the long period of absence from her people. In her twofold blessing she twice used the sacred name of Jehovah.

Her words thus far however, are insufficient to shake the affectionate love and resolve of either of the two girls. Who would carry the few belongings and keep and protect her along the way? “Surely we will return with thee unto thy people”.

“And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me” (i. 11-13).

In a final effort to really prove them, Naomi now painted the loneliness of her lot. She had no more sons, and was not likely to have any. This may seem a strange argument in our ears, but it is not far-fetched at all in the light of the law of Moses concerning the perpetuation of a family’s inheritance in Israel. We remember how the Sadducees in Matt. xxii. 23-33, who did not believe in the resurrection as the Pharisees did, came to the Lord in an effort to trap Him and they quoted the passage in Deut. xxv. 5-10 where the Lord’s command concerning this matter is clearly written. Moses said, “If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother”.

No.2. i. 14 - ii. 23.
pp. 213 - 220

We see therefore the reason for Naomi’s words to her daughters-in-law. They were still young, and would be able to find husbands for themselves from among their own people. Why emigrate to a foreign land where they knew no one, and leave their own kith and kin, especially in view of the fact that Naomi said “the hand of the Lord is gone out against me”.

“And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her” (i. 14).

Who can blame Orpah in returning home to her mother and family? Having considered Naomi’s arguments and thinking of her own future, there was logically only one course of action to take. The hardships of the journey contrasted with the comforts of her father’s home, also living among foreigners with strange customs and ways. Her love for her mother-in-law was not strong enough to enable her to make this supreme sacrifice. Warmly attached to this gracious woman whom she respected and admired so much, and who had given her so much kindness and love during her married life, she could *not* go all the way. Her heart and her loyalties were divided. In those days the lot of an unmarried woman, or a widow with no children, was such that marriage with almost anyone however unsuitable was preferable. Undoubtedly the best course for Orpah was to stay. Naomi must make her own way back as best she could. So Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and returned to her home. She had allowed herself to be persuaded and yielded her heart to follow the easier, less dangerous, but more selfish way back. What a contrast now we find in the decision of the other daughter-in-law, Ruth. Naomi, now armed with a fresh argument, urged Ruth to follow her sister-in-law’s example.

“And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (i. 15-17).

These simple words of Ruth have come down the centuries and express the love for one person to another that has never been excelled. They are without peer in any language. Love is a word that has become cheapened and clouded in our day. The love here revealed is pure, noble and inspired. It is utterly sincere because it comes from devotion. The beauty of Ruth’s words will move the heart so long as the world endures. They are comparable with the lowly acts of love which the Saviour said should be remembered wheresoever the gospel was preached.

All the relationships of life demand faith and love, patience, forbearance, good sense, good temper, good taste and good feeling. Yet perhaps above all the other relationships of life that of a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law demands all those gifts and graces. Every language I believe has its own stock of cruel proverbs and satires that lampoon the mother-in-law. Naomi and Ruth redeem that relationship, and the beauty in the nature of the one brought out and expanded the beauty in the nature of the other. This alone is the love that is Christ-like, for when we turn to Eph. v. 2 we shall see that the love of Christ was that He gave His life, His all for sinful mankind. In the same way Ruth gave up everything she held dear in her own country. Her kith and kin, her home, her friends, her all, to go out into the unknown with her mother-in-law. She held nothing back and willingly went all the way, clinching her resolution with a solemn oath that revealed the intensity of her feeling, and the irrevocability of her decision. She pledged herself always to remain at Naomi’s side till death parted them. She pledged herself in the name of the God of Israel, Jehovah, the one true God, Whom Ruth had come to know and believe in because of the teaching and manner of life of Naomi. “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”.

It was the shining life of this woman that converted the Moabitess from darkness and the ignorance of idol worship and idolatry in which she had been brought up. We should not be far wrong in tracing a great part of Ruth’s courage, devotion, extraordinary loyalty and exquisite love not so much to what Naomi said, but what she did. Her manner of life, the way she lived, her walk and witness, age and experience, have their responsibilities, and she used both wisely and well and so there grew a bond between these two that caused Ruth to put into words the deep feelings of her heart. “Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.”.

So Naomi yields. After so solemn a protestation of love, she can urge no more.

“When she saw that she (Ruth) was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her” (i. 18).

How does our love for the Lord Jesus Christ compare to the love of Ruth for Naomi? Are we willing to sacrifice anything for Him? Are we willing to go all the way?

We have considered together the Book of Ruth as a whole and the opening chapter. How that in this very lovely story the hero Boaz reveals to us in type that most important aspect of the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Children—our Kinsman-Redeemer. The importance of this little Book is also that it supplies an essential link in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of David.

Also that it opens up to us that wonderful aspect of redemption which is not that of forgiveness, i.e. setting free from bondage, but the possession of an inheritance and that inheritance is to be enjoyed for eternity.

The journey that Naomi and Ruth made from the land of Moab to Bethlehem in Judah was a long and toilsome one and not free from danger. Two rivers had to be crossed, the Arnon and the Jordan. The distance of actual journeying cannot be less than 50 miles. A weary haul needing tremendous resolution and courage on the part of both women.

At last tired out and travel stained, they arrived at their destination. Naomi must have been well known in Bethlehem before leaving for Moab, for we read there was no small stir among the local inhabitants, when it became known she had returned. The strain of the journey must have greatly taxed her strength, and added to that the grief she had sustained by the loss of both husband and sons had doubtless made her look aged and worn in appearance. Despite these things and after many years of absence, many in Bethlehem recognized her when at last she arrived back in her native town. The women would have enquired as to how she had fare in far off Moab? How poignant are the words she used in her reply:

“And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” (i. 20-21).

Here is no passionate outburst against the providence of God, but a calm reasoned explanation of the facts. She had gone out with husband and sons, and come back having left them buried in a foreign land. Yet there was no hysterical railing against the hand of the Lord, on the contrary, we find a gentle acceptance of this judgment. She went out a wife and a mother and returned a widow with no sons. Yet despite this we read of no murmuring or complaints, but a calm resignation to the will of God. The actual title Naomi used was “Shaddai”, our translation, “the Almighty”. This is not the title of Creator, which is “Elohim”, but His title as the “Giver”, the all-bountiful One. The One Who supplies all the needs of His children, the God of grace. It was first used in Gen.xvii.1 where it is put to show Abraham that He Who called him out to walk alone before Him could supply all his need. Call me not Naomi ‘sweetness’, call me Mara ‘bitterness’; see the play upon the word here—“for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me”. She said in effect—“It is He Who gives, it is He Who takes back”. This word ‘mara’ is vividly brought before us in Exod. xv. The Lord had brought His people out

from the bondage of Egypt. He had destroyed the army that Pharaoh had sent after them to fetch them back. Yet after this miraculous delivery, and after only three days in the wilderness without water, they reached the water-hole at Marah only to find the water not fit to drink because it was bitter. Immediately they murmured against Moses. Why have you brought us out? To die in this wilderness? They threatened his life and to return to their slavery. The Lord was testing their trust in Him. He was proving their faith. There is an important lesson here for us all. It is that unless our faith is tested, it will never be strong. Unless it knows the winds of adversity, it will never weather the onslaught of Satan to dislodge it from our hearts.

In this time of testing Naomi's faith remained unshaken, nay strengthened even as we shall see from the events that follow:

“So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest” (i. 22).

The barley harvest came before the wheat. This would be the time of the Passover, about the end of April.

Chapter ii.

We now take up the great theme of the Kinsman-Redeemer as it is unfolded in the central section of this little Book. From ii. 1 - iv. 14, we have the teaching of Scripture concerning this important office:

“And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz” (ii. 1).

Boaz was the grandson of Nahshon, who was prince of the tribe of Judah during the wanderings in the wilderness. He was the son of Salmon and Rahab of Jericho, the younger son, as we know he had an elder brother. He carried might in his name for the meaning of Boaz is “in him is strength”. Evidently he was a wealthy man; and it is an interesting side-light on the character of Naomi, that no effort was made by her to contact this rich relation on her return to Bethlehem. Despite her distress, she would not be burdensome nor expect any help from other members of her family.

“And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter” (ii. 2).

The character of Ruth comes out strongly here. She does not hesitate to face the hard work necessary both for her mother-in-law and herself nor is she too proud to condescend to a work which might perhaps seem humiliating. Neither does she hanker after her old home in the land of Moab and the plenty there. In order to keep from starving, she willingly assumed the role of bread-winner. She revealed the virtues of energy, honesty of purpose and true loyalty which evidently were inherent in her nature.

Doubtless Naomi would have explained to Ruth away back in Moab of the wonderful provision the God of Israel had made for those who were poor and needy in the land of Canaan. She would have told her of the loving concern and the tender mercy as well as the mighty power of the One Who led her people out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into the promised land. She would have told her the words recorded in Lev.xix.9,10 and in chapter xxiii. 22, and in Deut. xxiv. 19.

There was indeed in Israel a way for widows and foreigners to obtain bread.

“And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech” (ii. 3).

“Her hap was”, “it happened that”. No instructions were given her by Naomi. She did not know whose field it was to which she went. She had no reason for going to that particular farm more than any other. It was by chance she chose the one she did to all intents and purposes. Yet a clear shaping of her course was undertaken for her by unseen Hands. Her steps were divinely guided so that God’s purposes should be fulfilled.

So it was that Ruth came to glean in the field that belonged to Boaz who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

“And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee” (ii. 4).

Harvest time is always a busy time on the farm, many hands must then be at work. Boaz who had great wealth and therefore much land, must have employed a great number of labourers. The greetings between master and men showed there was much good feeling between the two. There was true courtesy and friendliness, and Boaz is surely presented to us as a man of the highest integrity, who is held in high regard by those who worked for him.

“Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house” (ii. 5-7).

The servant that was set over the reapers, the steward, or overseer, or as we should say the foreman, gave to Boaz a detailed account of who Ruth was. That she was a foreigner from Moab, with family connections to Boaz himself. That she was modest and had not commenced to glean until she had obtained leave. That she was very industrious and worked hard. This honest report, and doubtless the fact that Ruth was a very beautiful young woman, stirred Boaz to speak most kindly to her.

“Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn” (ii. 8-9).

This was a handsome offer indeed, and Ruth was overwhelmed at his generosity to her.

“Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not therefore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left” (ii. 10-14).

Boaz is revealed here as a man of God. He was not only rich in worldly possessions, he was rich in faith. This is shown by his words commending her to the Lord: “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust, or flee for refuge”. This implies a genuine expression of admiration for the generous courage and loyalty shown by Ruth in being willing to leave her people and bring Naomi safely home. Also to be willing to toil in the hot sun all day to provide for her. He also invited her to join his work force for lunch, which apparently he provided. Not only that, but he took a special interest in her by serving her himself. This showed his more than passing interest, but Ruth, immediately she had finished the meal, left to get on with her work. She took no advantage of his favour but quietly slipped away, considerably heartened no doubt by the unexpected kindness of the great man.

“And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed” (ii. 15-18).

Boaz makes sure Ruth takes back plenty of barley. An ephah is the equivalent of just under our English bushel, so she would have gleaned about 20 lbs of grain after it had been beaten out. Quite a weight for her to carry. We can imagine Naomi’s amazement when she saw the result of Ruth’s day.

“And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man’s name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law" (ii. 19-23).

Ruth gives an account of the events of her day, and doubtless with quiet satisfaction of the especial attention the great man Boaz had paid to her. We can only wonder at Naomi's feelings when she heard that Ruth had, quite by chance, happened to have asked to glean in one of the fields belonging to her husband's nearest relative. Boaz must have been considerably younger than Elimelech, having been born to his parents very late in their lives.

As Naomi puts it "one of our next kinsman", and the margin reads "one that hath right to redeem". Here is the word "GOEL" or "Kinsman-Redeemer" which so beautifully illustrates the work of Christ as our Redeemer. It also explains the reason why it was necessary for God to take upon Himself the form of a man, i.e. flesh and blood, in order to make salvation possible for the sinful human race. Here in this tiny Book of Ruth, the Moabitess, we find the type revealed of the One Who was to come: God our Saviour.

The "Kinsman-Redeemer" played an important part in the Hebrew economy. It is referred to in Lev. xxv. 23-28. Here we find the first statement of the law concerning the redemption of land, i.e. an inheritance. Under the law of Moses it was not possible for a man to sell the land that formed part of his true possession "in perpetuity". In every transaction with regard to the sale of land it was compulsory to grant a redemption. If a man had sold away any part of his inheritance on account of poverty or debt, his "next of kin" had the right to redeem it. In addition to this a special provision was made for the safe-guarding of the inheritance to the rightful family, which is set out in Deut.xxv.5-10.

All this is implied in Naomi's words "The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next of kin". "One who has the right to redeem".

When Naomi heard that Boaz had instructed Ruth to continue to glean in his fields to the end of the barley and the wheat harvesting, and not to go anywhere else, she realized that Boaz was very much more than a little interested in her daughter-in-law.

The position was that Elimelech when he had taken his family into the land of Moab, had sold his possessions. The only way to get this inheritance back was by another member of the family being willing to buy it back from the person who had bought it, and at the same time be willing and able to take Ruth for his wife.

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Chapter iii.

“Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?” (iii. 1).

When we compare this verse with verse 9 of chapter i., “The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband”, we understand that Naomi had Ruth’s future provision, and the preserving of her family name in Israel, very much in her mind.

She felt it her duty to endeavour to find a home for her daughter-in-law who had given up so much on her account, and who now was so lovingly providing for her. In the gracious generosity of Boaz towards Ruth, she saw the leading of the Lord, so she says in verse 2, “Is not Boaz of our kindred?”. She would be aware that he was not the nearest of her husband’s kin, but she knew that if he so desired he could become so.

“And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshing floor. Wash thyself therefore and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do” (iii. 2-5).

It was the custom at threshing time for the owner to remain all night on the threshing floor until the harvest was safely garnered. It was a time for rejoicing. So Naomi instructs Ruth how to act.

To our ears her plan seems, to say the least highly suspect. Judged by some standards of morality it appears to us offensive. However we know that both Naomi and Ruth were virtuous women who believed sincerely in Jehovah and observed His law most carefully. We also know that Boaz was a man of faith and fine character. Therefore Naomi’s plan could not in any way have been of evil intent. Rachel’s plan for Jacob was one of deception, but not this one. The plan was without doubt watered by much prayer that the over-ruling of the hand of the Lord would continue, and receive His blessing.

The words in verse 4 “uncover his feet”, “lift up the cover over his feet”, these men would simply lie down on the threshing floor with their clothes on, their feet covered with a mantle or coat.

Ruth’s obedience is an intelligent obedience. She knew in what relation Boaz stood to her family, and the responsibilities attached to that relationship. It was with quiet confidence that she risked the dangers involved.

“And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman” (iii. 6-9).

In verse 8 for ‘afraid’, the word is “startled”, and in verse 9 ‘skirt’ should be translated “wing”, as in chapter ii. 12, implying his protective care, in view of the fact that he was her kinsman-redeemer! Ruth is not trying to seduce Boaz. He would understand that she was asking him to redeem Elimelech’s inheritance, the land that had become lost. Also, as that would mean his marrying her in order to save the name of the dead man from being blotted out in Israel, that she would be willing to keep her part of the transaction.

How many times in Scripture do we read of the covering protection of the wings of the Lord. In Matt. xxiii., the Lord Jesus Christ denounces the unbelief and the hostility of the religious leaders of His time. He upbraids them for their omission from and their adding to the Word of God, their intentional misinterpretation as to His worship. He whips them with His words for their infidelity, their self-exhortation, their hypocrisy, and denounces them as a generation of vipers, children of them that killed the prophets, closing His words to them in verses 37-39.

“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!” (Matt. xxiii. 37).

David loved to sing of the safety and protection of the divine wings. Psa. xvii. 8, “Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings”. Psa. xxxvi. 7, “How excellent is Thy loving kindness O God. Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings”. Psa. lvii. 1, when he fled from Saul to the cave, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me. For my soul trusteth in Thee; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast”. Psa. lxi. 1-4, “I will trust in the covert of Thy wings”.

What a wonderful thing it is that you and I today can echo the words of David and find refuge, aye, and courage and strength beneath the shelter of those wings. Whenever we have doubts or fears; whenever we have failed; whenever we are depressed or overwhelmed, what a source of strength it is to be able to shelter beneath His wings.

Isaiah’s words in chapter xl. leap to our mind in this connection:

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. xl. 28-31).

“And he said, Who art Thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” (Ruth iii. 9-11).

This answer of Boaz to Ruth’s request is in itself sufficient proof of the view he took of her conduct, and of the integrity of his own. Naomi had perceived aright, his feelings of respect and admiration had grown into a sincere and genuine affection, but it could well have been that because of the difference in their ages, he would never have declared his love. His words show how closely he had been watching her, and he warmly commends her for the way she had behaved during the harvesting. Evidently Boaz had been keenly interested in finding out all he could about Ruth. Everyone who knew her had a good word to say about her. Only recently arrived in Bethlehem as a foreigner, she would be closely watched, yet she was known as a virtuous woman. This gives us quite clearly the sort of person Ruth was. Boaz knowing the strength of her character, her willingness to toil in the heat and the sun, the sweetness of her disposition, and the courage and loyalty of her heart, was quite willing to perform the kinsman-redeemer’s part: “I will do to thee all that thou requirest”.

“And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman’s part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning” (iii. 12-13).

There was one difficulty however relating to his elder brother. “There is a kinsman that is nearer than I”. According to the Law, the redemption of land in Israel, and the raising up of children, had to be done by the eldest son in the family. Redemption could only be effected by the next of kin. However Boaz probably knew perfectly well that the question of marrying a Moabite woman would be a stumbling block in his brother’s way. He therefore promises to perform the office of the kinsman-redeemer himself should his brother fail to do so.

So in the early morning Ruth returns to Naomi, taking with her a generous supply of grain. Needless to say Naomi is anxious to know how she had got on. Ruth tells her, and is obviously not a little anxious as to how the matter will be settled. Naomi comforts her with the words in verse 18:

“Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.”

How wise this mother-in-law is and how well she knows the human heart. Boaz was in love and therefore would brook no delay. That very day Ruth would have the answer.

Chapter iv.

“Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down” (iv. 1).

The gate of a city was the meeting place where the councilors sat and where all public transactions were carried out. We read in Job xxix. 7-9:

“When to the city’s gate I made my way, and in the open place prepared my seat; the young men saw me, and withdrew themselves; yea, all the elders (or aldermen) would rise up, and stand. The rulers, too, from talking would refrain, and lay their hand, for silence, on their mouth” (see the Companion Bible).

That was Job’s exalted position among the alderman and princes of the city before his affliction.

Boaz too without doubt would hold an important position among the councilors of Bethlehem, for he was a mighty man of wealth, and grandson to Nahshon, a former prince of Judah.

Boaz knew where he would find his brother. We do not read of this brother’s name, but he had the opportunity of being able to redeem Elimelech’s inheritance, and although he did not know it, to be knit into the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Boaz contacted his brother at this meeting place, and obtained the services of ten other councilors to act as witnesses in order to make the transaction legal. In Lev. xxv. and Deut. xxv. 5-10 there is clearly set out God’s law given to Moses before the nation entered Canaan concerning the selling of land in Israel:

“If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother’s wife, then let his brother’s wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband’s brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband’s brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother’s wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother’s house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed” (Deut. xxv. 5-10).

Each family in each of the tribes were given a portion of land, and the law commanded that no man could sell that possession in perpetuity (see Lev. xxv. 8-19, 23-28). In the year of Jubile, every fiftieth year, all land that had been sold reverted back to the original owner. Land however could be redeemed by the kinsman-redeemer at any time.

Now Naomi was not thinking so much of the land she had lost, as for the happiness and future security of her daughter-in-law, who had done, and was doing so much for her. She recognized the splendid match that Ruth would make if Boaz would marry her.

Now things were really moving. Boaz was anxious to get the matter settled immediately.

“And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech’s: and I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it” (iv. 3-4).

The present tense in verse 3 suggests that the sale is taking place at that time, that Naomi was selling the land perhaps in order to obtain money to live on. It seems more logical to suggest that Elimelech had disposed of his land before he took his family away to Moab during the famine. Over ten years had gone by before Naomi came back. Had it not been sold imagine the condition of it, if it had been left neglected all that time. Boaz is saying “the portion of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech and was sold, it must now be redeemed because Naomi had returned to Bethlehem”. The word ‘advertise’ in verse 4 rings strangely in our ears, the literal translation reads “I will reveal in your ear”. The word is stronger than merely ‘to tell’, “bring to your notice” perhaps.

The elder brother was the next of kin, the kinsman-redeemer, and as such he was the one who had the right to redeem the inheritance. Therefore he had to be given the opportunity. He immediately agrees to do so. It would be a first-class investment. He had plenty of men to clear the land and prune the vines and olives. Nothing would suit him better.

“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance” (iv. 5).

Here was the problem. When the person who had bought the land from Elimelech had been paid off, it would be necessary to meet Naomi’s daughter-in-law’s claim on the inheritance. She as the widow of Elimelech’s son Mahlon must be married so that a son might be born to carry on the dead man’s name in Israel.

“And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it” (iv. 6).

What did he mean “lest I mar my inheritance”? In the three other occurrences where this word is used, the sense is “to corrupt”. Josephus explains by saying that he already had a wife and feared the discord that may arise should he take a woman of Moab into his household. On the other hand the redemption of the land would involve withdrawing money from the kinsman’s own estate, but the possession thus acquired would not belong to him or his present family, but to Ruth’s son, should she have one. In the eyes of the law the son of Mahlon would inherit the land. It would therefore be like mortgaging

one's own estate for the benefit of another. So the brother relinquishes all claim as the next of kin with the words "redeem thou my right to thyself".

Boaz and his elder brother then follow a custom that was even then ancient in Israel, whenever the redemption of land was to be confirmed. "A man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbour, and this was a testimony in Israel." (God gave this command to Moses in Deut. xxv. 9). To place one's shoe upon anything was a symbol of possession. To take off one's shoe and pass it to another was a symbol of transference, of transferred authority. The idea behind the act is that the man resigns the right of walking on the land as master, in favour of him to whom he gives the shoe.

"Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: and let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman" (iv. 8-12).

So Boaz swears to undertake the part of kinsman-redeemer and to purchase Ruth to be his wife, and to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. So Boaz married Ruth, and fulfilled the obligation required by the law by redeeming the land, the inheritance owned by her family.

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him" (iv. 13-15).

In course of time a son was born, given Ruth in accordance with the plan and purpose of God. His hand was making sure of this union. For this son was to take his place in the lineage of David, and so of David's great Son. The women congratulated *Naomi* because it was the family of her husband that was being sustained and built up in Israel. How handsomely they speak of Ruth—recalling the courage, loyalty, faithfulness and love shown by her when she left her own people and brought Naomi safely home from Moab. Recalling also the unselfish way she had worked and provided for her aged mother-in-law ". . . . who loveth thee, and is better to thee than seven sons". Here is fulsome praise indeed for the devotion and love displayed by Ruth. She and Rahab, Gentiles both, bravely take their places among the distinguished line of Jewish women chosen by God through whom should come His promised Messiah.

"And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse into it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (iv. 16-17).

It was the women who chose the name of the baby boy—they called him “Obed”—the meaning of which is “serving” or “a servant”. The Prince of Wales has a motto which has a similar meaning, “Ich Dien”—I serve. The most wonderful thing this world has to offer is the coming of the desire in our hearts to serve our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This desire does not come until we realize something of the love of God, Who in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself, an offering for sin, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

Only when we understand a little of the cost of that sacrifice, and that it vitally affects us, does the desire to serve Him become the burden of our heart, our mind, our will.

So when faith in His faithfulness, and belief in His Work lead us to acknowledge Him as our Saviour, the Holy Spirit seals us as a child of God, and the desire to serve Him is born. The Lord Jesus Christ performed the lowly and menial task of washing the disciples feet. This act of service was to be something they would remember with awe when He ascended up out of their sight. It is a mighty good thing for us to remember, and to continually reflect upon, the condescension of the almighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Just as the Gospel of Matthew presents the Lord Jesus Christ as King, whose symbol is the Lion, Luke presents Him as the Man, John as God and Mark presents Him as the Servant. The lion, the man, the eagle and the ox were the four faces of the four “living creatures” of Ezek. i., the cherubim of Gen. iii., which speaks to us of paradise lost, and in the Book of Revelation where they speak of paradise regained.

There are four other Obeds mentioned in Scripture. The father of Jehu was one. Another was one of David’s valiant men. Another was son of Shemaiah, a Kohathite, a gate keeper of the Tabernacle in the days of David. Another was the father of Ahaziah, a captain, who helped Jehoiada the priest to make Joash king of Judah. All were good men who were loyal servants of God and the people.

Obed the son of Ruth and Boaz takes his place as the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.

He was indeed fortunate, for he was without doubt brought up in the fear of the Lord and in a family atmosphere of love and understanding.

“Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David” (iv. 18-22).

Pharez was the son of Judah and Tamar. Amminadab was a name of note. It was his daughter Elisheba who became the wife of Aaron and the mother of Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. So this delightful Book links up the days of the Judges to the times of Samuel. It is an interlude where faith and love shine out in the midst of failure and apostasy. Surely here the God of Israel points to the faith of the young woman from

Moab—in much the same way as when in the flesh He drew attention to the faith of the centurion. That Roman officer came to the Lord and appealed for His help to heal his servant who had been afflicted by paralysis. The Lord offered to go and heal him, but the centurion replied that he was not a fit person for the Lord to enter his house. He could not have meant socially, so could this refer to his manner of life? Did this foreigner recognize in the Healer the Son of the One True God? We read that the Lord marveled, and said to those who followed Him, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Matt. viii. 10).

So the Book of Ruth ends with the generations from Pharez to David. We have found in its pages the incredible fact that God would have to take upon Himself flesh and blood in order to redeem mankind. There was no other way for either Jew or Gentile to enter into possession of their inheritance. We know that He came as our Kinsman-Redeemer, laid down His Life, rose from the dead, ascended, and is now seated in the glory. May the faithfulness of Ruth be an inspiration to each one of us in these days when so many seem to do that which is right in their own eyes.

“. . . . the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in Whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. i. 12-14).

Christian Attitudes

No.7. Prayerfulness.

pp. 13 - 15

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. iv. 2).

Stuart Allen, in the Editorial of the May 1981 issue of the Berean Expositor quoted this text and point out that intercession was a vital part of Paul’s ministry. Several times Paul writes that he prayed “without ceasing” for others. The Editorial continues:

“When one thinks of the immense burden he carried, can it be that he is exaggerating? No, for he had learned that prayer is the lifting up of the mind through Christ to the Father and this can be done at any time and in all circumstances.”

In other words, while it is good to set aside time for prayer, we can only pray continually if we have the attitude of mind that lifts itself up to God in prayer at all times.

Nehemiah was the king’s cupbearer. He stood before the king, took up the wine and gave it to him. But he was sad and the king noticed it. When the king asked, “Why is thy countenance sad, seeing that thou art not sick?” Nehemiah was afraid (Neh. ii. 2). He told the king of the desolation of the city of Jerusalem and the king replied “For what dost thou make request?”. And we read, “So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king” (Neh. ii. 4, 5). There was no time to kneel down and pray. Only a moment in which to lift up the mind to God in prayer and then to reply to the king. This is an excellent example of the attitude of mind which we should endeavour to maintain.

There are several words for prayer conveying different aspects.

“I will exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (I Tim. ii. 1).

The word for supplication indicates a beseeching prayer, while prayer means the pouring out of prayer. Intercession is when we pray for others and intercede for them.

In several passages we find that prayer and supplications are linked:

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts i. 14).

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me” (Eph. vi. 18, 19).

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. iv. 6).

While it is important that we should pray (or intercede) for one another, even as Paul prayed for the saints (and asked them to pray for him) we often feel our inadequacy. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom. viii. 26). Let us be comforted by the fact that the Spirit makes intercession for us (Rom. viii. 26, 27). Furthermore, Romans viii. 34 tells us that the risen Christ also makes intercession for us.

In the very early issues of Joints and Bands (numbers 2-17) there are brief articles by Stuart Allen on prayer which are worthy of reprinting. The following points have been taken from those articles:

“Continue in prayer” means to persevere, to concentrate, and regard prayer as a matter of urgency.

“Epaphras labouring fervently for you in prayers” (Col. iv. 12). The intense prayers of Epaphras are indicated by the literal translation of ‘labouring fervently’—which is ‘agonizing’. He agonized in prayer.

The word to ‘watch’ means to be on the alert, to refrain from sleep. The reverse of watching is given in Acts xii. 5-16 where we read of Peter being in prison and prayer was made without ceasing for him. But when he was released from prison and knocked at the door, he had to wait because they did not believe that their prayers had been answered.

When should we pray? Pray without ceasing! Be in constant communion with the Lord under all circumstances. Stuart Allen writes:

“Effective prayer puts God first, others second, self last.”
“Effective prayer is based on the Word of God.”

When David prayed to the Lord, after he was told that Solomon would build the house of the Lord, and that the house of David would be established for ever, David prayed “Do as thou hast said” (II Sam. vii. 25). As David based his prayer on the promise he had received of the Lord, so let us base our prayers on the promises that the Lord has made to us and pray with thanksgiving.

Our Lord Jesus Christ often prayed to His Father and we have many examples of His prayers. He prayed “Thy will be done”. As we pray, may we always pray, not that we should have our own way, but that the will of the Lord may be done.

Paul also is an example for us as he prayed and submitted his life to the will of the Lord. May we ever rejoice that we have access to the Father:

“For through Him we have both access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. ii. 18).
“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John xiv. 6).

So it is very important that one of our Christian attitudes should be prayerfulness. How often we fail in this! Let us remember that prayer is an essential part of our spiritual life. May we lift up our hearts and minds to God in prayer and realize His presence with us throughout the day.

“Continue (as a matter of urgency) in prayer and watch (be on the alert) in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. iv. 2).

No.8. Confidence. **pp. 30 - 32**

“In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence” (Prov. xiv. 26).

Some people by nature are shy, timid, reserved and perhaps apprehensive. Others are strong characters and have self confidence. Those who are timid need words of encouragement, while those who are self assured need to consider the basis of their confidence, remembering that it is easy for a strong character to become proud.

In the O.T. references to the faint hearted indicate that they are of little use when the enemy must be faced:

“And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart” (Deut. xx. 8).

Gideon was appointed by God to deliver Israel but his army was too large, lest Israel should say “Mine own hand saved me”. So Gideon told those who were fearful and afraid to return home, and twenty-two thousand left the field, leaving ten thousand. But God said that even these were too many (Judges vii. 1-7).

When Joshua was appointed to lead Israel, the Lord spoke words of encouragement:--

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Josh. i. 9).

Paul wrote to Timothy “Fight the good fight of faith” (I Tim. vi. 12) and he urged him to be strong:

“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. ii. 1).

Israel had to fight their enemies, but we are engaged in a different kind of warfare. It is a spiritual conflict. For us, we have to run the race that is set out before us. We need confidence; we need strength, but not a confidence that arises from self esteem. Our source of strength must be found through Christ:

“and such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (II.Cor.iii.4,5).

There are two references in Proverbs to confidence:--

“For the Lord shall be thy confidence” (Prov. iii. 26).

“The fear of the Lord is strong confidence” (Prov. xiv. 26).

But there is also a word of warning:--

“confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint” (Prov. xxv. 19).

If we are to be confident, our trust must be placed in the Lord Who is worthy of our confidence.

Paul could have had a confidence based on his Jewish birth and faith, but he rejected this:

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. iii. 3).

He counted as loss for Christ all those claims he had in the flesh, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, that he might gain Christ (Phil. iii. 7, 8).

In his daily life, he relied on the strength that he received from God:--

“. . . . all men forsook me notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me” (II Tim. iv. 16, 17).

Timothy was a faithful man, but it seems that he needed some words of encouragement. So we find in the letters that Paul wrote to him several messages to urge him onward in his life and ministry. Here are some of those words of exhortation:--

“Let no man despise thy youth” (I Tim. iv. 12).

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee” (I Tim. iv. 14).

“Stir up the gift of God” (II Tim. i. 6).

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. i. 7).

“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. ii. 1).

So if any are by nature timid and at times suffer from depression, or any kind of fear, consider the advice given to Timothy. God has not given us the spirit of fear, but may we be confident since we have received the gift of grace that is in Christ Jesus. His strength is sufficient for our every need.

Let us rejoice in the wonderful privilege we have which enables us to approach the Father, for we have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. ii. 18).

“In Whom (Christ Jesus our Lord) we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you” (Eph. iii. 12, 13).

There are several passages in Philippians that speak of confidence and trust, so in conclusion, let us remember these words:--

“Be confident of this very thing, that He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it (complete it) until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. i. 6).

If we are timid, let us not be faint-hearted. Let us rely on the strength that the Lord Jesus Christ will give us, for our sufficiency is in Him. We may feel inadequate as we try to run the race and fight the good fight of faith. But may we remember that He has begun the good work in our hearts, and we rely on His grace. That good work which He initiated will be completed by Him. So then let us be of good courage, let us have confidence, not in ourselves, but in Him.

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. vi. 10).

No.9. Discrimination or Discernment.

pp. 51 - 53

“That ye may approve things that are excellent” (Phil. i. 10).

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said to him “Ask what I shall give thee”. His answer is given in I Kings iii. 6-9. Verse 9 reads:

“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”

God approved of this reply and gave Solomon a wise and understanding heart.

Although we do not have to shoulder responsibility as great as Solomon, each one of us needs an understanding heart, so that we can discern between good and bad. If our lives are to be in line with God’s will, we need guidance and wisdom. And if we are to know the deeper things of God, and His will and purpose for us, to know the hope of His calling, we need the leading of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of wisdom.

In order to make the right choice between good and bad, and to understand deeper things that God will reveal to us, we must learn how to test or try all things.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. v. 21).

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. xii. 2).

Not only do we need to test or prove all things, we also need to test ourselves:

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (II Cor. xiii. 5).

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” (Gal. vi. 2-4).

In Ephesians we read about the worthy walk:

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; (for the fruit of the Spirit [or light] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Eph. v. 8-10).

So then our Christian attitude should be to prove or test all things, so that we can choose what is good, and what is acceptable to the Lord in our daily lives.

It is right that we should learn what is good, but we read in Hebrews about some things which are better. Here are some examples:--

“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb. vii. 19).

“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Heb. vii. 22).

“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Heb. ix. 23).

“. . . . took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb. x. 34).

“. . . . others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb. xi. 35).

To appreciate the values of spiritual things, we need more than an agile brain. The natural man may be clever, but it is only by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that we can assess spiritual things, for they are spiritually discerned:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. ii. 12-14).

The need for the wisdom that we receive from God is emphasized in the prayer that Paul prayed for the Ephesians, so let us refer to Eph. i. 16-23. We will only quote verses 17-19 to save space:--

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power”.

So if we are to understand what is the hope of His calling, we need enlightenment, we need the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Writing to the Philippians, Paul told them of his prayer that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in judgment (intelligence) “that ye may approve things that are excellent” (Phil. i. 10). The margin gives the translation “that ye may try the things that differ”. In Ephesians we read that we are raised up together and “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. ii. 6).

As we try the things that differ and so approve things that are excellent, we see that we have a hope at the right hand of God where Christ sits (Col. iii. 1-4).

No.10. Submission.
pp. 86 - 88

“For even Christ pleased not Himself” (Rom. xv. 3).

There is a Sunday School prayer that begins:

“Lord Jesus, be Thou with us now
as at Thy feet we humbly bow,
And when we sing and when we pray
Help us to *mean* the words we say”.

In the hymn “Thy way not mine, O Lord” there are prayers such as “Choose out the path for me. Smooth let it be or rough” and “Take Thou my cup and it with joy or sorrow fill”. But when we sing these words, do we really *mean* them?

So when we think of submission, and submission to the will of the Lord, we ask whether we are giving an intellectual assent, without really meaning that we are willing to submit ourselves to God’s will. Would it be true to say that we make mental reservations when we say “Thy will be done”?

The Greek word *hypotasso* is translated in various ways, such as to submit, be subject to, be in subject to, be in subjection to, etc. Young’s Concordance gives the rendering “to set in array under” and this seems to convey an orderly structure.

The description in I Cor. xv. of the ultimate subjection and submission of all things to God is an example of an orderly structure. All things will be put under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, although Heb. ii. 8 points out that we do not yet see all things under Him. Christ must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. When all things are subdued unto Him, then we read “the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (I Cor. xv. 24-28). See also Eph. i. 10 and 22.

We are instructed to recognize and be subject to the powers that be and this is another orderly structure. We should render to all their dues, we should pay our taxes, and render honour to whom honour is due (see Rom. xiii. 1-8). Hebrews xiii. 17 repeats this principle, “Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves”. See also I Pet. ii. 13-14.

The submission of the church to Christ is introduced as an example of the relationship that should exist between husband and wife. Eph. v. 24-25 reads:

“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it”.

Some wives do not like the idea of obeying their husbands, but if the husbands give themselves as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, wives may be more willing to ‘submit’ to their husbands. For who could resist a loving husband who followed Christ in such devotion and care?

Let us mention very briefly other examples of submission:

- (a) Submission to ministers of the gospel (I Cor. xvi. 15, 16).
- (b) Submission to one another (Eph. v. 21).
- (c) Submission of the younger to the elder (I Pet. v. 5).

If our Christian attitude is to be in line with the teaching of the Word of God, we need to be humble in mind, and give every possible consideration to others. We cannot insist on our “rights” but be willing to give up and submit as we seek to know the mind and will of God.

As a boy Jesus Christ was subject to His parents (Luke ii. 51) and He was an example to children.

But surely, the finest example of submission is found as we study the life of Christ. He came down, not to do His will, but the will of the Father (read John vi. 38-40). Even Christ pleased not Himself, as we read in Romans:

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but as it is written, ‘the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on Me’.” (Rom. xv. 1-3).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (I Cor. x. 32, 33).

There is of course a danger if our desire is only to please men; Paul made it clear that loyalty to the truth came first and before his desire to please men. We find this corrective in Gal. i. 9, 10:

“As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

The carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the will of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. viii. 7). But we are not “in the flesh” but in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in us.

If our Christian attitude in regard to submission is to be as it should be, we need the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our prayer, like Paul's in Acts ix. 6 should be "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?". If we are to show a spirit of submission to the Lord, to those who minister to us, to those around us, as well as to the powers that be, we certainly need help. Surely we all wish to do the will of the Lord, but have we the strength and the courage?

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians ii. 12, 13).

We need the strength—and we have been promised that God works in us and gives us the strength we need. So let us take courage.

Renew my will from day to day
Blend it with Thine, and take away
all that now makes it hard to say,
"Thy will be done".

No.11. Peace. **pp. 106 - 109**

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Col. iii. 15).

Some years ago, the writer received a visitor from Israel and during the interview, a telephone call came through for the visitor. Evidently, his wife was speaking to him and at the end of the call, the visitor said "Shalom" and replaced the telephone receiver. So even now, "Peace" is a salutation that is still in use. At the beginning and end of some of the epistles, we find this greeting of "Peace". After the resurrection, our Lord appeared to the disciples and said "Peace be unto you" (John xx. 19, 21, 26).

If there is to be peace, there must be a complete and mutual understanding and if any division or difference has occurred, there must be reconciliation. Sin created a barrier between us and God and so sin had to be dealt with, so that reconciliation could take place. Rom. iii. quotes, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (verse 10). But although all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we can rejoice that we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans iv. 25 introduces resurrection. It reads:

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

This leads on to Rom. v. 1:

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So our peace comes to us through faith, and as a result of our Lord's victory over sin and death in His resurrection. We can never thank Him enough for all that He has done for us, and for our peace with God. (We do not make our peace with God for He has already done it for us.)

Not only do we have peace with God but we can enjoy the peace of God which keeps and garrisons our hearts and minds:

“Be careful for nothing prayer thanksgiving requests made known unto God And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep (garrison) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. iv. 6, 7).

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts” (Col. iii. 15).

Added to this is the promise that the God of peace shall be with us.

“Now the God of peace be with you all” (Rom. xv. 33).

“Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. iv. 9).

There are eleven references to peace in Romans. In Ephesians, we find 8 occurrences and here we find a dispensational aspect. The middle wall of partition separated the Jew and Gentile. But of the two, Christ has made (or created) one new man. “The both” has been reconciled to God in one body by the cross. Mr. Charles H. Welch expounds this in detail in *The Berean Expositor* Volume X, pages 177-180. We can only touch upon the truth in this article. Here is an outline of the 8 passages where “peace” occurs.

- A | i. 2. Grace and peace (salutation).
- B | ii. 14. He is our peace (the Head).
- C | ii. 15. The twain.—One new man.
 - D | ii. 17. Preached peace—those far off.
 - D | ii. 17. Preached peace—those nigh.
- C | iv. 3. Unity—the bond of peace.
- B | vi. 15. Gospel of peace (feet shod).
- A | vi. 23. Peace and love (benediction).

Let us rejoice that He is our Peace. He has created the one new man, but in the practical section, we are enjoined to “endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. Satan seeks to divide us and we need to be on our guard. Hence Paul says “endeavour” to keep the unity for there may be times when this is not easy.

Now let us revert to Rom. viii. 6, 7 which says:

“To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. The carnal mind is enmity against God”.

We are all aware of the conflict between the flesh & the spirit and Rom. vii. & viii. contain much about this.

But in our national life, we are faced with many problems, inflation, unemployment, etc., so much so that some people no longer listen to the news or read the papers. Their minds are greatly disturbed by the “news”. Voices are raised declaring that this or that is the solution to our national problems. But earthly wisdom is not enough to enable a solution to be found. When Christ returns, He alone will be able to show the right solution. He can heal the differences between the nations and the internal differences too. But even when He returns there will be opposition to His rule until all things are put under His feet.

One of Christ’s names is the Prince of Peace.

As we conclude, let us remember the picture of the storm at sea when Christ was asleep on a pillow in the boat (Mark iv. 35-41). The boat was full of water as the waves washed over it.

“Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” cried the disciples. “And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still” (Literally, “Silence, be quiet!”).

As the storms of life break over us, we too may be afraid or at least, the peace of our minds may be disturbed. The outlook for this material world is indeed grim. We need to hear the reassuring voice of the Lord so that our minds may have peace.

Should we not have that inward peace that only God can give? Whatever the “outward” may be, our peace should remain. Why? Because we have peace with God. Because we should let the peace of God rule in our hearts, and because the God of peace is with us.

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col. iii. 15, 16).

No.12. Sympathy. **pp. 122 - 125**

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind” (Phil. ii. 1, 2, R.S.V.).

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded” (Phil. ii. 1, 2, A.V.).

There are some people who have been given a sympathetic nature; they are good listeners, and inspire others with hope and confidence. It has been said that one cannot sympathize fully unless the experience has been shared. For example, one who has had a nervous breakdown can sympathize with a person suffering from the illness in a way that

is impossible for one who has always been strong and healthy. So it may not be easy for everyone to sympathize in depth; yet we should be compassionate to all.

The dictionary gives sympathy – Fellow feeling, compassion.

The A.V. does not seem to contain the word “sympathy” but in the Greek we find the word *sumpatheo* which occurs twice in Hebrews. So let us begin by looking at these two references:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. iv. 15).

The literal translation is:

“We have not a high priest not able to sympathize with our infirmities, but (Who) has been tempted in all things according to (our) likeness, apart from sin” or we may say “sin excepted”.

Our Lord has lived on this earth as a man, and experienced all kinds of suffering and deprivation. Surely He could say, “I too have been through it all and I know about your particular experience” and so He fully sympathizes with us.

Paul tells the Hebrews that he knew how they sympathized with him, and had experienced loss similar to his own losses. The literal translation begins “For both with my bonds, ye sympathized”. The A.V. reads:

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb. x. 34).

Then in Peter’s epistle, he writes that we should extend compassion to one another:

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (I Pet. iii. 8).

The literal translation is:

“Finally, all being of one mind, sympathizing, loving the brethren, tender hearted, friendly”.

This then should be our attitude of mind, being sympathetic one to another.

The Greek word *sumpascho* means to suffer together, and this is an extension of the thought that we should sympathize.

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (I Cor. xii. 26).

Paul is writing about the members of a body and shows how each member shares with the experiences of any one member. This word also occurs in Romans where Paul writes about the sharing of the sufferings of Christ. He writes:

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. viii. 17).

Paul writing to the Philippians explains how he counted all things loss for Christ, and he was willing to suffer the loss of all things in order that he might win Christ. He continues:

“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phil. iii. 10).

Our Lord has shared in our experiences, and now He asks us to share with Him for we are united with Him. We need strength if we are to suffer with Christ, but first Paul points out that we have the power of His resurrection which is the enabling power, so that we can share with our Lord.

We have seen how the Lord has compassion on the people and on us. Paul received sympathy from those who suffered as he did. We have read how we should have sympathy with one another and how the members of a body share. We have gone further and seen that we may share in the Lord’s sufferings.

Let us conclude by the words written by Paul in II Cor. i. 3-7 concerning the God of all comfort:

- (1) Who comforts us
- (2) and enables us to comfort others.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.”

No.13. Graciousness. **pp. 142 - 145**

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. iv. 32).

Paul was an example to us. “Be ye followers together of me” he wrote to the Philippians (Phil. iii. 17). In Eph. v. 1 he wrote “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” while in I Cor. xi. 1 he says “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”. It is evident that a high standard of conduct is demanded of us.

In Eph. iv. 32, which we have quoted above, we are enjoined to forgive one another even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven us. The word translated ‘forgive’ means “to be gracious to” and so the message is that as Christ has shown grace to us, so we should be gracious to others.

This brings us back to the grace by which we are saved, and this basic doctrine has its practical implications.

Paul wrote in Phil. iii. 1, “To write the same things to you is not irksome to me, and it is safe for you” (R.S.V.) so we may not hesitate to go back to elementary things which we surely know, but rather be willing to meditate on what Christ has done for us, knowing that our practice should balance the doctrine.

So let us remind ourselves of the 12 occurrences of the word ‘grace’ in Ephesians.

The epistle begins and ends with a salutation and benediction of ‘grace’. In chap. i., we are reminded that we have been blessed with every blessing that is spiritual in heavenly places. We have been chosen in Him, and blameless before Him, we have been predestinated unto the adoption of children according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

We have been accepted in the Beloved, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Then, passing to chapter ii., we are reminded of God’s great love; we have been quickened together with Christ, and have been raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come, He might show us the exceeding riches of His grace toward us through Christ Jesus.

Twice we are told “By grace are ye saved” and our salvation does not depend on our own works, lest we should boast. But we have been created “unto good works” and those good works should be the fruit and not the basis of our salvation.

In chapter iii., Paul speaks of the dispensation of the grace of God given to him for us. Paul was the minister for the truth of the Mystery according to the gift of the grace of God, given to him by the effectual working of His power. Although Paul said he was the least of all saints, this grace was given to him so that he could preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Then in chapter iv., we learn that to every one of us, grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Each one of us therefore has this gift of grace, whether in small or greater measure, and we have the responsibility to use this grace as we are given the opportunity. In verse 29, we are told that one of the practical outworkings of the grace of God given to us, should be in our speech. No corrupt word should pass our lips. Our words should edify so that we may minister grace to those who hear us. We may not be gifted speakers, we may not be preachers, but surely we do speak! And when we speak, our words should reflect the grace that God has placed in our hearts.

An outline of the 12 references to grace in Ephesians will summarize what we have tried to set out in our meditation and comments.

Charis (grace).

- A | i. 2. Grace to you.—Salutation.
- B | i. 6. According as He hath chosen us to the praise of the glory of His grace. |
 - a | i. 7. Accepted, redemption, forgiveness according to the riches of His grace.
 - b | ii. 5. By grace—saved.
 - a | ii. 7. Raised, seated together in heavenly places, the exceeding riches of His grace.
 - b | ii. 8. By grace—saved.
- B | iii. 2. The Dispensation of the grace of God. |
 - a | iii. 7. Paul—minister—according to the gift of grace of God.
 - b | iii. 8. Grace given to preach.
 - a | iv. 7. Every one. Given grace according to the gift of Christ.
 - b | iv. 29. Minister grace to hearers.
- A | vi. 24. Grace be with all who love in sincerity.—Benediction.

If our Christian attitude reflects the grace given to us, if we are followers of Paul even as he was of Christ, then this should be evident in our daily lives, in our speech, in our manner of life, and in our relationship with others. In Col. iii. 13, Paul is slightly more explicit. He says:

“ longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

Words cannot adequately express our thanks and gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ for what He has done for us. How can we reflect such grace in our lives? The last three chapters of Ephesians is a guide but even so, can we live up to this high standard? Ephesians vi. 10 says “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might”. We are

not in ourselves strong enough to live to this high standard and it is only as we receive the power and strength from Him that we may go on our way and be truly gracious.

No.14. Steadfastness. **pp. 163 - 165**

“Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (I Cor. xv. 58).

The Christian life has been likened to a race and the Christian to an athlete. The race is not like the 100 yards sprint but to the 10 miles long run, which is a feat of endurance.

Stedfast (which we now spell steadfast) means to be firm or constant. It means that there must be a continuation of effort and not a series of short bursts of energy. The long runner must not stop on the way to look around and enjoy the beautiful countryside, he must concentrate on running and look towards the end of the race.

We live in days when there are many influences which would cause us to turn aside. As this is written, there is an article in a magazine that discusses the decline in moral values and one reason given is the changing nature of Christian worship and teaching: “The salt has lost its flavour”.

Today, we hear much about the social gospel and Christians are advised to participate in politics, with the thought that we are wise enough to be able to bring into being the kingdom of God. No mention is made of the return of Christ Who alone can bring into being the kingdom of God.

Let us see what the Scriptures have to say and what warnings are given to us in these days which are called perilous times.

We quote from the Revised Standard Version (R.S.V.):

“Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths” (II Tim. iv. 2-4).

Paul says that we should not be like children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. He warns that there are those who are cunning and whose object is to deceive (Eph. iv. 14). Those who are “tossed to and fro” are just the opposite of steadfast, firm and constant believers in Christ. We need to be on the alert as it is possible to handle the Scriptures deceitfully (II Cor. iv. 2), and by failing to rightly divide the Word, those who claim to be teachers might mislead the earnest seeker after truth.

Some of the dangers are expressed in Paul's letter to Timothy and we quote three references:

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (I Tim. i. 5-7).

“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” (I Tim. vi. 20, 21).

“Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (II Tim. ii. 17, 18).

Seeing that there are so many dangers to the honest seeker after truth, how important it is to prove all things and to hold fast that which is good (I Thess. v. 21). As Paul wrote to Titus, we should hold fast the faithful word (Titus i. 9) and his advice to Timothy is even more appropriate today “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. i. 13).

We need to hold fast and to stand fast:

- (1) “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (I Cor. xvi. 13).
- (2) “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. v. 1).
- (3) “. . . . stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. i. 27).
- (4) “. . . . so stand fast in the Lord” (Phil. iv. 1).

To be steadfast, we need to hold fast and to stand fast and we need to be established in the faith, for it is through the power of God that we are so established. “Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ” (Rom. xvi. 25).

The need for stability is expressed in Paul's letter to the Colossians. Again we quote from the R.S.V.: “provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard” (Colossians i. 23). See also Stuart Allen's comments on page 132 of *Letters from Prison*.

We must have a sure foundation and our faith must rest squarely on the Word of God, which leads us to the Living Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. We do need the help of teachers who are sound in the faith and how fortunate are those who have such sound teachers!

Before we conclude, let us remember Eph. vi. 13-18. We need to put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers and other enemies. Three times we are told that we are “to stand”. The description of the armour is given in this passage.

We conclude with I Cor. xv. 57, 58:

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

No.15. Bereavement. **pp. 210 - 212**

“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;
blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job i. 21).

When our Lord walked this earth, He showed His love, concern and compassion for mankind. There are a number of remarkable examples, but two come quickly to mind when we think of bereavement. Let us look at them.

The widow of Nain. It is recorded in Luke vii. 11-17 that as Jesus approached the city of Nain, there was a funeral procession, for the only son of a widow had died and was being buried. Many people were expressing their sympathy by attending the funeral. The Lord saw the distress and sorrow of the widow and He had compassion on her. He went up to the widow and said “Weep not”. At that stage, the procession halted, and Christ went towards the bier. The Lord Jesus gave an order, “Young man, I say to you, Arise”. He who had been dead sat up, and began to speak.

The raising of Lazarus. The second example is even more strange. It is one of the eight signs recorded in the Gospel of John. There were two sisters, Martha and Mary, who had a brother named Lazarus, and Jesus Christ often visited them, for He loved all three. Lazarus fell seriously ill so the sisters sent a message to Jesus Christ. “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick”. Our Lord knew how ill he was, and that he would die within a few days but He did not hurry. He intended to raise him from the dead. In John xi. 4, 15 and 42 we have reasons for the delay. It was for the glory of God. It was to be an experience for the disciples so that they might believe. It was to be a proof that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father.

So when Jesus and the disciples arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days. The scene was one of great mourning and sadness, and our Lord was full of compassion and sympathy. He was deeply touched by the tears shed by Mary. Also the Jews were weeping.

Jesus groaned in the spirit and was troubled. Jesus wept (John xi. 35), “See, how He loved him”, said the Jews.

Having shown His love for Lazarus, and His sympathy with the two sisters, He prepared for the next stage to prove that He was the Creator made manifest in the flesh.

He approached the grave and asked that the stone which acted as a door to the cave should be removed. We read in verses 41-42:

“And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou has heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me.”

Jesus cried “LAZARUS, come forth”. And he that was dead, came forth, bound hand and foot and his face bound with a napkin. “Loose him and let him go” said Jesus.

In these two events, we see the intense love, sympathy and compassion of our Lord. Today we can be assured that in our distress and sorrows, He shares with us and He supports us continually. But today we do not see these remarkable miracles or signs. But they do remind us that the day of resurrection will come and those whom we have lost, and who love the Lord, will arise in His likeness. Then, there will be no more sorrow, or pain or crying.

The bereaved. While one hesitates to refer to one’s own experience, the Psalmist exclaims “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (Psa. cvii. 2). The writer will take the liberty of giving examples from his experience, recognizing that others may have had quite different circumstances for we are all different by nature and environment.

One who has suffered bereavement needs a strong faith. However much the bereaved grieves and that grief may be most intense, should it not be possible to believe that God is in control, and that what God wills is best? If there is complete faith that God over-rules, may we not remind ourselves of Rom. viii. 28, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”. The writer lost his wife after 50 years, and before her death she was worried about many things. How could she cope if her husband died first? She feared having to go to hospital: and other worries could be added. But she died suddenly and did not have to enter hospital, and her husband did not die first. So one could give thanks that the writer’s wife was spared the worries and she did not have to suffer a long illness. Even while feeling a sense of loss, it is possible to praise the Lord.

The friends of the bereaved. Some people are embarrassed when they have to meet someone who has been bereaved.

In a local Church magazine, it is said that in Britain there are 3,000,000 widows, 800,000 widowers, and 200,000 children under 16 who have lost a parent by death. A comment is made that the clergy realize how inadequate their care of the bereaved can be. There is a National Organization to provide care for Widows and their children called CRUSE as they consider their work consists of, (1) finding the means of providing a suitable person to talk with the bereaved, (2) giving practical help where needed, for

example in legal, financial and housing matters, and (3) providing social activities, meetings and outings, establishing friendship groups, etc., etc.

We may not be able to compete with Social Workers in providing for the needs of the bereaved, but in our own way, and according to our circumstances, we may be able to show our sympathy in a practical manner. We may send a letter or sympathy card, or speak on the telephone to show our love and concern. When the writer's wife died, many friends sent cards or short letters which were deeply appreciated.

An important way of helping is to pray for the bereaved, and to mention in a letter or on a card that you are remembering your friend in your prayers. The writer is sure that many friends were supporting him in their prayers, and it was a great help. In our case we stated that no flowers were desired, but gifts to a certain charity could be made if desired. But it so happened that flowers came after the funeral from a few sources, which were displayed around the house and were a means of consolation.

JOB. You know the story of Job? Why not read Job chapter i. again and remind yourself of his great trials. Despite his great losses, he was able to say:

“The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job i. 21).

“Brothers as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy” (James v. 10, 11, N.I.V.).

No.16. Friendship. pp. 229 - 231

“A friend loveth at all times” (Prov. xvii. 17).

At Christmas time, it is the custom to send greetings cards to friends, and those of us who are systematic have a list, or a record on cards (in alphabetical order), which at first sight might indicate the number of friends we have. Indeed, this custom has extended to the business world and it is not uncommon for a businessman to have to sign 800 Christmas cards—a time consuming occupation! But if our list is only say 70 people, would it be true to say that they are friends or should we say they are acquaintances? We may have many acquaintances, but how many true friends? An acquaintance is someone who is known, but with whom there is not a close relationship. A friend is one with whom we are more intimate, one for whom we have affection, a high regard or we might say, one who loves us and whom we love.

An example of such a relationship is given in the account of the friendship between David and Jonathan:

“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (I Sam. xviii. 1).

This close friendship was followed by a covenant and a gift which was evidence of the loving relationship that had sprung up between David and Jonathan. So we read in I Sam. xviii. 3, 4:

“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.”

The whole account of this friendship is given in chapters xviii.-xx. and the death of Jonathan is recorded in I Sam. xxxi. 2.

Proverbs xviii. 24 says that if we want friends, we must be friendly to others and there follows the statement “and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”.

A friendship that will last must be based on a two-way co-operation. In the case of David and Jonathan, we notice in I Sam. xx., that Jonathan was willing to be of great assistance to David. “Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee” in verse 4. But David was under an obligation to Jonathan to show him kindness while he lived, but also David must continue his kindness to Jonathan’s house, in the event of Jonathan’s death.

Our ability to make friends is hindered if we are selfish, for selfish people do not always show themselves friendly. A friend loveth at all times, but this applies to each of the friends.

When we remember that Abraham was called “the Friend of God”, we move to a higher plane. James ii. 21-23 first refers to Abraham being justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar. Perhaps we have thought that Abraham did not offer up his son, because God found a substitute (a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, Gen. xxii. 13), but the Lord said “because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son” (see verse 16). We see that Abraham’s willingness to obey and trust God was counted for the very act. And James shows how faith was made perfect by his works.

“And the Scriptures was fulfilled which saith ‘Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness’; and he was called the Friend of God” (James ii. 23).

The complete trust of Abraham in his Lord established a bond of friendship which enabled him to be called the Friend of God. The O.T. reference is II Chron. xx. 7.

Is Abraham the only person who can be called “The Friend of God”? Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, so if we can be called friends of Jesus Christ, is this not the same as being friends of God?

If we turn to John xv. 13-15 Jesus spoke of greater love that no man has, than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. And Jesus continued, “Ye are my friends, if

ye do whatsoever I command you". In the past, He had called His disciples servants but now he calls them His friends as He has made known the will of the Father to them. The disciples had not chosen Jesus Christ but He had chosen them and ordained them, that they might be fruitful.

In Ephesians, we also read that Christ chose us but there is no reference to our being called friends. Eph. v. 30 says we are members of His body. Eph. i. 22, 23 says that Christ is the Head of the church which is His body. As members of the church which is His body, we have a closer relationship than being friends. We are united with Him and with one another. So we can rejoice in the richness of His grace, for we do not deserve such blessings. Yet we have such a wonderful hope, that defies description. We can only bow our heads in prayer and thanksgiving.

But we must revert to a consideration of friendship with others in this present life. All friends are not true and reliable friends. Some people will only remain friends while they benefit from the relationship. They may be attracted to those who have material and plentiful goods which a generous man may be willing to share.

"Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour"
(Proverbs xix. 4).

"The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends"
(Proverbs xiv. 20).

"He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth": but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Prov. xiv. 21).

The story of the Prodigal Son in Luke xv. is an example. He had plenty of friends while his money lasted but then he began to be in want. Where were his friends then?

There is also the danger that a friendship may be endangered by gossip or the spreading of rumours:

". . . . a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Prov. xvi. 28).

". . . . but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Prov. xvii. 9).

Even a friend may betray one who has trusted him and the following verse reminds us of the betrayal of our Lord.

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psa. xli. 9).

So we find many warnings in the Scriptures about those who are supposed to be friends. Many of us may have had some experience which would enable us to say that all friends are not reliable. It is when we have suffered some loss, when we have faced some kind of crisis, or been in need of help, that we discover who our real friends are. In such times, we may have pleasant surprises, although also there may be unpleasant discoveries. But if we are in need, we remember Paul wrote in Phil. iv. 19 ". . . . But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus".

A friend loveth at all times. Our Lord Jesus Christ never ceases to love us.

Dispensational and Foundational Truth

pp. 186 - 190

As an introduction to his *Alphabetical Analysis of Truth*, C. H. Welch divides the subject into three sections, (1) Doctrinal Truth, (2) Dispensational Truth, (3) Practical Truth. He explains each section in this way:

(1) “Doctrinal Truth embraces all that has been revealed concerning the Being and Attributes of God, and all that God has done, commanded, promised or foretold in creation, law and grace.” This is truth that time does not alter. It is basic or foundational. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 23) is true under whatever dispensation we may be called. “God is just” is as true under grace as it was under law. There is therefore a permanence about *foundational* truth.

(2) “Dispensational Truth takes note of the purpose of the ages, the changes that have been introduced since creation, such as may be denominated the dispensation of Innocence, Law, Earthly Kingdom, Grace, Church, Mystery, etc., and the office of dispensational truth is to decide whether any particular doctrine—be it command, promise, calling or prophecy—does or does not pertain to any particular individual or individuals.” Dispensational truth would lead the believer to distinguish between the blessing that says ‘the meek shall inherit the earth’ (Psa. xxxvii. 11; Matt. v. 5), and those blessings which are described as all ‘spiritual’ and to be enjoyed ‘in heavenly places’ where Christ is enthroned (Eph. i. 3, 19-23; ii. 5, 6). To those who discern ‘things that differ’ (Phil. i. 10 margin), these two statements cannot mean the same thing if words are allowed to have their normal meaning.

Under the law of God given through Moses sin and its forgiveness was linked with animal sacrifice (Lev. iv. and v.) and this could not be ignored. To do so meant discipline and punishment. Today no Christian who sins is involved with animal sacrifice, for the great Antitype, Christ Himself, the Lamb of God, has made the one necessary sacrifice for sin, namely giving Himself, so doing away with the O.T. types and shadows which are no longer necessary, as the epistle to the Hebrews so clearly shows. Because of this, we now have a dispensation of grace resting on the finished work of the Saviour. The O.T. dispensation of animal sacrifice has passed, having achieved its object. This is no problem when the Scriptural setting of each is realized and distinguished.

(3) Practical Truth. This should be obvious, for it is the practical working out in experience, of the doctrine or instruction given to us in the Word of God.

However, problems will arise if (1) and (2) are not understood and acted on, and some dispensationalists seem to be confused here. It has been pointed out that, in reading the Word of God, we should note “the address on the envelope”, that is to say to recognize to whom the passage of Scripture is addressed. This is right, but we must not draw wrong conclusions. The name and address of the person on the envelope decides who is the

owner of the letter. But the owner would be foolish, if, before he opened the letter, he decided that every sentence must refer to him and no one else because he is the owner! Statements in the letter might refer to a dozen different people and these would have to be given their place.

We must bear this in mind when we come to the Scriptures. By all means let us note to whom it is addressed. Failure to do this will affect the interpretation. But don't let us assume that every statement in Scripture can only relate to those who are mentioned in the opening verses.

Let us take for instance the prophecy of Isaiah in the O.T. and the epistle of James in the N.T. Isaiah tells us that his prophecy is "concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (i. 1). James addresses his epistle to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (i. 1). We have heard it said that because these Scriptures are addressed to Israel, they are not "for the Body" and therefore they need not receive careful study by those who belong to the Body of Christ. And this, in spite of the statement by the Apostle Paul, that "*all Scripture is profitable for doctrine (teaching), . . . that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (II Tim. iii. 16, 17).

Let us turn to Isa. xxvi. 3 where we read:

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in Thee",

and then compare this with Phil. iv. 7:

". . . . the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

These two Scriptures are addressed to two different groups of God's children, the people of Israel, and the Body of Christ, but both deal with the same *basic* truth that peace of mind can be enjoyed to the full through complete trust in the Lord. The previous verse in Philippians mentions prayer and thanksgiving which must include trust in God. This is typical of what we can find right throughout the Word of God and therefore we must be careful to distinguish between what is foundational or basic, with what is dispensational.

The command to "rightly divide" the Word of God (II Tim. ii. 15) goes far beyond making a distinction between Israel and the Church, or recognizing Acts xxviii. as a dispensational division. It means that we must go carefully through every passage of Scripture we are studying and note what is basic and what is the position of the people in the context (dispensational) and their relation to the purpose of God. Foundational truth upon which the purpose of the ages is built is covered by such Bible terms as justification, redemption, atonement, sanctification, propitiation, reconciliation, substitution, identification, forgiveness, pardon, ransom. Dispensational truth on the other hand, notes the differences that God has planned for various sections of His redeemed family. Their placing in glory depends entirely on His elective purpose and in

His wisdom, love and grace. He knows just where is the best place for each in the new heaven and earth He will yet create.

Some He purposes to bless on the new earth (Psa. xxxvii. 11; Matt. v. 5); others look forward by faith, like Abraham, to the heavenly Jerusalem which finally descends to the new earth (Heb. xi. 9, 10, 16; xii. 22; Rev. iii. 12; xxi. 10-27). Others will be enthroned with the ascended Christ, “higher than all the heavens” (Eph. iv. 10; ii. 6). The whole of God’s vast creation will be peopled with His children.

The Lord’s great redemptive plan is much greater and wider than the average Christian appreciates. Certain it is that the glory of God will completely fill this new creation as will His redeemed family as they contemplate for eternity and praise the One Who has done “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Eph. iii. 30, N.I.V.). Then “all things in heaven and earth” will stand in the Headship and power of Christ (Eph. i. 10).

The need to distinguish what is basic and what is truly dispensational is essential when we are dealing with such an epistle as that by James. It is easy to call this Scripture “Jewish”; but what is meant by this? Do those who use this term mean the passage is *predominantly* Jewish, or *entirely* Jewish, that is, every verse is not only addressed to Israel, but *concerns* Israel and no one else. Unless this term is used with care it can lead to considerable misunderstanding. This can be seen in the interpretation of the Gospels. When we come to the Gospel of John, some assert that this is Jewish. If they mean that it was primarily addressed to the nation, they are right, for it is a history, as all the Gospels are, of the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus and this is looked at from four different angles. If they mean that every statement of the Lord recorded by John is about Israel alone and has no reference to the Gentile, then their viewpoint is sadly wrong.

One of John’s key words is the word “world” which occurs no less than 79 times. It means *mankind in general* and *not one nation in particular*. No one can give a correct interpretation of this Gospel, unless they study every occurrence of this important word. Obviously it must have taken a prominent place in the Lord’s ministry, for we should remember we only have a selection under the Spirit’s guidance of the Lord’s words spoken during His lifetime. As to why He should stress His relationship to the whole of mankind in a ministry which He Himself said was limited to Israel (Matt. xv. 22, 24) and also that of the Twelve (Matt. x. 5, 6), we have dealt with in a previous article on *The Great Commission of Matthew xxviii*. But we should carefully note that while Christ’s ministry was primarily to Israel, yet He declared “I am come not to judge the world, *but to save the world*” (John xii. 47), not just to save Israel, and His goal was the *belief of the world* (John xvii. 21, 23), not just the belief of Israel. The comment of the Evangelist is to the point here “for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, *but that the world through Him might be saved*” (John iii. 17). And the previous verse, which has been the means for the salvation of thousands, gives the way this salvation with eternal life may be realized, namely by faith, belief or trust in the Saviour. “He that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life” (John v. 24). These verses give the

simplest expression of salvation, eternal life and freedom from condemnation in the N.T. It mattered not whether a Gentile or a Jew were listening to the Lord's words, if they responded by faith, then this salvation was theirs. *And this is still true today.*

Here is a good example of basic or foundational truth which is truth for all time. Sin and death are not dispensational, nor is God's remedy for them dispensational. God has only one way of removing sin and justifying the sinner, namely by the redemptive work of His beloved Son and this is received on the principle of faith and John's Gospel gives a clear witness to these facts.

This being so, we must carefully distinguish what is dispensational in this Gospel from what is basic and unchanging. If we do not do this our exposition is bound to be unbalanced and lop-sided. On the other hand, if we do it, the purpose of God for the heaven and earth becomes clearer and more wonderful. To have an inheritance in any part of these spheres is a tremendous privilege and reveals how great is the love and grace of God which alone makes it possible. Human goodness and merit cannot intrude here.

We are in the hand of One Who is working "all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 11), and the design that He has will surely be fulfilled in His time and His own way. Because of this we can go on in "full assurance of faith" and not be moved by anything around us.

Like the Psalmist, we look forward to resurrection glory and can say with him, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness" (Psa. xvii. 15).

The Good Deposit

No.1. pp. 101 - 106

The Apostle Paul's two letters addressed to his son in the faith, Timothy, were written to guide him as a leader of the Church. The first one states:

“Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God” (I Tim. iii. 14, 15, N.I.V.).

The second one, which was written shortly before his martyrdom, concentrates on the most important truths that Timothy must constantly bear in mind if he was going to be a faithful teacher and friend. Paul urges him to make the effort to visit him in his prison as quickly as possible before winter, when traveling would be difficult. Then the Apostle could give him his last advice, guidance and encouragement personally (II.Tim.iv.9,21).

In both epistles he refers to the truth that the Lord had entrusted to him. This is of great importance for the Apostle declares that this sacred trust had been committed to Timothy, who in turn was charged to commit it to others, “faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (II Tim. ii. 2). It is not only termed “that which is committed to thy trust” (I Tim. vi. 20), but also a “form of sound words, *which thou hast heard of me (Paul)*” (II Tim. i. 13). The translation of the N.I.V. is:

“What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit (that which has been committed) that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit Who lives in us” (II.Tim.i.13,14, N.I.V.).

The Greek verb *paratithemi* and its substantive *paratheke* means “to deposit with another, give in charge” and the substantive “a deposit or trust” (Abbot-Smith).

We need to get a very clear conception of this deposit of truth, for without this, how can we guard it? One thing we can be assured of, and that is Timothy understood perfectly what the Apostle meant, for Paul wrote:

“But thou hast *fully known my doctrine*” (II Tim. iii. 9-11).

We can also receive this understanding if we search the N.T. and seek for it, asking for enlightenment, carefully noting the truths that had been committed to Paul by the risen Christ. This will save us from imagining that the Apostle was passing on his own opinions to others. Rather he was the human channel that the Lord Jesus was using to convey special truth to us. He was the Lord's Apostle to the Gentiles, although during the Acts period, he put the covenant people of Israel first, for Luke makes clear in the Acts that Israel had not been cast away, for God in His longsuffering was waiting for their repentance and turning back to Him (Acts iii. 19-26).

In Paul's prison ministry that followed, he was still specially connected with the Gentiles, for he describes himself as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles" (Eph. iii. 1, N.I.V.), although this does not mean that faithful Jewish believers could not benefit from the teaching given through him.

The basic truth on which "the good deposit" rests is that of salvation by grace and this, the Apostle states, was given to him by "revelation of Jesus Christ":

"I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it *by revelation from Jesus Christ*" (Gal. i. 11, 12, N.I.V.).

So important was this that in the previous verses Paul wrote:

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (Gal. i. 8, 9, N.I.V.).

Forceful words are these, but absolutely necessary, for they were dealing with basic truth, the very foundation of the Christian faith. To be wrong here is to be wrong everywhere.

The Apostle describes this good news in I Cor. xv.:

"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you have received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received *I passed on to you as of first importance*: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. xv. 1-4, N.I.V.).

Here is the essence of the good news for sinners. Christ has paid the penalty for their sins by dying for them and being treated as the guilty one. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. liii. 5, 6). This gospel meets the needs of all mankind. It is perfect, never needs changing, and is the divine standard for all gospel preaching. Any other gospel is no gospel at all and comes under God's condemnation.

The true gospel must be contained in "the good deposit" otherwise Timothy and all who followed after would have no assured *foundation* and nothing effective to make known to those outside of Christ.

We pass on to the teaching concerning the identification of the believer with Christ and here we have truth that is peculiar to Paul's ministry. It is the epistle to the Romans that reveals what God has done by uniting the believer with Christ. The Apostle states, "I have been *crucified with Christ*" (Gal. ii. 20). To the Roman believers he wrote, "knowing this, that our old man *was crucified with Him*" (Rom. vi. 6, R.V.). Crucifixion means death. He continues, "now if we be *dead with Christ*, we believe that we shall also *live with Him*" (Rom. vi. 8). After death comes burial, "therefore we are *buried with Him* by baptism unto death" (Rom. vi. 4). Verse 5 goes on to teach us, "if we have become

united with Him by the likeness of His death” (R.V.). The next step must lead to life if there is to be a future for those who are dead, so we read, “but God hath quickened us *together with Christ*” (made us alive together with Christ, Eph. ii. 5). Thus we have been raised together with Him.

The climax comes in the later epistle to the Ephesians written after Israel had been set aside at Acts xxviii. God has “made us sit together (seated us together) *in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. ii. 6), and the wonder of this exaltation as far as Christ is concerned is made clear in Eph. i. 18-23 which should be carefully read and pondered.

In the crucifixion, death, burial, quickening, raising and enthroning of Christ at the right hand of the Father, the member of the Body of Christ is now identified, and the glorious conclusion is the final manifesting with Christ in glory (Col. iii. 3, 4). All this is God’s work alone, the believer has no part in it except to believe the stupendous facts that God has written and revealed through Paul, the prisoner of the Lord. In God’s plan, each individual member of the Body is so linked with the Head that, what happens to Him in these seven great steps, happens to them as well. Do we rejoice in this and reckon as God reckons?

This is the way God removes the great barriers of sin and death which would eternally separate us from Christ, and finally, in resurrection likeness, we shall be conformed to the Image of the Son, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. v. 27) but be rather, “holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight” (Col. i. 22). Let us constantly praise our heavenly Father for this wonderful closeness of union with the Lord Jesus which is ours now and symbolized by the figure of Head and Body which give us the closest illustration of unity that the Word of God uses.

This revelation of truth must certainly be included in “the good deposit” and it has the effect of making us *Christ-centred* and enabling us to obey Col. iii. 1, 2 to set our mind on things above where Christ is supremely exalted and enthroned and we are enthroned with Him.

Not only this, but the Apostle Paul declares he had a further revelation from Christ concerning the Body and its calling. In this was revealed a secret which up to that point God had hidden “in Himself” (Eph. iii. 9 and Col. i. 25-28). It is important to realize that the word “mystery” in the A.V. is a transliteration of the Greek word *musterion* and means, not something puzzling or mysterious, but just a “secret” which is unknown until it is revealed. Paul declares that this secret had been revealed to him by God (Eph. iii. 3) and he was commissioned to make it known to all, that is those who had been elected by the Father in past eternity (Eph. i. 4). The meaning of “all” and “every” in Scripture is always governed by the context.

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, and to make all men see what is the *dispensation of the mystery (secret)* which from all ages hath been hid in God Who created all things” (Eph. iii. 8, 9, R.V.).

Colossians i. 25, 26 states that this secret was hid from past ages (time) and generations (people) and in view of this it is unbelief to say that it can be found in the O.T. or in any Scripture previous to the point Christ made it known to Paul.

It cannot therefore refer to the gospel of salvation, for this was never a secret, but had been “promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures (the O.T.)” (Rom. i. 2). Nor can it refer to the fact that the Gentiles were to be blessed with Israel, for this had been made known in Gen. xii. 1-3 and many other passages. Eph. ii. 15 reveals the fact that this *sussoma* (lit. joint-body) is made up of the “two” (twain, A.V.) i.e. Jewish and Gentile believers and is a *creation* which God calls “a new man”. It is important to know that the word “make” in this verse (A.V.) is the deeper word “create”, which shows that this company is not an evolution or development from the Acts period, but a *new* company, a *new man* and a *new creation*.

We do not know whether this is a large company, a medium sized or a small one, for it is not revealed and it is idle to guess. We are on sure ground however, when we start with the Father’s elective choice (Eph. i. 4) and this choice was made *before* creation. It was therefore in the mind of God before He commenced to create, which shows its tremendous importance to Him in His redemptive plan. Even the aristocracy of heaven, principalities and powers, are now learning from it and its association with the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. iii. 9-11).

This great revelation to Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, must certainly be included in “the good deposit” of truth, given by the risen and ascended Christ to him and then deposited by the Apostle to Timothy and the churches. In fact we must include in it *all* the truth expressed in the epistles that make it known (Ephesians and Colossians) and the epistles of Paul that followed (Philippians, Philemon, Titus, I & II Timothy). Once revealed, the secret was addressed to all the faithful (Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 2) and was not hidden again. It was linked with a *dispensation*, “the dispensation of the mystery (secret)” (Eph. iii. 9, R.V.). The word “dispensation” is little understood, most people imagining that it means a period of time, an age. This is not so; in Luke xvi. 2 the word is rendered “stewardship”, something that is entrusted to a person to look after and guard. And so the word is very near the “deposit” in its meaning. It is God’s truth that has been passed on to the redeemed to live out and faithfully make known to others.

Paul was keen to make all the chosen ones see it (Eph. iii. 9) and furthermore, we are told that God wishes “to make known the riches of the glory of this secret among the Gentiles, which is Christ among you (A.V. margin), the hope of glory” (Col. i. 24-27). In the A.V. “would make known” = wishes to make known. In the light of these most important statements, one might assume that every believer has a clear conception of “the good deposit” of truth, but it is not so. The first chapter of Ephesians reveals an essential to this knowledge. Verses 17 and 18 reads, and we give Rotherham’s translation:

“Making mention in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you a spirit of wisdom and understanding in gaining a personal knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart *having been enlightened*, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what surpassing greatness of His power to us who believe”

In other words, their eyes had already been opened so that further understanding might be given of the new calling and its hope. The Apostle had made it abundantly clear that this spiritual perception must be experienced before the Word of God can be understood. It can only be “*spiritually discerned*” (I Cor. ii. 14). Intellectual attainment is of no avail by itself to gain divine understanding. If it was so then all brainy people should be able to gain an understanding of the Scriptures without the Spirit’s enlightenment. To teach that every believer gets this automatically because he is saved is to go beyond what the Word reveals. *There was no need for Paul to pray for the Ephesian believers if this was true*, nor any need for the Psalmist to ask the Lord, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous (marvelous) things out of Thy law” (Psa. cxix. 18).

Moreover without these “opened eyes” how can one “*guard* the good deposit” (I.Tim.vi.20; II Tim. i. 13, 14)? How can one guard what is not seen and understood? Timothy was warned by the Apostle that this faithful guarding would result in suffering and enduring hardness (II Tim. i. 8; ii. 3). *How is it possible to suffer and endure hardness for truth that is not appreciated?*

These searching questions need a Scriptural answer and that answer is given clearly in Eph. i. The Apostle Paul could say to the Thessalonian believers, “knowing, brethren beloved, your *election of God*” (I Thess. i. 4). But how was he able to say this? Had he received some special knowledge of the Lord’s elective purposes? No, the following verses make clear that it was their faithful response to the truth which proved this. The Lord Jesus had said, “by their *fruits* ye shall know them” and this is true for all time. May all who claim to be members of the Body of Christ, *the new man*, show by their response and actions that they have had “opened eyes” to the heavenly calling that is enshrined in “the good deposit” of truth and *by their practical response* indicate that they belong to the “saints and *faithful* in Christ Jesus” (Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 2).

Those who wish to take this important study further,
We recommend Charles H. Welch’s booklet “John and the Mystery”.

The Gospel according to MATTHEW.

No.3. i. 1 - 25.

pp. 15 - 19

Before we commence the exposition of chapter i. we would advise the reader to have a copy of the Revised Version (R.V.) and a modern version, the New International Version (N.I.V.) and read them side by side with the Authorized Version (A.V.). While we shall attempt a verse by verse exposition, for the sake of space we cannot make long quotations from the text of any version as this would take up too much space.

Matthew i. 1 - 17.

The gospel commences with the genealogy of Christ: "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. i. 1, A.V.). "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (N.I.V.). This is traced through David back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. There is another genealogy in Luke's Gospel which goes back to Adam, the father of the human race. Each of these pedigrees is in line with the object which the writers had in view; the former Jewish and the latter Gentile. Matthew's line is traced to David through Solomon, but Luke's is to David through Nathan (another son of David).

The genealogy in Matthew is divided into three parts of fourteen generations each. In order to do this, in the second part he omits three names, and he does likewise in the third part and counts both David and Jeconias twice. It should be remembered that Matthew's object was not to give a complete succession, but only to make sure there was no break in the line and that no name was included which did not belong to the line.

The important name was *David* which occurs five times. The letters of proper names had a numerical value, the consonants being D-4, V-6 and D-4 making a total of fourteen ($14 = 2 \times 7$). This may have influenced the writer to divide the genealogy into three parts of 14 generations each.

There are difficulties when one compares these genealogies. Some go as far to say that they cannot be reconciled. But we must be careful not make difficulties. Omitting names was a common practice among the Jewish genealogists and we should know something about the laws of Moses pertaining to inheritance.

Genealogies occupied an important place in Israel, divided as they were into twelve tribes with inheritances which could become involved by intermarriage. A man's grandson could be called his son, and so could a son-in-law. Also we should remember the provision that was made in the law of Moses for a married man who died childless. The husband's brother was required to raise a family through the widow and the children were to take the name of the deceased man. This guaranteed that the family name was not blotted out, the line extinguished and the inheritance lost (Deut. xxv. 5-10).

Matthew traces the genealogy of Joseph back through Jacob who begat him, to Solomon, David and Abraham. Luke traces Joseph's genealogy back through Heli, *his father-in-law*, to Nathan, David, Abraham and Adam. Joseph is therefore the begotten son of Jacob, and thus the son of David through Solomon; while Mary, the wife of Joseph and daughter of Heli, was descended equally from David, but through Solomon's brother Nathan, and so Joseph was the *son-in-law* of Heli.

There is another difficulty which is related to King Jeconiah who, through his wickedness was rejected by the Lord who changed his name to Coniah, removing the letters "Je" which form part of the Lord's name. Jeremiah was authorized to pronounce:

“. . . . Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, *sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah*" (Jer. xxii. 30).

Yet we know that Coniah was *not* childless, for I Chron. iii. 17 gives us the names of his sons. Looking carefully at what Jeremiah says, we should note that he is dealing *with the throne* in saying "no man of his seed shall prosper, *sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah*". In other words Jeconiah's children were *debarred from the throne* and the line through Solomon comes to an end. It is evident that Salathiel (or Shealtiel) whose father is recorded by Luke to have been "Neri the son of Nathan, which was the Son of David", had succeeded to the royal title and was therefore looked upon as the son of Jeconiah by legal adoption, the royal line being transferred from the line of Solomon to that of Nathan his brother, at this point, possibly by a marriage between the families.

Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph; Luke the genealogy of Mary. This was necessary because of that bar that was set up to any of the literal seed of Coniah. As the crown rights were forfeited, Nathan's line succeeds, so that the Saviour Who was born in Bethlehem *has the full right to the throne of David*.

Another difficulty is the appearance of women in the genealogy. Women do not normally appear in Jewish pedigrees and in Matthew's case they are women of doubtful character, Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Ruth was a foreigner, a Moabitess. The reason is surely that the One Who declared He had come to call sinners to repentance, does not scorn such a descent. He was a friend of publicans and sinners, and in His infinite grace and love stoops to reach them in their deepest needs.

We do not say that we have the answer to every problem in these genealogies. Many of our difficulties are caused by our differing outlook, laws and customs from those of N.T. days and we should remember that the Bible is not bound to explain every point that we find difficult today. What is absolutely necessary for us to know, God has expressed in His Word and this awaits our faith to grasp and receive the abundant blessing that follows.

We should note that each of the fourteen generations corresponds to a great historical period. The first fourteen comprise the age of the patriarchs and judges; the second comprises the age of the kings, and the third the period of Jewish decadence. The Greek *egennesen*, begat, which occurs regularly, does not always mean immediate parentage, but direct descent. The section ends with “Joseph the husband of Mary *of whom* was born Jesus Who is called Christ” (i. 16). The relative pronoun *whom* (*hes*) can only refer to Mary, because of its gender (feminine) and number. It cannot refer to Jacob or Joseph.

The Birth of the Messiah (i. 18 - 25).

The word ‘birth’ here is *genesis*. Dr. J. Morison writes “the Evangelist is about to describe, not the genesis of the heaven and earth, but the genesis of Him Who made the heaven and the earth, and Who will yet make a new heaven and a new earth”. Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Betrothal was a much more serious thing in Jewish law than an engagement is with us. It was of equal force with marriage itself. It could only be severed by divorce, and faithlessness was treated as adultery and punishable with death (Deut. xxii. 23-27).

Mary was found to be pregnant through the work of the Holy Spirit. Luke gives additional details of this stupendous miracle. The wonderful delicacy of both narratives gives historic reality, so utterly different to the impure legends of heathen mythology. The apocryphal gospels clearly show that they could produce nothing similar. Their inventions are nothing if not distressing. Dr. A. Plummer correctly assesses the situation when he says, “if the two Evangelists had sought material in legends of pagan or Jewish origin we should have had something very different from the narratives which have been the joy and the inspiration of Christendom through countless generations nothing in the early Christian literature warrants us in believing that a writer of the first or second century could have imagined such things and described them thus”.

Dr. A. T. Robertson’s words are also to the point here:

“Both Matthew and Luke present the birth of Jesus as not according to ordinary human birth. Jesus had no human father We see here God, sending His Son into the world to be the world’s Saviour, and He gave Him a human mother, but not a human father, so that Jesus Christ is both Son of God and Son of Man, the God Man One credits these most wonderful of all birth narratives according as he believes in the love and power of almighty God to do what He wills.”

The Lord Jesus was born *in* the flesh, but not *of* the flesh.

It is quite amazing to read the different reactions of theologians to the virgin birth. Some openly reject it and others say it is not important and that redemption does not depend on it. The blindness here is nothing less than appalling, for it can be stated most definitely *that redemption would have been impossible without it*. It was absolutely necessary for Christ to be sinless if He was to be the Saviour of sinners. Had He any sins of His own, He would have needed a Saviour Himself. One sinner cannot save another sinner (Psa. xlix. 6, 7). The Holy One, the Lord Jesus alone could be the ransom for sinners (Matt. xx. 28; I Tim. ii. 6) and pay the price for their deliverance and salvation.

What the critics have not realized is that sin and death are passed on to the next generation *through the male seed*, not the female. Although in point of time, Eve was the first to sin, Scripture never ascribes the terrible blemish to her but to Adam:

“Wherefore, *as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin:* and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. v. 12).

So it was absolutely necessary for the Lord Jesus to be born without a human father. No one but God Himself can become the sinner’s Saviour:

“I, even I, am the Lord (Jehovah); and *beside me there is no Saviour*” (Isa. xliii. 11).

And yet as God, death is impossible, for He is immortal. The only way was to link humanity to His Godhead in order to be able to die and bear the penalty for sin Himself. To fully comprehend what was involved in all this passes human comprehension. Great indeed is the secret of godliness, “God was manifest in the flesh” (I Tim. iii. 16), and the truth is not altered if one reads “He Who was manifest in the flesh”, for the pronoun “He” cannot refer to any created being. It can only refer back to God Himself in this context.

So the virgin birth was the work of God in His almightiness, limitless wisdom and love. And it was therefore with truth that the angel said to Mary:

“. . . . therefore also *that holy thing which shall be born of thee* shall be called the Son of God” (Luke i. 35).

The Infant Christ is the only holy baby that has been born since the fall of man. For a fuller treatment of this theme both Scripturally and scientifically we strongly recommend Dr. A. Custance’s fine treatise, *The Seed of the Woman*.

**No.4. i. 18 - ii. 15.
pp. 33 - 37**

The Birth of Jesus Christ (cont’d).

Verse 19 of chapter i. shows us the conflicting thoughts of Joseph as he faced up to Mary’s condition. We are told that he was a “just man”. The word means “law-abiding”, that is he was a faithful adherent to the law of God given through Moses. That law, as we have seen, contained the command of death for unfaithfulness. At the same time Joseph was a merciful man, and loving Mary, he wished to spare her embarrassment and suffering. He therefore decided that divorce, kept as private as possible, was the answer to his problem.

However, he received valuable instruction from God which gave him the guidance he needed so much at this most difficult time:

“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (i. 20-23).

What a relief it must have been to Joseph to learn the true facts regarding Mary! She had not been unfaithful after all! A Son was about to be born, the promised Seed of the woman and it was not necessary for him to name this Child, for He had already been divinely named—JESUS. Jesus is the Hebrew Joshua or Jehoshua and Jesus is the Greek equivalent, “Jehovah (is our) Saviour”. The Joshua of the O.T. had been a great deliverer and leader into the promised land. But here was the real Joshua, Who alone could remove every obstacle afflicting His people and lead them into the Kingdom of heaven, God’s kingdom on earth. “He shall save His people from their sins”. Primarily this refers to His earthly people Israel, for it was to them He had been sent (Matt. xv. 24). Salvation from sin means deliverance from the power and penalty of sin and this Israel needed as much as the rest of mankind.

In the purpose of God salvation must finally include His heavenly people, for they too come under the domination of sin and death. Later on, in the ministry of Paul, we are to learn that the same Saviour is now Lord and Head of the Body, the church and has rescued each member from the power of darkness and translated each one into His Kingdom in the glory of heaven’s holiest of all (Col. i. 2-14). Thus this salvation of God is basic to all His purposes and accomplishes what men can never do for themselves, that is, abolish sin and death which holds the human race in a vice-like grip and are their greatest enemies.

As we go on to read verses 22 and 23 of Matthew’s first chapter, we have to decide whether these verses continue to record the words of the angel to Joseph, or if they are the comments of the Evangelist.

Chrysostom and others take these words as being those of the angel and they may be right, for then they would be an added explanation to Joseph, who certainly needed this divine revelation to relieve his perplexity. It is a pity that the A.V. is not accurate with the prepositions. The word from Isaiah was spoken *by* (*hupo*) the Lord, through (*dia*) the prophet. The Lord was the real speaker, the prophet was His mouthpiece. What was happening was the Lord’s work which He had made known centuries before and at last the right time had come for this great Saviour and His salvation to be made known.

The virgin in Isaiah’s day was definite and pointed to a particular virgin:

“The case is singular; it is unparalleled. Whatever scope for doubt there may be regarding the flexibility of the meaning of the word for *virgin* in Isaiah’s Hebrew, there is none doubting regarding the meaning of the Evangelist’s term. It most definitely and distinctively means *virgin*” (Dr. J. Morison, *Commentary on Matthew*, p.11).

As a result, the infant Christ is given another name, Emmanuel, God with us. The explanation of the Hebrew name was doubtless added by Matthew and not spoken by the Angel to Joseph. This name is coincident with meaning of the name Jesus—“*Jehovah—Saviour*”, and “*with us—God*” and it should be clear that no created being could ever truthfully bear these two great titles and carry out what they represent.

The angel had told Joseph *to take unto him his wife*. So when he awoke from sleep, he obeyed the angel and in Moffatt’s words, “took his wife home”. One can imagine the relief and joy of both Joseph and Mary after all the perplexity they had experienced. Regarding verse 25 Dr. A. T. Robertson writes:

“Joseph lived in continence with Mary till the birth of Jesus. Matthew does not say that Mary bore no other children than Jesus the perpetual virginity of Mary is not taught here. Jesus had brothers and sisters and the natural meaning is that they were younger children of Joseph and Mary and not children of Joseph by a previous marriage. So Joseph ‘called His name Jesus’ as the angel had directed and the Child was born in wedlock. Joseph showed that he was an upright man in a most difficult situation” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p.13).

The visit of the Magi.

There is no doubt that Matthew considered what he wrote was historic and really happened. He does not think it necessary to go into much detail concerning the miraculous Birth of the Saviour. As A. B. Bruce says, “the main purpose is to show the reception given by the world to the new-born Messianic King. Homage from afar, hostility at home; foreshadowing the fortunes of the new faith; reception by the Gentiles, rejection by the Jews”.

Matthew ii. 1, 2.

Bethlehem is stated to be in Judaea, as there was another Bethlehem in Galilee, seven miles northwest of Nazareth. This Bethlehem of Judaea was the setting of Ruth’s life with Boaz (Ruth i. 1). It was the home of David, Ruth’s descendant, and he was born here and also anointed King (I Sam. xvii. 12). The word means “house of bread”. The Lord Jesus was born in this “house of bread” and Himself was the Bread of Life (John vi. 55), the true Manna from heaven.

The Emperor Augustus decreed an enrolment or census by families, as the papyri show. Matthew tells us that the Infant Christ was born “in the days of Herod the king”. Luke’s date is more precise (Luke ii. 1-3). Herod died in B.C.4 according to Josephus. He had been king of Judaea since B.C.40 (through Antony and Octavius). Herod the Great as he is sometimes called, was a tyrant of the worst type. Through his jealousy he put to death his wife Marianne and their two sons Aristobulus and Alexander, also another son who was once his heir. He was insanely jealous and would brook no rivalry of any sort. When he heard about Christ, it was as a possible rival that he regarded Him, so we can well understand Matt. ii. 3 telling us “he was troubled” and his one object now was to eliminate this possibility. Behind it all was the power of Satan whose aim was to destroy the Seed of the woman who would “crush his head” (Gen. iii. 15) and God

Who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. i. 11), now moves His Son to a place of safety in Egypt until Herod dies.

Who were the “wise men from the east” (Matt. ii. 1)? We must first rid ourselves of tradition. The N.T. does not say there were three, nor that they were kings. Some things which are stated and illustrated on Christmas cards are pure fancy. They were called *Magi* and we cannot be sure of the derivation of this word. There were Magi among the Medians, Persians and Chaldeans. It is the same word as “magician” and is linked with Simon Magus (Acts viii. 9, 11) and of Elymas (Acts xiii. 6, 8). Those who came to Jerusalem were not of this class, but they evidently studied the heavens. It is even possible that they were Jewish proselytes who knew of the Messianic hope and what they had seen in the heavens was so extraordinary as to suggest the birth of some great Person. Herod, thoroughly agitated by the news, demanded from the chief priests and scribes that he be told where this Christ would be born. *Epunthaneto* (enquire) is the imperfect tense and suggests that Herod enquired *repeatedly*, showing his disturbance of mind. The Jewish leaders who knew the letter of the O.T. had no difficulty in telling him that this had been revealed in Micah v. 2. Matthew gives a paraphrase of this verse, but there was no doubt that the place of birth was Bethlehem of Judaea, “. . . . for thus it is written by the prophet, and thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel (Matt. ii. 5, 6). The word governor means a Ruler or Prince, and the A.V. misses the full meaning of *poimenei* which means “shepherd” although it puts “feed” in the margin. Israel were the “sheep” of the Lord’s pasture (Psa. lxxix. 13) and this figure is constantly used of them in the Old Testament.

The Lord Jesus is the good Shepherd (John x. 11). He is the “great Shepherd” (Hebrews xiii. 20), and the “chief Shepherd” (I Pet. ii. 25). The verbal form is used again in Rev. vii. 17. When He re-commissioned Peter after His resurrection He told him to “shepherd” the lambs (John xxi. 16) and we should not forget that our word “pastor” means shepherd. The One that was born in Bethlehem will most certainly rule His people Israel, but it will not be as it were with an iron rod, but the devotion of a good shepherd caring for and protecting his sheep. The tragedy of the Shepherd’s first Coming was that the sheep rejected His loving rule and murdered Him, but the story and its fulfillment will be very different at His Second Coming as this Gospel shows. The earthly people Israel are in the very centre of God’s earthly kingdom purposes. Matthew is careful to put them there and not one jot or tittle of the law or the Word which reveals this will fail ultimately.

Herod now calls the wise men, but conceals his murderous motives. He pretends that he will go and worship the young Child, if they will find out accurately where He is. He might have succeeded if God had not intervened, but the redemptive plan of the ages is too great, too wonderful and important to be ruined by the vindictive rage of a Herod under the control of Satan.

The star which had guided the Magi still went before them (again the imperfect tense in the Greek, “kept on in front of them”). Their joy was great when they found the holy

Child, and opening their “caskets” (treasures), they give Him gold, frankincense and myrrh. There have been many comments on the mystical meaning of these gifts from the earliest centuries, but doubtless the gold typifies His Deity. The frankincense with its fragrance represents the holiness of His sinless life; the myrrh, used for embalming the dead, suggested His atoning death. The holy God became man for the redemptive purpose of death and the destruction of Satan (Heb. ii. 14) and so the wise men with more wisdom than they knew, set forth the Gospel story of the One Who is our great God and saviour (Titus ii. 13, R.V.). Is it not extraordinary that this greatest event in history, God coming into human experience, should have been met for the most part with indifference and unbelief? There was “no room for Him in the inn” (Luke ii. 7). The greatest palace would really have been unworthy of Him, but He is willing to be born in a cattle shed, what condescension, what humility! The tragedy is that there are still millions, centuries later, who “have no room for Him” in their lives.

**No.5. ii. 16 - iii. 12.
pp. 53 - 58**

We have seen how Matthew groups his narrative in groups of three and in the second chapter we are studying this is evidently so, for we have (1) the visit of the Magi, (2) the flight into Egypt and (3) the return to Palestine, the land of Israel (Matt. ii. 21). When the tyrant Herod had died and the danger temporarily removed from the infant Child, God makes it clear by a dream that it was now safe for Joseph and his family to return home. Matthew ii. 22 tells us that Joseph was afraid when he came into the territory of Archelaus, Herod’s son. He was quite the worst of Herod’s descendants and Josephus tells us that in order to show he was equal to his father as an autocratic ruler he commenced his reign with a massacre of no less than three thousand people. Thus it was that God directed Joseph to Galilee, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken *through* the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene” (ii. 23).

The last phrase contains a difficulty, for there is nothing in the O.T. which seems to connect the word *Nazaraïos* (Nazarene) with the Messiah. Zahn has pointed out that there is no word “saying, *legonton*”, after “prophets”, a word which Matthew usually inserts when he quotes the prophetic utterances of the O.T. The inference is that “He shall be called a Nazarene” is not meant to be a direct quotation, but is the Evangelist’s explanation for what has gone before. In the early ages of Christianity Jerome suggested that this statement refers to those passages which predict that Christ would be despised, for John i. 46 and vii. 52 are linked with contempt for Nazareth. One thing is certain, there is no connection with the word Nazarite for the Lord Jesus was not a Nazarite. We should also note that Matthew says *prophets* not *prophet*. The reference is not to any one quotation, but the testimony of several O.T prophets such as Psalm xxii. 6-8; Isaiah liii. 2-4 which show Him to be the Nazarene “despised and rejected”.

We now come to another section of this Gospel which has three connected events, (1) the preaching of John the Baptist, (2) the baptizing of the Messiah and (3) the temptation in the wilderness.

Chapter iii. commences with the words “in those days”. Matthew does not intend any precise date. In fact he is passing over a period of some thirty years. But at last an event had taken place that produced excitement throughout the nation. After the long period of the prophets of the O.T., God had been silent for four long centuries since the time of Malachi. But this silence had been broken and a new prophet had appeared which stirred the interest of many in the nation. Doubtless this brought joy and expectancy, but when he delivered his message, some of this ardour must have cooled, for this prophet did not teach that because they were physically descended from Abraham the kingdom was automatically theirs and belonged to no-one else. He stressed the need for a change of heart, confession of sin and deeds which matched this change of mind (repentance). Every tree that did not produce such good fruit was in peril of being cut down.

This was *not* what Israel expected or wanted to hear, but the true messenger of God always gives the people what *they need*, not what they want.

John’s name means “gift of Jehovah” and is a shortened form of Johanan. He was indeed a gift from God, giving Israel God’s message which exactly suited their condition, preparing the way for the King and His kingdom. His first word was “repent” and here we have a difficulty, for there is no English word which exactly matches the Greek *metanoeo*. The English word repent means “to be sorry again” from the Latin *repenitet*. To make matters worse it gets confused with “penitence” and “penance”. The Latin Vulgate has “do penance” which unfortunately Wycliff followed. Dr. A. T. Robertson says that the Greek word has been hopelessly mistranslated. It does not basically mean “to be sorry” for the Greek already has a word for that, namely *metamelomai* which is used of Judas (Matt. xxvii. 3). The Syriac Version is better, “turn ye” for “turning” was the constant word of the Old Testament for Israel when they wandered away from God (e.g. Zech. i. 3).

John was to be a herald for the coming Messiah and King, and so he called the chosen people Israel to make themselves ready for this supreme event. He is called “the Baptizer” for it was this rite that distinguishes his ministry. This would not have been strange to his hearers who were Israelites, for the ritual of washing and cleansing was firmly entrenched in the law of Moses, both for the priests and also in connection with the offerings. To Israel had been committed the divine types and shadows of spiritual realities and water baptism was intended to signify among other things the need of purification and was accompanied by confession of sins:

“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the regions round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, *confessing their sins*” (iii. 5, 6).

All this was in view of the near coming of the Messiah:

“His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, gathering wheat into His barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (iii. 12, N.I.V.).

In view of this a change of heart and a change of life was essential. One is reminded of the similar testimony of the O.T. prophets such as Isaiah:

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil” (Isa. i. 16).

Likewise they testified to the fact the early work of the Messiah was cleansing. Zechariah foretells that at that time “a fountain shall be opened *for sin and uncleanness*” (Zech. xiii. 1).

Ezekiel xxxvi. 25-27 states:

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and *ye shall be clean*: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, *will I cleanse you*. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you”.

The baptism of John links itself of these O.T. Scriptures and combines confession of sin with this outward symbol of washing and cleanliness.

Matt. iii. 7 tells us that many Pharisees and Sadducees mingled with those who had come to John’s baptism. The Pharisees on the whole were self-confident, self-satisfied and self-sufficient. Their name means “Separatists” and they separate themselves from the mass of their fellows under the idea that they were holier and more spiritual to those around them. Their chief aim seemed to be to show off themselves as being superior to the rest of mankind.

The Sadducees in many respects differed from the Pharisees. They were the rationalists of the day. They clung to the outward ceremonies of the law, but were prominently worldly and worldly wise. Their religious conceptions were utterly hollow, and while the Baptist knew of the differences of these two sects, they were one in their opposition and appreciation of the truth. Scathingly he says to them:

“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (iii. 7, 8, N.I.V.).

The Lord Jesus likewise called them “snakes” on two occasions (Matthew xii. 34; xxiii. 33). By the power of the Holy Spirit John looked through and through them, and saw real antipathy to the truth and a lack of any conception of sin and failing and the need for repentance and change of action.

He said in effect, what brings you here with the mass of people you despise? There is only one thing that matters, *actions*, that go hand in hand with a humble state of mind: in other words “fruit meet for repentance”.

But this phrase in our English translation puts things the wrong way round and suggests that the fruit of good conduct is a preparation for repentance. The N.I.V. is much better, rendering the phrase “produce fruit in keeping with repentance”. John

challenges them and makes it clear that if their repentance is worth anything, it will be manifested by appropriate conduct.

Nor must they take refuge behind the idea that because they were the physical descendants of Abraham their future in the coming kingdom was assured. God was able to change the shingle on the banks of the Jordan if He so wished, and raise up children to Abraham (iii. 9). The Baptist continued:

“The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (iii. 10, N.I.V.).

Or like chaff—it will be burned up. In other words there will be a tremendous sorting out by God of those who desire to enter His kingdom. Not one will have a portion there who does not come up to the Divine standard. The Lord Jesus proclaimed the same truth when He said:

“Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots” (Matt. xv. 13, N.I.V.).

And who will do the uprooting? No human being, but God Himself! Before the establishment of the earthly kingdom there would inevitably be judgment and a Divine sorting out. The axe to cut out the false branches already is lying at the root of the tree, declared the Baptist (iii. 10). The present tenses are startling. This is not something that inevitably pertains to the distant future—it was a present reality. Here is no evolution of ages, a gradual development of the new order of things, taking centuries of improvement to work out. Rather the whole series is condensed into a single scene where God is the sole actor.

This is the testimony of many other Scriptures and it makes one wonder how the idea originated that this kingdom would be brought in slowly by the church preaching the gospel—it is so unscriptural. All is bound up with the Lord’s doings, either at His first Coming or His second Coming back to this earth.

The prophet goes on to elaborate this refining work of God:

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come One Who is more powerful than I, Whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (iii. 11, N.I.V.),

the object of which is to purge and refine by the fire of His holiness which is unquenchable (iii. 12).

We must take care with the word “unquenchable”, for it does not reveal the *duration* of the punishment. Dr. A. Plummer’s comment is:

“(the word) does not necessarily mean that the fire will burn for ever; still less that it will burn, but never consume, what is in it; but rather that it is so fierce that it cannot be extinguished. Here it is expressly stated that the worthless material will be consumed.”

There is no definite article before the words “Holy Spirit” in verse 11. Literally it reads “He shall baptize you with (or in) holy spirit and fire”. There is no need to debate whether this primarily refers to the Holy Spirit or His action. What is clear is that this baptism is not one of water, but is the refining, purging and purifying of those in Israel who will then be ready to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is judgment that is being spoken of by John not grace, and is in line with such O.T. passages as Isa. iv. 4:

“The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; He will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem *by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire*” (N.I.V.).

By such judgment the Lord, through the Spirit’s work, will “thoroughly purge His floor” (Matt. iii. 12).

The more we consider John’s ministry the more we realize how startling it must have been and entirely different to what the Jew was expecting. The Baptizer was truly the forerunner of the King, opening up the way for Him, so fulfilling Isa. xl. 3 which Matthew quotes:

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, *prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*”

The word *LORD* is the great title Jehovah. The One Whose way is being prepared is addressed as “our God”, which presents no problem to those who acknowledge His Deity, even if they cannot fully comprehend the fullness and greatness of His Being. In fact no one can; nor are they asked to do so, but faith steps in where reason cannot reach and rests upon the unchanging Word of God which is always true and is the ground for faith to rest on.

The third great item in this section of Matthew’s Gospel is the baptism of the Messiah. This may bring problems, because we may be certain of one thing, the Lord Jesus had no need to repent for He had no sin. Of Himself He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. vii. 26). Then why did He submit to water baptism by John? We must consider this in our next study.

No.6. iii. 13 - iv. 11.
pp. 73 - 79

Matthew now proceeds to record the baptism of the Messiah:

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him” (Matt. iii. 13-15).

Of one thing we can be perfectly sure, namely that the Lord Jesus had no need of baptism for purification, for, as we have seen, He was the holy One, without sin or taint of any kind. This John recognized, making him most reluctant to carry out this rite. Verse 14 tells us that John “forbad Him”. The word means he tried to prevent it, but the Lord countered this by saying “it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness”, that is to fulfil all that was resident in the purpose and will of God. If the Lord had not submitted to baptism, He would have appeared to hold aloof from His forerunner, whereas the ministries of the two are linked together. The baptism was only half the story, for the Messiah had yet to be anointed by the Spirit. It was the beginning of His public career as the Messiah, like the anointing of a king. In the realm of type and shadow, priests, prophets and kings were anointed at the beginning of their ministry and the Son of God was no exception to this:

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, This is My Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased” (iii. 16, N.I.V.).

It is not certain whether Matthew means that the Spirit of God took the form of a dove and came down or that He descended like a dove does. But in view of Luke’s statement that the Holy Spirit descended *in a bodily shape* like a dove (Luke iii. 22) we take the former is what is meant. Meekness and gentleness are the qualities associated with the dove and the Messiah was the One Who was “meek and lowly of heart” (Matt. xi. 29) and was soon to announce that “the meek shall inherit the earth” (Matt. v. 5). However we must not assume that He Who was conceived of the Spirit should be devoid of Spirit until His baptism. The outward symbol of the dove reminds us that He was unique in this respect. Isa. xi. 2 had foretold that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon Him and moreover John iii. 34 assures us that the Spirit was not given to Him “by measure”. There was no limitation of the Spirit and His enabling for the Messiah.

Contrary to popular teaching, the baptism in water of Christ was not given as an example to follow. In addition to what we have seen, the Apostle John gives us another reason in quoting the words of John the Baptist:

“. . . . but (in order) that He should be made manifest to Israel, *therefore* am I come baptizing with water” (John i. 31).

This baptism had a direct message for *Israel* in showing that their Messiah had come and brought them under responsibility in their attitude towards Him. The voice of the Father from heaven richly confirmed His anointings. “This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” Each manifestation of the Godhead is represented here (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as the formal entrance of the Lord upon His Messianic ministry. The Lord Jesus said “I do always those things that please Him” (the Father, John viii. 29), words which could not be uttered with truth by any human being. The Father’s declaration is repeated at the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5) and shows the constant unchanging worthiness of the Son of God.

With this account of the Lord’s baptism, the Baptizer’s witness as a prelude to the Christ’s earthly ministry closes. John the Baptist was very much like Elijah of the O.T. and was designated so before his birth by the angel who declared that he would go “*in the spirit and power of Elias* (Elijah), to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children” (Luke i. 17). In appearance he looked like Elijah and dressed like him. He ate frugally and lived a strict, self-controlled life. Like Elijah too he was fearless and without partiality, being ready to denounce kings and rulers when they erred from God’s ways, as well as correct and educate the ordinary people. As to whether he actually fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy concerning Elijah we shall have to consider as we study this Gospel.

We now come to the third item in this section of Matthew’s Gospel and that is the record of the threefold temptation of the Lord Jesus. The word ‘tempt’ means to test and it is not surprising that the Lord was tested by the devil immediately after His baptism which signaled the beginning of His Messianic work. This is a frequent experience of those who step out into the open for Christ. Satan desires to “sift them” as he did Peter later on to ruin their work if possible.

Matthew iv. tells us that Christ was “led of the Spirit” into the wilderness. Mark’s account gives a stronger word (*ekballei*) “drives” (“sent Him out”, N.I.V.). It was a strong compulsion of the Holy Spirit that led Christ to go into the desert to contend with the foe who is designated “the god of this age”. This attack by Satan was nothing less than an attempt by him to overthrow the Messiah at the very beginning of His public career and witness, as the agony in the garden was a similar attempt to overthrow Him at the end of His witness and prevent Him reaching the cross and accomplishing His mighty work of redemption.

Satan never gives up nor does he tire. Eph. vi. teaches us concerning the constant warfare with the powers of darkness and the Lord Jesus was not exempt from this.

Matthew tells us that after fasting 40 days and being in a state of hunger, the devil came to Him. He was completely alone with none to help and Mark adds the fact that He was “with the wild beasts” so there was an element of danger as well. The evil one knows the best time to attack is a time of physical weakness. The change of scene here is mental. We need not assume that Satan literally moved the Lord from place to place. From a high mountain only a fraction of the world could be seen, but the glory of all the kingdoms of the world could be suggested to the mind. The tests came from the outside

for there was nothing sinful *in* Christ that could respond to Satan's evil suggestions, as there is in us who have a sinful nature. We now give Matthew's account of the Temptation:

“After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread. Jesus answered, It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took Him to the holy city and made Him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, he said, Throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered him, It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. All this I will give you, he said, If you will bow down and worship me. Jesus said to him, Away from me Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only. Then the devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him” (Matthew iv. 2-11, N.I.V.).

In the narrative of the Temptation we have the first instance of the Lord quoting Scripture. In this Gospel the Lord quotes thirteen of the books of the O.T. and clearly refers to two other books, besides other allusions. For the student of the Word we give the occurrences—Genesis (xix. 4, 5); Exodus (v. 21, 27, 33, 38; xix. 18, 19) some of these might refer to Deuteronomy; Leviticus (v. 43; xix. 19; xxii. 39); Numbers (v. 33); Deuteronomy (iv. 4, 7, 10; v. 31; xxii. 37; xxiv. 31); Psalms (xxii. 44; xxiii. 39; xxvi.64; xxvii.46); Isaiah (xiii.14,15; xv.8; xxi.13; xxiv.7,10,29,31); Jeremiah (xvi.13); Daniel (xxiv. 15, 21, 30; xxvii. 64); Hosea (ix. 13; xii. 27); Micah (x. 35, 36); Zechariah (xxiv. 30; xxvi. 31); Malachi (xi. 10). The references to I Samuel (xii. 14) and Jonah (xii. 38, 41) are clear. We shall completely miss the point of these temptations unless we realize that the Lord Jesus came to this earth as appointed by the Father, and as the faithful Servant, who was completely dependent and obedient to Him. Christ Himself said “My meat is to do the *will of Him that sent Me*, and to finish *His work*” (John iv. 34). Christ's will, His words, and His work were not His own, but the Father's (John vi. 38; xiv. 10; v. 36; ix. 4). Thus it was that He lived in complete dependence upon the Father, and in doing this, He did not use His own divine power for His own needs. He could have done so, but only at the expense of forsaking the role of the obedient Servant Who was always at the disposal of the Father and dependent on Him for everything.

The devil's first words look back to the declaration of the Father from heaven, “this is My beloved Son”. Satan said, “if you are the Son of God”. The ‘if’ is not one of doubt, but as Professor A. T. Robertson says this is “a condition of the first class which assumes the condition to be true”, so ‘if’ could be rendered “since”. “Since you are the Son of God, change these stones into bread”, thus tempting Christ to be unwilling to render to His Father the complete obedience that His position as the Servant demanded. It was *when the Father willed*, His hunger would be satisfied, and for this He had to wait in order to be faithful.

But Satan in effect said “no, why wait? There is nothing sinful in relieving hunger by eating a meal. You have the power to do it, use it and satisfy your need”. This was

subtle indeed, for of course there is obviously no sin in eating when one is hungry. But the Lord's answer is clear. He realized that He had been subjected to the discipline of this fast for the same purpose that Israel had been "suffered to hunger" in the wilderness, namely that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Deut. viii. 3). The Father in His own time and way would supply the physical needs of His Son. The duty of the Lord was to be obedient in His dependence and not to decide for Himself either the moment or the manner in which His fast should be ended. And so the Lord so aptly quoted a verse from Deuteronomy which had Israel's physical test in view regarding food, which was so much like His own at this time.

The second temptation revolved around the fact that people are impressed by the spectacular and even the Lord's enemies wanted Him to give them a "sign", something out of the ordinary that might convince them. Consequently the devil suggests that the Lord should throw Himself down from the roof of the Temple in the sight of the crowds. Of course you will be supported and protected from harm by angels! This would certainly impress people. To try to prove his point Satan does not hesitate to quote Scripture, and one must confess he often knows the Bible better than professing Christians. He quotes from Psa. xci. 11 but significantly omits the words "to keep thee in all thy ways". This alters the truth of the original—for God has never promised to keep His children in all their ways, *if these ways are contrary to His will*. We are not allowed to take unnecessary risks and count on the Lord's protection. What dangers are an essential part of fulfilling the Lord's will, we may be sure we shall be kept safe in going through them. We notice too that Satan took care not to quote the next verse, namely verse 13, which gives the destruction of *the adder*, as well as the lion. This was getting too near home for the devil who could not have forgotten Gen. iii. 14, 15! The Lord Jesus confounds him by quoting again from Deut. vi. 16, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God". Putting God to the test is not trusting Him. The Saviour is willing to face death when the Father reveals that He should do so and not before this time.

Satan now tries a third temptation and this comes nearer his one constant aim, and that is to attain God's place and receive the worship of creation. Christ is given a panoramic view of the kingdoms of the world and their glory "in a moment of time" (Luke iv. 5). The enemy declares that they are his, "for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke iv. 6). Christ does not contradict him for he is the "usurper" who temporarily is in command of the world system. He is the "prince of this world" and now he suggests that it would be the easiest thing for Christ to gain control of all these kingdoms by the simple act of bowing down and worshipping him! All the difficulty and pain of the future can be avoided if He will only do this! It was a short cut to glory.

Had the Lord done this, He would have subscribed to the diabolical doctrine that the end justifies the means, the observation of which has tripped up thousands. Evil can never be overcome by evil and the reign of God can never be established by Satanic means. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve", words which need to be constantly proclaimed today. The carrying out of the devil's plan would have meant the surrender of the Son of God to the world ruler of this darkness.

Its threefold aim was to gain: (1) a temporal, not a spiritual dominion; (2) to gain it at once; and (3) this would have made the Messiah a vice-regent of Satan and not of God.

“Begone” Christ says to the deceiver and Satan is forced to leave Him temporarily. Luke iv. 13 adds that this was only until a good opportunity occurred again. The order of the three temptations vary in the first three Gospels, but this does not cause any difficulty. We can praise the Lord that the victory was won in spite of the physical weakness after a forty days fast and the repeated attacks of the devil. We are told that angels came and ministered to the Lord, evidently strengthening Him and what rejoicing must have filled their hearts as they contemplated the mighty Conqueror, empowered by His heavenly Father.

Before we pass on, let us remember that the Lord Jesus did not triumph because He used the power of His Godhead against Satan. As an example, He used effectively the holy Scriptures which we can all use. This is the mightiest weapon against the evil one. It is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph. vi. 17) and is the only weapon which can defeat Satan and all his wiles.

There has to be constant practice in the use of weapons if they are to be effective. To many the Bible is a closed book because it is never used or studied. To such it is not a weapon at all for it rests on the shelf unused. May we all, while we have the opportunity, so read and receive the Word of God that we may have the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all wisdom (Col. iii. 16) and so be ready to meet the deceiver with the sword of the Spirit.

No.7. iv. 12 - 25.
pp. 88 - 93

Verse 12 of Matthew chapter iv. begins a new paragraph which gives the commencement of the Galilean ministry. A year had elapsed which is not mentioned by the Evangelist. The reason for Christ's return to Galilee is given here, namely that John had been arrested and imprisoned. This is confirmed by Mark, although Matthew alone records that, leaving Nazareth (where He had been rejected [Luke iv. 16-31]), the Lord came and dwelt in Capernaum in the north-west shore of the Sea Galilee in the district once known as Zebulun and Naphtalim, but now incorporated in the larger circular area known as Galilee (Galilee means circle or circuit). This was where the Jewish population was largely mixed with Gentiles, hence “Galilee of the Gentiles”. Capernaum became at this point as Matt. ix. 1 says, “His own city”.

The Evangelist finds in this the fulfillment of Isa. ix. 1-7, which describes a time when that same region, the northern part of the land of Israel ravaged by the Assyrian invader, would one day experience “a great light” (Matt. iv. 13-16). He Who was the

light of the world would remove its darkness. The ministry of the Lord Jesus here continued the Baptist's, which had suddenly come to an end through his arrest ordered by Herod Antipas.

Verse 17 gives the first of the two time periods contained in Matthew's Gospel, "*From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*". This was identical with the Baptist's message. In xvi. 21 we have the same introductory words, but this time the Lord begins to foretell His rejection and death. In chapter iv. the nearness of the kingdom is announced but there is no *explanation* of that kingdom. In fact in none of the Gospels do we find a detailed explanation of the kingdom of heaven. It was evident there was no need for such an explanation, for that kingdom had been foretold in all its glory in the O.T. It was the Messianic kingdom which had Israel at its centre. If John the Baptist and Christ were revealing another kingdom, different from the O.T., then it would have been necessary to make this perfectly clear to their hearers who were Jews, raised up and instructed in the O.T. Scriptures.

G. N. Peters in his *Theocratic Kingdom* observes:

"The New Testament begins the announcement of the kingdom in terms expressive of its being previously well known the preaching of the kingdom, its simple announcement, without the least attempt to *explain* its meaning and nature, the very language in which it was conveyed to the Jews—all pre-supposed that it was a subject *familiar to all*. John the Baptist, Jesus and the seventy, all proclaimed the kingdom in a way without definition or explanation that indicated that their hearts *were acquainted with its meaning*" (1:181).

The nearness of this great kingdom was made real by the coming to earth of the KING. All that it awaited was the repentance and acceptance of the King-Priest, by Israel, hence the call to the nation by the Baptist and the Lord.*

[* -- For further details of this most important fact, see the author's *The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth*, chapter 5.]

The Kingdom of Heavens and the Kingdom of God.

The phrase, the kingdom of heaven, is found only in Matthew's Gospel where it occurs 32 times and its sphere is defined in the "Lord's prayer", "Thy kingdom comes. Thy will be done *in earth as it is in heaven*" (Matt. vi. 10) and further exemplified by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount in His quotation from Psa. xxxvii. 11, "the meek *shall inherit the earth*" (Matt. v. 5 and see Psa. xxxvii. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34). Needless to say this is not equivalent to a kingdom *in heaven* if words mean anything at all. That there *is* a kingdom in heaven, other Scriptures reveal, but we must not import this into Matthew's Gospel which is most evidently dealing with the Messianic kingdom of the O.T. This kingdom will be like "the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deut. xi. 21), when "the Most High ruleth in *the kingdom of men*" (Dan. iv. 25, 26).

The kingdom of God is wider in scope and is as universal as the sovereignty of God over the whole creation which includes heaven as well as earth and finds its occurrences mainly in the epistles which later develop the heavenly aspect of God's kingdom.

The two phrases are sometimes used interchangeably in the Gospels as the following references show: Matt. iv. 17 and Mark i. 15; Matt. v. 3 and Luke vi. 20; Matt. xix. 14 and Mark x. 14; Matt. xix. 23 and Luke xviii. 24; Matt. xi. 11 and Luke vii. 28; Matt. xiii. 11 and Luke viii. 10. There are five passages in Matthew where he departs from the normal and uses the phrase, "the kingdom of God" (Matthew vi. 33; xii. 28; xix. 24; xxi. 31, 43). However, because these two phrases are sometimes used interchangeably in the Gospels, we must not assume that they are always identical in meaning in all their occurrences in the N.T. The kingdom of heaven is the mediatorial kingdom of the O.T. and is related to God's dominion on the earth which is realized at the Second Advent when "the Son of Man comes in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28) and takes control of earthly affairs. The kingdom of God is wider and includes all heaven as well as heavenly beings. The reason why they can be used with a similar meaning in the Gospels is that the lesser aspect (the kingdom of heaven) is included in the greater (the kingdom of God). We can say with truth that London is in England, or that it is in Great Britain, but it would be erroneous to conclude that England and Great Britain are identical terms.

To Israel alone was the kingdom of heaven made known at the beginning, because, as the O.T. makes clear, they should be the centre of it and from them the knowledge of its glories should radiate all over the earth, so that "*all families of the earth*" might be blessed (Gen. xii. and many other Scriptures). This is why Israel dominates the kingdom purposes revealed in Matthew. It is "to the Jew first", but finally not to the *Jew only*, and this is what Israel forgot, and in their pride imagined that they alone formed the kingdom of the heavens on earth.

Between the summary of the Lord's preaching given in iv. 17 and the description of His Galilean ministry in verses 23-25, Matthew gives the call of the two pairs of brothers who formed the nucleus of the apostles. They had previously been disciples of John the Baptist and through him had come to know the Messiah in His preliminary ministry in Judaea, as recorded by John, about which both Matthew and Mark are silent. Matthew marks the readiness of both pairs of brothers to obey the call, although it meant leaving their means of livelihood. They do not hesitate, for it is with regal authority that the Lord speaks. They were listening to the voice of the King and His authority is not resented, but immediately obeyed, even to the point of leaving their fishing nets without waiting to draw them in.

Their response meant that the Lord was not surrounded, as formerly, by a crowd of casual and constantly changing hearts, but by a select number of constant followers. It is with these disciples that He traversed Galilee, teaching in the synagogues. In this new experience they were learning how to become fishers of men, as the Lord had willed for them. Three of these men, Peter, James and John, seemed to be more intimate with the Lord than the rest of the Twelve. They were specially privileged to be alone with Him at

the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark.v.37), on the mount of Transfiguration (Matt.xvii.1), and in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 37).

Matthew now goes on to tell us that, unlike the Baptist, who required people to come to him in the wilderness, the Messiah went to them: He "went about in all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the good news of the kingdom". The kingdom, so long awaited, was the constant theme, and at last it was near, with the presence of the King in their midst. Not only this, but He healed "*all manner* of sickness and *all manner* of disease among the people" (iv. 23), and the next verse expounds this by saying, "and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, the epileptics and the paralytics, and He healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed Him" (verses 24, 25, N.I.V.). Furthermore His name spread beyond the bounds of Galilee into the Roman province of Syria (verse 24).

Sometimes this great healing ministry is represented by the critics as nothing more than faith healing, "physical methods" or "moral therapeutics", but it is quite incredible that all those who were laid in the streets were no more than neurotics. Can leprosy, dropsy, fever, withered hand, issue of blood, blindness and deafness be cured by emotional methods?

We may pause to ask why this healing ministry takes such an important place in the proclamation of the kingdom? In the O.T. those who faithfully followed the instructions of the law, were guaranteed good health:

"The Lord will take away from thee *all sickness*, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt upon thee" (Deut. vii. 15).

Such were to be blessed by the Lord "above all people" (Deut. vii. 14). No one can get the full enjoyment from life if they are constantly ill and it is perfectly clear that, among many features of the kingdom, is good health. It is quite wrong to suppose that the kingdom of God is a spiritual one and nothing more. It is certainly spiritual basically, but its outward effect touches all departments of life (This important point is discussed in the author's *The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth*). With so much physical, mental and spiritual healing, the Lord Jesus was demonstrating to the people the character and rich blessings of the kingdom He had come to proclaim.

However, there was more than this in the frequent miracles that the Lord Jesus performed. After the resurrection Peter said:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man *approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you*, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts ii. 22).

It was not that Christ performed miracles that proved His Messiahship, for Satan can work these to deceive (II Thess. ii. 8, 9). The miracles of the Gospels and Acts were those predicted by the Old Testament as being characteristic of Messiah's coming and ministry, for them "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be

unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6).

It was by these specific miracles, as Peter declares, God confirmed the Lord’s ministry and they were all *literally fulfilled* day after day before the people of Israel. Nor do they cease at the crucifixion, for the Acts period is full of similar spectacular miracles (see Acts ii. 43; v. 12, 15, 16; vi. 8; viii. 6; xiv. 3; xv. 12; xi. 11, 12; xxviii. 9).

These signs and wonders were God’s confirmation of the kingdom message (Heb.ii.3,4) to those of Israel who believed (I Cor. i. 6, 7) and a divine witness against those who believed not (I Cor. xiv. 21, 22). As long as the chosen people exist as a nation in covenant relationship to God, these evidential miracles persist, but when Israel is set aside in unbelief at the end of the Acts, they cease as kingdom signs to Israel. God can and does still work miracles, but they are not evidences of the mediatorial kingdom of God relating to the earth. These were all *public* and *spectacular* in character. At least twenty (20) of the Acts miracles were seen by witnesses, sometimes by great multitudes, as on the day of Pentecost. Even the most vehement opposers could not deny their genuineness. They were forced to admit “that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it” (Acts.iv.15,16). At the conclusion of the Acts period these great public miracles came to an end.

It is most important that we should have a Scriptural understanding of these miracles and signs performed by the Lord and the apostles. To take them out of their divine setting can be dangerous, for it gives Satan the opportunity to travesty them and so deceive the unwary. In the Acts period God gave to believers the gift of *discerning of spirits*, to enable them to sift infallibly the true from the false. Hence the warning in I.John.iv.1-3.

**No.8. The Sermon on the Mount (v. 1 - 7).
pp. 114 - 118**

We now come to the first of the great address contained in Matthew's Gospel. Before we consider the details, there are one or two observations that must be made. We must not fall into error of imagining that the Lord said a thing once only and never repeated it. How many times did He use the phrase "he that believeth in Me"? He was constantly drawing the attention of His hearers to Himself, for this was fundamental to His ministry and witness. We may be sure that we have only a few occurrences preserved in the Gospels.

With regard to the Sermon on the Mount, it would not be safe to say that this address was given on one occasion and never repeated. We have a shorter version given by Luke. Is he abbreviating Matthew's account or recording another occasion when the Lord repeated some of His teaching? This sermon is presented as one discourse in the first Gospel, whereas, various items from it are spread over Luke's Gospel in at least ten places. The diligent student should compare the following:

Matthew	Luke	Matthew	Luke
v. 3-12	vi. 20-23	vi. 24	xvi. 13
v. 13	xiv. 34, 35	vi. 25-34	xii. 22-31
v. 15	xi. 33	vii. 1-5	vi. 37-42
v. 18	xvi. 17	vii. 7-11	xi. 9-13
v. 25, 26	xii. 57-59	vii. 12	vi. 31
v. 31, 32	xvi. 18	vii. 13, 14	xiii. 23, 24
v. 38-48	vi. 27-30, 32-36	vii. 15-20	vi. 43-45
vi 9-15	xi. 1-4	vii. 23	xiii. 27
vi. 19-21	xii. 33, 34	vii. 24-27	vi. 47-49
vi. 22, 23	xi. 34-36		

Matthew may have gathered together in one discourse the various subjects of the Lord's teaching. It is equally possible that Christ Himself presented these subjects in one discourse and Luke records items at different places in his Gospel. We cannot be dogmatic about this, nor is it necessary, for however the Lord's teaching is grouped together, the genuineness, authority and value of it is not affected in any way.

Matthew gives no indication of date, but it would be wrong to assume that this sermon was given at the beginning of the Lord's ministry. We must remember that Matthew only gives us two dates in his Gospel, as we have seen. Moreover he does not attempt to present events in their chronological order. The multitudes in v. 1 clearly refer to the great multitudes of the previous verse (iv. 25), and these did not gather until the Lord had been working and witnessing for some time and the report of Him had spread abroad.

Furthermore the doctrine contained in the Sermon on the Mount is certainly not elementary. It is presented to those who had already believed and been instructed to some degree. In view of the basic teaching given in John iii. to Nicodemus, it must be true that His disciples who were listening, had already responded and put their faith in Him:

“Except a man be born again, *he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John iii. 3).

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (verse 5).

These statements definitely exclude unbelievers participating in the kingdom of heaven. The sermon was evidently given about the middle of the Galilean ministry.

Verse 1 and 2 of Matt. v. read:

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and he opened His mouth, and taught *them*, saying”,

Who represent His disciples? We must remember that this sermon is given *before* Matthew records the calling of the Twelve in chapter x., whereas in Luke, the Twelve are called *before* his summary of the Sermon on the Mount (Luke vi. 13-16). Whether His disciples consisted only of the two pairs of brothers He had called, or all the Twelve we cannot be sure, but one thing is clear, these disciples were sitting nearest to Him as He gave His teaching. In Luke’s account a great multitude of people also came to hear Him (Luke vi. 17). He “stood in the plain” of the A.V. should be rendered “He stood on a level place” as the N.I.V., and this could have been on the side of the hill as He ascended. The discourse was given largely for the *instruction of the disciples*, and we must keep this constantly in mind as we ponder over each verse.

The word “blessed” occurs 9 times in verses 3-11. It is not the normal word, which is *eulogetos*, but *makarios* which is difficult to render exactly in English. “Happy” comes nearest to it and it is actually applied to God in I Tim. i. 11 and vi. 15. There is no copula (is or are) in these opening verses, so they be translated “happy the poor in spirit”, “happy those that mourn”, etc. Or it could be rendered “O the happiness of”. The word translated happy refers to bliss which is attached to each promise. Expositors variously number these as 7, 8 or 9. They are 9 if verses 11 and 12 are considered as a distinct and complete unit. They are 8 if verses 11 and 12 are regarded as expansions of verse 10. They are 7 if the numbering is regulated by distinctions in the subject matter of the promises. In the Gospel of Luke there is no question about the number, for here we have 4 beatitudes and 4 woes.

Some of them seem to overlap, for the poor in spirit are most likely to be meek; those who are merciful are likely to be peacemakers; those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are likely to be pure in heart. Those who are persecuted for righteousness sake will mourn for those who stoop to do this sort of thing and they will surely be comforted. These verses are seeming paradoxes, for according to God’s reckoning, blessedness begins where man reckons that misery begins and there is nothing like this teaching in Jewish or Gentile philosophy.

With what surprise those around the Lord must have listened! To some in the crowd, the statements must have come as a shock, for the Jews' conception of the Messiah was one of a mighty conqueror who would free them from the Roman yoke and there is nothing like that in this great address. The happiness described in these verses does not come from human opinion, but rather from the condition ascribed to them in the estimate of God. Matthew does not attempt to gather all the Beatitudes uttered by the Lord into this sermon. He could have added "blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (xiii. 16); "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (xi. 6); "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (xxiv. 46); "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke xi. 28); "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29).

It was possible that the Lord Jesus, on the hill side, had the Psalms in mind, for they give many instances of blessedness, the first commencing with "blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly".

"Now when He saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and he began to teach them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 1-3, N.I.V.).

The Greek says "the mountain", although we do not know which mountain it was. It was evidently a prominent hill in the district from which the Lord found it more convenient to give His address. In the manner of the rabbis, He sat down, as they did, and taught His disciples. He commences to describe the character and conduct of those who will be worthy to enter into His great kingdom of the heavens.

Who are the "poor in spirit"? It certainly does not mean spiritual poverty, but rather those who have no confidence in themselves, or as Paul said later "no confidence in the flesh", but every confidence in God that He is able to supply all they require. In other words they are truly humble in mind, the very opposite of being self-sufficient and proud as the Pharisees were. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican illustrates these two classes well (Luke xviii. 10-14). The Pharisee was full of himself and his good deeds, full of pride. The Publican, on the other hand, made no attempt to exalt himself. He could only describe himself as "the sinner" and depend on the mercy of the Lord. The comment of the Lord Jesus was that he went down to his house "justified" rather than the other and then He adds, "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*" (verse 14). This man was indeed "poor in spirit", ready to enter the kingdom, if God willed, and be exalted by Him in that kingdom.

From this first Beatitude, we get the clear teaching that proud self-righteous people will never enter into the Lord's kingdom. As we study each Beatitude, we get a picture of the character of those in this future kingdom. In Luke's account, the words "in spirit" are omitted and reads, "blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke vi. 20, N.I.V.). Luke may include therefore, those who are literally poor, but this word goes wider to include the mind, for the literally poor are not necessarily "poor in

spirit”. “Blessed is he that considereth the poor” (Psa. xli. 1) could be understood, but “blessed are the poor” would have sounded strange doctrine indeed.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. v. 4, N.I.V.).

This does not refer to those who are lamenting from *any cause*. Much will depend on the cause of the mourning and the mental outlook of the mourner. Such may mourn over their own shortcomings and sins, but they will also be concerned about the sin and failure and indifference of the world around them, which interferes with the plans of God and His sovereignty over the earth. They will be comforted when they realize that nothing finally can overturn His almighty purpose which will surely be fulfilled, and then “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. vii. 17).

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. v. 5).

These words are uttered by the One Who called Himself “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. xi. 29) and shall the disciple be above his Master? Christ is quoting from Psa.xxxvii., where the phrase “shall inherit the earth” occurs 5 times (verses 9, 11, 22, 29, 34, land and earth represent the same word). The land is surely that which was promised to Abraham and his posterity, from the Nile to the river Euphrates (Gen.xv.18). Meekness is often misunderstood and reckoned as weakness. Moses was described as “very meek, above all men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numb. xii. 3) but he was anything but weak. Meekness is the gentleness of real strength, certainly not effeminacy. Meek people are humble so far as their own attainments are concerned, but they have a mighty tower of strength divinely given to draw on when needed, and can be resolute and unbending when demanded by circumstances.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled”
(Matt. v. 6, N.I.V.).

It is noteworthy that it is the hunger and thirst for righteousness, and not the possession of it, that is pronounced “blessed”. To assess oneself as righteous, like the Pharisee in the parable, is fatal. To know one needs it is not enough. But to have a passionate and persistent longing for something better like righteousness is always good. We should never be content with our spiritual condition. It is the *hungry* soul that the Lord fills with goodness (Psa. cvii. 9) and our aim should constantly be Christ-likeness even though we can never completely attain to it.

Such will be the attitude of mind of those who seek to enter the kingdom, the Lord declares.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matt. v. 7, N.I.V.).

This Beatitude relates to the dealing of men with one another, and those who exhibit mercy will themselves find mercy in the day of judgment and reckoning for service. God’s mercy is at once cause and effect. Because God is merciful to him, the righteous person is merciful to others and because he is merciful, he wins God’s mercy. This mercy is frequent in the O.T. (Psa. lxxxvi. 15; ciii. 8; cxi. 4; cxii. 4; cxvi. 5; cxlv. 8) and is often joined with graciousness and compassion. The need for mercy and

compassion shown to others is vividly portrayed in the parable of Matt. xviii. 21-35 and the divine judgment on those who deal harshly with others.

**No.9. The Sermon on the Mount (cont'd) (v. 8 - 12).
pp. 125 - 130**

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. v. 8).

This does not only mean a mind that is free from sin, but rather single-mindedness, whose first desire is continually to the Lord and His claims. We remember the warning of double-mindedness (James i. 8). One of the features of our great and certain hope is that “we shall see Him as He is” and this will be true of all the callings of the redeemed.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matt. v. 9, N.I.V.).

It is true to say that the “worthy walk” always leads to peace and not enmity or division. In other words, peace leads to unity, and unity is very important in the outworking of the purposes of God, hence the three divine unities of Eph. iv., the sevenfold unity of the Spirit, of the Faith and of the Body.

God’s work can proceed with unity; it is hindered by division, hence Satan’s aim to constantly divide the people of God. The One Who is the Lord and Head of the Body is the Prince of Peace, Whose kingdom is one of peace. Each member’s spiritual experience starts with peace (Rom. v. 1) and continues with it, for peace is an important part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23). Peacemaking begins at home, in the mind, and then spreads to all God’s family.

The eighth Beatitude deals with men’s attitude towards the believer:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. v. 10, N.I.V.).

And this attitude will often be one of hostility:

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you . . . but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you . . . if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you . . .” (John xv. 18-20).

The Lord has warned us beforehand of the opposition and hatred of an unbelieving world. Most people dislike those whose principles differ greatly from their own, and specially those whose principles are much higher than their own. Such are a standing reproach to those who are not righteous, and it is exasperating to be constantly reminded that one’s life is not what it ought to be.

The believer then, who is reflecting His Lord, must not be surprised if he is misunderstood and is treated with coldness, contempt or ridicule; for this is just the treatment that his Saviour experienced. In this Beatitude there is another seeming paradox, but the blessedness here, as the next verse shows, leads to God's commendation at the end, with reward that lasts for ever. The pathway of the believer is much the same whatever calling and whatever time we are dealing with; it is never a way of ease and freedom from trouble. Later on, the Apostle Paul stressed this when he said "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22).

The next verses in Matt. v., verses 11 and 12, are companions of the one we have been considering:

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. v. 11, 12, N.I.V.).

This Beatitude amplifies the one given before, but one thing must not be missed, and that is the words "for My sake" or "because of Me". There can be no reward for suffering for one's own wrongdoing. The slanderous treatment of the above verses must not be true, but must be entirely for Christ's sake. The Lord can never commend any one who deserves all the evil said of him and done to him here.

We have seen that the kingdom which John the Baptist and Christ proclaimed was the great Messianic kingdom so graphically described by the O.T. prophets. Peter in his sermon recorded in Acts iii., does not hesitate to link this kingdom, this time of refreshing and restoration from the Lord, as the time described by *all the prophets from Samuel onwards, for they foretold of these days*, he declared (Acts iii. 19-26). The point at issue is this, is the Sermon on the Mount describing this kingdom? Is it a time of persecution, reviling and slandering of God's people? Is it a time of enduring all the losses and crosses of this sermon? Is evil still going to abound? Will it be a time when God's people will be hated of all nations? (Matt. x. 22 and xxiv. 9). The kingdom in this great address is looked on as future:

"*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*" (vi. 10).

"*The meek shall inherit the earth*" (v. 5).

"*They shall be filled*" (v. 6).

"*Many will say to Me in that day*" (vii. 22).

When at last the Lord's prayer is answered and that kingdom becomes a reality, it will be a time when God's will is done perfectly, as it is done in heaven. Does the Sermon on the Mount describe such a time we ask again? And the answer must be "no", or the Word of God absolutely misleads. What we do see clearly is a persecuted, waiting people, suffering in the absence of their rightful King, sustained by the hope that, when He comes and the kingdom is set up, they will receive their great reward when they, the meek, shall inherit the earth and receive the rich blessings of this great kingdom.

Once we recognize this, we are better able to decide whether the Sermon on the Mount was addressed to the Church which is His Body or whether, as some maintain, it

gives the laws of the kingdom when set up. We feel, from the standpoint of interpretation, that both these conceptions are wrong, for the former assumes the kingdom of heaven to be the church and the latter assumes that the great Messianic kingdom is one of suffering and loss, whereas the prophets maintained that it would be the time when Christ should reign gloriously as the Son of David:

“In His days shall the *righteous flourish; and abundance of peace* so long as the moon endureth” (Psa. lxxii. 7),

and so many are the growing O.T. descriptions of this kingdom, both spiritually and temporally along these lines, that there is no need to quote them.

The two great key thoughts of the Sermon on the Mount, and in fact the whole Gospel, are *reward* and *entry into the kingdom*. The Sermon is giving us the qualities of those who are permitted to enter and those who will be shut out.

We will now give the outline of the section before us:

- A | v. 1-16. Reward.
- B | v. 17. The Law and the Prophets.
- C | v. 19, 20. Entry into the kingdom.
- D | v. 21-44. But I say unto you.
- E | v. 45-48. The Perfect (spiritually mature).
- A | vi. 1 - vii. 11. Reward.
- B | vii. 12. The Law and the Prophets.
- C | vii. 13-23. Entry into the kingdom.
- D | vii. 24-29. These sayings of Mine.
- E | vii. 24. The Wise.

The word for ‘enter’ or ‘go into’ occurs no less than 35 times in the Gospel of Matthew. Five of these occurrences are found in the Sermon on the Mount. The word is *eiserchomai*:

“. . . . except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case *enter into* the kingdom of heaven” (v. 20).

“. . . . when thou prayest, *enter into* thy closet” (vi. 6).

“*Enter ye in* at the strait gate broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which *go in* thereat” (vii. 13).

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, *shall enter* into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father” (vii. 21).

It is clear that conditions for getting into this kingdom are severe, and bear in mind that the whole sermon is addressed primarily to the *disciples*, saved men who had been “born again” by believing in Christ. This will no doubt cause problems, but Scriptural problems are meant to be faced, and must be faced if we want truth.

Other references in this Gospel which bear directly on the kingdom are the following:

“. . . . I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never *enter* the kingdom of heaven” (xviii. 3, N.I.V.).

“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you *to enter* life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire” (xviii. 8, N.I.V.), (likewise verse 9).

“. . . . If you want to *enter* life, obey the commandments” (xix. 17, N.I.V.).

“. . . . it is hard for a rich man to *enter* the kingdom of heaven” (xix. 23, N.I.V.).

“. . . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to *enter* the kingdom of God” (xix. 24, N.I.V.).

“Friend, he asked, how did you *get in here* without wedding clothes? The man was speechless” (xxii. 12, N.I.V.).

“. . . . you hypocrites you yourselves do not *enter*, nor will you let those *enter* who are trying to” (xxiii. 13, N.I.V.).

“. . . . the virgins who were ready *went in* with him to the wedding banquet” (xxv. 10, N.I.V.).

“. . . . well done, thou good and faithful servant *enter* thou into the joy of thy Lord” (xxv. 21 and also verse 23).

In these references we can see that entering the kingdom and entering into life are parallel. Let us now look at the word “reward”, first in the Sermon on the Mount and then in the rest of the Gospel. In the sermon it occurs 7 times:

Alms before men	No <i>reward</i> in heaven (vi. 1).
Hypocrites who seek glory of men	They have <i>their reward</i> (2).
Alms in secret	The Father <i>shall reward openly</i> (4).
Prayer as hypocrites	They have <i>their reward</i> (5).
Prayer in secret	The Father <i>shall reward openly</i> (6).
Hypocrites fasting	They have <i>their reward</i> (16).
Appeared not to fast	The Father <i>shall reward openly</i> (18).

Other references are:

“Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a *prophet’s reward*, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a *righteous man’s reward*. And if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is My disciple, I tell you the truth, he *will certainly not lose his reward*” (x. 41, 42, N.I.V.).

In each case it will be noticed that it is always some kind of *action* that produces a divine reward, not just faith alone. It is absolutely necessary that we distinguish between faith and works, between what we receive from God as a gift of His grace, quite apart from merit, and what we work out for the Lord in service as the fruit of salvation. Salvation is never by works; it comes from faith in Christ and what He has done for us, but it is “unto good works”. Good works should result from it (Eph. ii. 8-10). It is the service of the believer that the Lord tests, and faithful service leads to the Lord’s commendation and His reward (Matt. xxv. 19-23). Unfaithful service means loss of reward, but not loss of salvation (I Cor. iii. 10-15).

Failure to distinguish between these parallel truths has caused a multitude of difficulties and arguments, some teaching that we can be saved today and lost tomorrow. Others deny that there is any reward or loss at all, for, they say, grace covers all this. A

very convenient doctrine no doubt, specially where unfaithfulness is concerned. Nevertheless it is quite unscriptural and therefore not true.

The Sermon on the Mount is not the gospel for the unsaved. If it is, then salvation *is* by works, merit and human attainment and much of holy Scripture is contradicted. It is *reward* teaching to believers of the time of Christ's first coming and lays down God's conditions for entry into the kingdom of the heavens. Those who do not fulfil these conditions are refused entry and "wailing and gnashing of teeth" describe the intense disappointment of such who are excluded.

No.10. v. 13 - 30.
pp. 149 - 154

Having seen the Scriptural setting of the Sermon on the Mount and considered the Beatitudes, we proceed with verse 13 of chapter v.:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men" (v. 13, N.I.V.).

Salt gives flavour to food and preserves from corruption. It makes food more palatable and wholesome. Dr. A. T. Robertson says that it is common in Syria and Palestine to see salt scattered in piles on the ground, because it has lost its flavour. Thomson in his *The Land and the Book* page 381 says, "I saw large quantities of it literally thrown into the street, to be trodden under foot of men and animals". This is a picture of encouragement and warning given by the Lord to describe those who were intensely concerned about entering and enjoying God's kingdom.

Like salt, they should be a preservative against corruption and evil around them. Instead of this the danger is that such could be infected by these evils, in which case the "saltiness" has gone and is worthless. The Apostle Paul uses the same figure in Colossians, "Let your speech be always with grace, *seasoned with salt*, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. iv. 6).

A second illustration is now given by the Lord:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (v. 14-16, N.I.V.).

A city on a mountain and a candle on a lampstand would certainly be seen and would shed its light around. In the same way, the believer should let his light shine to all mankind. Even so the light does not originate from him, but from the One Who is "the light of the world" (John viii. 12). The believer is only a light *bearer* and as such

deserves no glorification. All glorification should go to the Lord. He Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness and to shine in our hearts (II Cor. iv. 4-6) deserves all the glory, for the glory is not ours.

Likewise Phil. ii. 15 (margin) exhorts us to “shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life” and this is not the first time the Sermon on the Mount is referred to in Paul’s epistles. The world’s darkness is intense and Christ, as the world’s Light, is absent. All the more need then for His followers to reflect the light of His truth which alone can dispel the darkness.

The Fulfillment of the Law.

The Lord now comes to His relationship to the law given through Moses:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (v. 17, 18, N.I.V.).

The idea that, as a Teacher, He had come to make known something that was novel and exciting, is absolutely wrong. He had not come to alter or abolish God’s law, but to fulfil it and remove the traditional misinterpretations of the scribes and Pharisees, thus opening the way to the correct interpretation of the laws of God. There are *six* illustrations of this, grouped in two “threes”, which are separated from one another by the word “again” in verse 13. Six times the Lord says, with the calm assertion of supreme authority, “But I say unto you”, correcting what had been said to previous generations (verses 22, 28, 32; 34, 39, 44).

The Lord asserts:

“Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven (that is he will have no position of authority in it), but whosoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (v. 19, 20, N.I.V.).

Note the order of *practicing* the law first, and teaching it afterwards. Nothing can be clearer that the righteousness to which the Lord refers here, is the righteousness of *obedience*, not the imputed righteousness which is the characteristic of the epistle to the Romans. Again we remind the reader that He is addressing saved men, His disciples, and telling them that their conduct and practical working out of the law is essential for admittance into the kingdom of heaven. We are on the ground of “reward teaching” here, not salvation by grace, and those who attempt to introduce this into this context are utterly confusing the purposes of God. (For the frequent groups of three in this Gospel, the reader is referred to Volume LI, page 233). The Pharisees were men who “say and do not” (xxv. 3), who preach and do not perform. This practicing of the law is the Lord’s test of *greatness in the kingdom*.

Murder.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘do not murder’, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca’, is answerable to the Sanhedrin; but anyone who says ‘you fool’, will be in danger of the fire of hell” (v. 21, 22, N.I.V.).

There is a threefold grading of guilt here. What must be remembered is that the Lord Jesus is not just dealing with the outward act or word, *but the inward state that is behind it all*. If we miss this, we shall have endless difficulties with verse 22 and other statements in this sermon. Let us note too the words “You have heard that *it was said*”, not “*it was written*”. Many of those listening to Him could neither read nor write. Their knowledge of the Law came from the public instruction of the synagogue, where the *spirit* of the law was frequently missed or obscured. It was right that a murderer should be liable to prosecution, but there was more that should have been taught than this. The command “thou shalt not kill” is based on the principle “thou shalt not hate”, and these words again rested on the command “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. xix. 18, 34). This, later on in the N.T., is expressed as “whosoever *hateth* his brother is a *murderer*” (I John iii. 15), so the condition of the *mind* is bound up with the *action* that follows.

Thus, in the eyes of divine justice, such a person is liable to the same punishment as an actual murderer. When one reflects, it is obvious that Christ is not nullifying the law; rather is He applying it more intensely, for He knows the human mind through and through and looks at it before action takes place.

The grades of punishment to which He refers are the local court; the supreme court at Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin; and the fiery Gehenna; dealing with (1) aroused anger, (2) insolent speech and (3) worse language such as *Raca*, a term of contempt, a word of deeper insolence than the English word ‘fool’.

Gehenna and Hades are often confused in the Authorized Version which is a pity. Locally Gehenna referred to a valley, south-east of Jerusalem, where refuse and dead bodies of criminals were cast. Since fire was always needed to consume the refuse it was known as a place of perpetual burning. Here idolatrous Israelites offered their children to Moloch (II Kings xxiii. 10). It was a term of utmost degradation to a Jew. The words “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” which occur elsewhere in the Gospel are a quotation from Isa. lxvi. 24:

“And they shall look upon *the carcasses* of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm (i.e. of the carcasses) shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched”.

We must not assume from this context in Matthew that the Lord is condemning all use of the word ‘fool’, for He Himself uses it of the Pharisees (xxiii. 17, 19), also calling them hypocrites and vipers. But then the Lord was holy and righteous in His assessment of these men and could not use these words untruthfully.

The warning underlying Matt. v. 21, 22 is that all degrees of hatred and contempt, whether expressed or not, are dangerous and liable to condemnation by God Who alone can righteously judge the feeling and malevolent of the heart. This point is enforced by what follows:

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave the gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (v. 23, 24, N.I.V.).

The law of love is on a higher plane than that of sacrifice, therefore postpone sacrifice rather than reconciliation, remembering the importance of peace-makers (verse 9). It is essential for such to get rid of bad feelings against someone else before bringing his offering to the altar.

The next words of the Lord expand this:

“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny” (v. 25, 26, N.I.V.).

The point stressed here is that no time must be lost. It must be done *quickly*. The offended person may die, or the offender may die, therefore put an end to the situation of enmity as soon as possible.

The Apostle Paul gives similar advice in Eph. iv. 26:

“Be ye angry and sin not; *let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*”

In other words, do not let the day end before such a condition is put right. What a weight of troubles would be avoided if believers would always heed this advice!

Adultery.

“You have heard that it was said ‘do not commit adultery’. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. v. 27, N.I.V.).

This injunction of God protects the sanctity of marriage and the peace of married life. There never was a time when this command was more needed than today. Moral standards have collapsed in this and other countries of the world with disastrous results; leading to misery and profound unhappiness. One of the latest surveys is that one marriage in three ends in divorce in this country and thousands of homes are broken up, with pitiful effects on the children of such marriages.

When will people realize that God’s laws are not given to *deprive* people of happiness, but to *give and protect happiness and well-being*. Until this is recognized, there can be no end to the pressing problem of broken homes and the heart ache that this inevitably

produces. It will never result from more laws and regulations. They can never touch the heart of the problem, which is disobedience to the Lord's commands.

Furthermore, in the context of Matt. v., it is clearly taught that the purity of heart is indispensable for admission to God's kingdom (verse 8).

The verses that follow teach that no sacrifice is too great in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven:

“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell” (v. 29, 30, N.I.V.).

The right hand and eye are the most valuable members of the body that can be sacrificed without causing death. They signify what is most precious. It should be obvious that the Lord is using figures here, for the actual sacrifice of an eye or hand would do nothing towards securing purity. Christ is not teaching that the body should be mutilated, and we have never met a person zealous enough to have done this. What He is doing is to strongly stress *self-control*, and let us not forget that this is part of the fruit of the Spirit which the Lord expects from His children (Gal. v. 22, 23 where ‘temperance’ means ‘self-control’). “Causes you to sin” of the New International Version is better than ‘offend’ in the Authorized Version. Giving offence to others is not what the Lord Jesus means here but the inability to control one's self.

The eye stands for seeing and the hand for doing. If what we look on and what we do causes us to sin, then we must cut it out ruthlessly. The One Who gave the law of God through Moses is the One Who is interpreting it here and His interpretation must be right!

**No.11. v. 31 - vi. 4.
pp. 165 - 169**

Divorce.

“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce’. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery” (Matt. v. 31, 32, N.I.V.).

Here the allusion is to Deut. xxiv. 1. The Pharisees and Scribes differed greatly among themselves regarding divorce. Those who followed the school of Shammai forbade divorce on any other ground than infidelity. The Pharisees belonged to the Hillel school and interpreted “uncleanness” in a wide variety of definitions so that they could grant divorce on the flimsiest of pretexts. This meant that they twisted the law of

Deuteronomy xxiv. 1 in order that they could live as immorally as they pleased, yet still make a pretence of being law-abiding.

The Lord Jesus brings them back to a true interpretation of the verse in Deuteronomy. In Matt. xix. 7, 8 He adds that divorce was given “because of the hardness of your hearts but from the beginning it was not so”. Some assume from this that divorce *for any reason* is wrong now, but they forget that the first marriage was made *in a time of sinlessness* and therefore would never have been broken up while this lasted. There could have been no question of divorce at the beginning. Others, noting that both Mark and Luke omit the clause about adultery, assume that Matthew added the clause because he felt that it represented the Lord’s teaching, in which case it was merely Matthew’s opinion. We absolutely reject this as it contradicts the inspiration of the holy Scriptures.

Moreover, the Evangelists omit other facts that Matthew includes, but sound exposition does not consider these to be wrong because this is so. Rather, we have the Holy Spirit superintending the composition of His Word in both cases. The plain teaching of Christ is that marriage is indissoluble except for adultery. God’s laws have social implications, for they deal with human behaviour and this affects all society. When anyone breaks the laws of God they are disrupting society whether they realize it or not. Modern conceptions of divorce have drifted far away from God’s standards and instead of solving problems, they only make more, and produce further unhappiness. Most people are married in a church and take an oath that they do so “for better or for worse”. But how many really mean this and feel the obligation to keep it? “For better”, yes, but “for worse”, no. They think this gives them the right to link with someone else, if they so desire. Is it any wonder that the home, which is the very centre of the nation’s life is being destroyed and anarchy and misery are taking its place? Specially is this so, when according to some surveys, every third marriage ends in divorce in Great Britain.

Oaths.

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord’. But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne, or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do no swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’, and your ‘no’, ‘no’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (v. 33-37, N.I.V.).

The Lord now comes to the subject of oaths. In the O.T. God made it clear that promises to Himself, whether oaths or not, must be kept. A man must “do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth” (Numb. xxx. 2). In other words, his word must be relied on, for this is the basis of character. The Lord Jesus did not prohibit oaths in a court of justice, for He Himself answered Caiaphas on oath. Deut. vi. 13 and x. 20 commands “thou shalt swear by His name”. And Psa. lxxiii. 11 states that “every one that sweareth by Him shall glory” (or be commended). It was flippant oaths and all that borders on profanity Christ was prohibiting. Oaths and strong statements have come into use because men are so often liars. They should not really be necessary. False swearing was common among the Jews, hence the charge given by James (v. 12) which strongly resembles the Sermon on the Mount. Dr. A. T. Robertson says:

“The Jews were past masters in the art of splitting hairs, about allowable and forbidden oaths or forms of profanity just as modern Christians employ a great variety of vernacular ‘cuss-words’ and excuse themselves because they do not use the more flagrant forms” (*Word Pictures of the New Testament*).

This light taking of oaths Christ forbids absolutely. The law said, “ye shall not swear by My name lightly” (Lev. xix. 12) and the Lord shows that the way to avoid false swearing is to be content with simple affirmations and negations. Nor does the absence of an oath lessen the obligation to speak the truth. In the kingdom of God, truth will reign, and no one can enter it who regards truth as being unimportant.

An eye for an eye.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth’. But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (v. 38-42, N.I.V.).

The law of retaliation was affirmed in Exod. xxi. 23-25, but the spirit of revenge was forbidden (Lev. xix. 18). Vengeance belongs to God only (Deut. xxxii. 35). The law of God put a restriction on unrestrained vengeance. “It limited revenge by fixing an exact compensation for an injury” (McNeil). The Greek can be translated evil or evil person. Resistance is forbidden when it is a matter of personal revenge, and it is personal revenge for a personal injury that Christ is speaking about. It is mishandling the words of Christ to try to apply them to judges who inflict penalties for guilt, or for governments to use arms to defend the defenseless under their charge. But it is sinful to resist wrong in a wrong way or from a wrong motive. To resist from love to God, from love to society, or love to one’s family is different. If all resistance to evil was wrong, then it would be wrong to resist the devil by words or even prayer.

The Lord gives five examples: assault, lawsuit, impressment, begging and borrowing. These all indicate *an attitude of mind* which is stressed so much by the Lord in this Sermon. It would be foolish for us to surrender our homes and property to anyone who likes to claim them, whether in need or not. But we ought to be ready to give to all who *are* in need. We are not told to give everything that is asked for, but to every one who asks, which is a different thing. And then generosity and wisdom should come into the picture. The Lord Jesus did not consent when He was asked to interfere about an inheritance. But He gave a necessary rebuke and a wholesome warning (Luke.xii.13-15). We should, however, remember Prov. xix. 17, “He that hath pity upon the poor *lendeth unto the Lord*”.

Love for enemies.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy’. But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and

sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (v. 43-48, N.I.V.).

The logic of these words is surely clear. It is not hard to love loveable people, but it is far from easy to love one’s enemies. But this is in harmony with the pathway to divine reward. It is a difficult and testing way and we must not expect it to be otherwise. If it was, then reward cannot mean much.

The phrase “and hate your enemy” is not in Lev. xix. 18 or for that matter anywhere in the O.T. It is a rabbinical inference that Christ repudiates bluntly. The Apostle Paul refers to this aspect of the Sermon on the Mount with similar instructions as to our attitude to enemies (Rom. xii. 20). He quotes from Prov. xxv. 21 to confirm this.

The Lord Himself prayed for His enemies, even while He hung on the cross, as also did Stephen, the first martyr in the N.T. (Acts vii. 60). The section closes with the tremendous statement to be perfect like our heavenly Father. The word perfect is *teleios*, the goal, the end, and perfection in love seems to cover it all. We cannot be sinless like God is, but Christ is not teaching this. In our much smaller measure we can be filled with divine love which unselfishly spends itself for the Saviour and those with whom we come into contact day by day. We need to learn the lesson about the perfecting effect of love described in I John iv. And those of the Lord’s day who listened to this great Sermon would surely be able to carry it out in practice, though difficult, through this love of God which later Paul declares is “shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom. v. 5). Dr. R. V. Tasker has an interesting note here. Remembering that the Lord Jesus spoke in Aramaic and commenting on the word ‘perfect’ he says:

“*Perfect* here is a misleading translation of *teleios* and is largely responsible for the erroneous doctrine of ‘perfectionism’. Men can never be perfect as God is perfect; and Jesus Himself taught that at best, when men have done everything possible, they are unprofitable servants, who have only done their duty (see Luke 17:10). Torrey would seem right in supposing that the underlying Aramaic word was active in sense, and that the meaning here is ‘all-including (in your good will) even as your Father includes all’. Nothing here leads up to the idea of perfection, to say nothing of equaling the perfection of God Himself! In this paragraph, the disciples are taught that they must show kindness *to all men*, just as the heavenly Father makes no exception.”

This needs weighing over very carefully.

Giving to the Needy.

The Lord now proceeds to contrast the ordinary conduct of the Jews, as exhibited in the conduct of the Pharisees, with the standard He requires. The chief Greek texts read “righteousness” instead of “almsgiving” (A.V.). It is “acts of righteousness” (as in the N.I.V.) which are described by Christ, the external conduct of the leaders in observance of the law. Again we have another triplet, alms, prayer and fasting. The danger in the first is the praise of men. The Pharisees loved to parade their good deeds in front of the people so that they could be admired.

“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen of them. If you do, you will have *no reward* from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, *they have received their reward in full*. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, Who sees what is done in secret *will reward you*” (vi. 1-4, N.I.V.).

Ostentatious religion may have reward here with human praise, but it receives none from God later on. One cannot have it both ways. Some say we ought not to consider the thought of reward at all. In one sense this is true. The all pervading motive should be love for Him. But if God chooses to reward those whom He counts faithful, who are we to disdain it? Some people act as though they are holier and wiser than the Lord. The fact remains that the doctrine of reward runs right throughout the Bible and only foolishness and blindness will ignore it. Great will be the disappointments of those who miss God’s rewards, for they are eternal and of infinite worth.

**No.12. vi. 5 - 12.
pp. 190 - 195**

Prayer.

“But when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen of men. I tell you the truth, *they have received their reward in full*.

When you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, Who is unseen. Then your Father, Who sees what is done in secret, *will reward you*. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (vi. 5-8, N.I.V.).

Ostentation in praying is just as bad as ostentation in giving. The Lord warns against the public actions of the Pharisees regarding prayer. All the reward they will get is the admiration of those who watched their sanctimonious behaviour. In contrast, the disciples are advised to go into a quiet room where there is no distraction and there pray to the Father.

Not only must they avoid the bad example of the Pharisees, but also the habits of pagans in prayers to their gods. These pagans thought that long prayers and constant repetition would move the gods to give them what they wanted.

And it has to be said that there are Christians today with similar views. They seem to think that God can be worried into granting prayers and that such prayers, if repeated many times are more likely to be answered than a petition made only once. Thus they

think they can compel Him to do what He is unwilling to do and some call this 'prevailing prayer'!

The Lord Jesus not only condemns this, but reminds us that our heavenly Father knows our needs *before we pray to Him*. He does not need any information on this point and believers should constantly remember prayer is never presented in the Bible as a means of bending God to our will. Rather it is the opposite; it is bringing us *to leave all to His will* as the model kingdom prayer, about to be given, enjoins. And we have a wonderful example of this in the Lord's statement in Gethsemane ". . . . not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42).

If we do not do this, then such wrong praying can be dangerous as Israel learned to their cost. They had tired of the heavenly provision of the delicious manna. We need *flesh* to eat was their constant complaint and prayer. Psa. cvi. 14, 15 gives us the sad result:

"they lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. *And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul*",

and the O.T. records the stern judgment that followed from the Lord. And all this is the result of repeatedly asking God for something that *they wanted*, but was contrary to His will.

The model prayer, suited to those believers who were keenly desirous of entering the Kingdom now follows:

"This is how you should pray.
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one" (vi. 9-13, N.I.V.).

There is no doubt that this is the best known prayer of the Bible, for all who profess to be Christians are taught it from their earliest days, and it enters into practically every church service. Did the Lord intend this? He said 'after this manner' (or 'in this way') not necessarily 'in these words'. Professor A. T. Robertson says:

". . . . He gives them a model. He Himself did not use it as a liturgy (cf. John xvii.). There is no evidence that Jesus meant it for liturgical use by others. In Luke xi. 2-4 practically the same prayer is given at a later time by Jesus to the apostles in response to a request that He teach them how to pray" (*Word Pictures of the New Testament*, p.52).

This does not mean that the prayer was never meant to be used, but rather to watch carefully that constant repetition does not cause one to become too used to the phraseology and therefore deadened to its meaning.

There is no agreement as to the number of petitions in this prayer, any more than the number of the Beatitudes. But it seems obvious that the prayer is divided into two parts, the first relating to God alone and the second concerning human needs. Each part consists of three petitions, which is in line with Matthew's constant grouping in triplets. It is important to note that the petitioner should begin with God and not his own wants or needs. Too often prayer is only real to us when we are in desperate straits and then it consists of our needs only.

We should remember that this prayer is addressed to Israelites who had close links with God by covenant ties. Their favoured position is described by Paul in Rom. ix. 3-5 and thus they could look on Him as Father (see Deut. xxxii. 6; Isa. lxiii. 16; Jer. xxxi. 9). The idea of the universal fatherhood of God is unscriptural and therefore untrue. John.i.12 states "*as many as received Him, to them gave He the right (power) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name*". All may be related to God as *Creator*, but redemption is necessary to restore the relationship as *Father*.

Which art in heaven. This may not convey much to us as there is little description of it in the Bible, probably because it is beyond the power of human words to express it. Heaven is used in the singular and the plural. We even have the phrase *above all heavens* (Eph. iv. 10) which describes the Saviour's supreme exaltation at His ascension and His going back to the glory that was His before Bethlehem.

Hallowed be Thy Name. God's Names represent His nature and character so far as this can be known. It is a fascinating and profitable study to consider the various Names of God which occur in His Word, each one making known some facet of His infinite greatness.

The word 'hallow' may mean "make holy" which is impossible with regard to God Who is already holy. It can also mean "make known as holy", or "regard as holy" and this is what is meant here. While the relationship with God to His children as Father is true and encourages all such to come to Him, nevertheless this must be without any irreverent familiarity. Reverence must always characterize our approach to God.

Thy Kingdom come. This shows obviously that the complete fluffiest of this great Kingdom is yet future. We need to beware of the frequent spiritualization which makes this mean no more than God's rule in the mind of the believer here and now. Of course it starts here, but its great outworking goes much further than this, as the Scriptures show.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This tells us at least two things—(1) the kingdom of heaven, though heavenly in origin and character, will be realized *on the earth*, and (2) it will be a time when God's will is paramount as it is now in heaven. The Beatitude had already promised that "the meek should inherit the earth", and this but

confirms us in the belief that the kingdom preached by John the Baptizer of the Lord Jesus is the great Messianic kingdom of the O.T. which combines spiritual bliss with earthly blessings, and freedom from the attacks of the evil one.

There is a heavenly phase of the Kingdom of God which is revealed in the later epistles. To limit God's Kingdom to either earth or heaven, as many do, is a profound mistake. Such a view is bound to be partial and defective, for both aspects are revealed in the Word of God (The reader is referred to the author's *The Kingdom of God in heaven and on earth* where this is dealt with in detail). God's will is done perfectly in heaven by the angelic beings and principalities and powers. What a glorious day it will be when this blessed state of things is true of the earth! And God will not rest until this comes to pass.

Give us today our daily bread. We pass now from what relates to God to human needs. The word translated 'daily', *epiousios*, has given Bible scholars a good deal of trouble. It is an extremely rare word, so much so that Origen said that it was coined by Matthew and Luke to reproduce the idea of an Aramaic original. Moulton & Milligan say in their *Vocabulary*, "the papyri have as yet shed no clear light upon this difficult word, which was in all probability a new coinage by the author of the Greek Q (a work purporting to give some of the sayings of the Lord Jesus) to render his Aramaic original". This was written in 1919. Professor A. T. Robertson, whose New Testament Greek scholarship is unquestionable, says that the word must have originated in trade and traffic of the everyday life of the people, and this has been confirmed by A. Debrunner's discovery of *epiousios* in an ancient housekeeping book (*Light from the Ancient East*, New ed. 1927 p.78 and note 1). The word occurs also in three late MSS after 2Macc.1:8. Professor Robertson says that the meaning of the word, in view of the kindred participle (*epiousei*) in Acts xvi. 12, seems to be "for the coming day", a daily prayer for the needs of the next day, as every housekeeper understands.

Dr. A. Plummer's words are to the point here:

"We are not to ask for superfluities. The petition will cover what is needed for culture and refinement, but it will not cover luxury or extravagance. What we need must not be interpreted to mean all that we desire; sufficiency and contentment will never be reached by that method. Contentment is reached by moderating wants, not by multiplying possessions."

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. The debts here are equivalent to sins and Luke's account uses the word "sins" (Luke xi. 4). When we sin we become liable to God. "Debt" was a Jewish way of describing sin. Here forgiveness is asked "in proportion as" we also have forgiven those in debt to us (A. T. Robertson) a very serious reflection. There are expositors who try to minimize this and make it square with forgiveness of sin in the epistles, but the verses following the Prayer forbid this:

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt. vi. 14, 15, N.I.V.).

To this must be added Mark xi. 25:

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins” (N.I.V.).

And in Matt. xviii. 35 this is strongly enforced by the parable of the unmerciful servant who did not forgive, and the conclusion by the Lord Jesus is:

“This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart”,

and this forgiveness was cancelled because of an unforgiving spirit. All the time we must keep in mind the conditions laid down in Matthew’s Gospel *for entering the Kingdom or being shut out*.

When we read Eph. iv. 32 we have the opposite:

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, *even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*.”

Here we are urged to forgive, not in order to obtain forgiveness by God, but because we have already been forgiven by Him. As Col. ii. 13 expresses it: “*having forgiven you all trespasses*”. It is a question of keeping verses in their contexts and interpreting strictly with these contexts in view.

**No.13. vi. 13 - vii. 5.
pp. 205 - 209**

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. The temptation mentioned here does not mean temptation to sin. James i. 15 denies that God ever tempts any person to sin. The word means trial or test and in His wisdom God tests in order to challenge us, so that our faith in Him grows from “little faith” to “great faith”.

It is impossible to say whether the Greek means “evil” or “the evil one”; it can mean either and both senses are found in the N.T. If it is “the evil one”, Satan, then we should remember for our comfort that God has provided a sure shield against his attacks. It is the shield of faith (Eph. vi. 16).

The doxology of verse 13 is placed in the margin of most modern versions. It is not found in the oldest manuscripts. The earliest forms of it vary very much; some are shorter and some longer than the one in the A.V. It would appear that the use of a doxology arose when this prayer began to be used as a liturgy to be recited in public worship and it was probably derived from I Chron. xxix. 11.

There is no reason, however, why this doxology cannot be used, for it is quite Scriptural and gives a conclusion to the prayer (end of verse 13).

Fasting.

The verses follow do not lay down for fasting either as to the frequency or any special time when it should be done. But *when* a fast was undertaken, then, as with other things that have been mentioned, there must be no ostentation. There was no rigid law; in fact we are told at this time the disciples did *not* fast and the Lord explains why (Matt. ix. 14; Mark ii. 18).

Again warning is given about the Pharisees and their sanctimonious ways:

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show they are fasting. I tell you the truth, *they have received their reward in full*. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash you face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, Who is unseen; and your Father, Who sees what is done in secret, will *reward you*” (vi. 16-18, N.I.V.).

Treasures in heaven.

In this section (vi. 19-34) we find another triplet. There are divisions: the heavenly treasure (19-21), the single eye (22, 23), the banishment of anxiety (29-34).

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (vi. 19-21, N.I.V.).

There is a play on words here in the Greek, for literally it is “treasure not for yourselves treasures” and Wycliffe renders it “do not treasure to you treasures”. These would be stored normally in houses with mud walls that could be easily broken through by thieves or “dug through” as the original has it. Even if free from thieves, there was always rust which corrodes and ruins. But in God’s care and keeping the real treasures are for ever secure and then comes the important statement that “where your treasure is, your heart will be”. The two interact on one another. Our hearts or minds will be drawn upwards if we treasure *the eternal things* which are safe in heaven.

On the other hand if our minds are bent on earthly things, that is where they will be fixed. Earthly things are linked with materialism, and this is the great god that is worshipped today and by which everything is measured. The Lord warned:

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; *a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions*” (Luke xii. 15, N.I.V.).

Would that this was blazed abroad today. Millions could be saved from deception and continued disappointment if they would only heed these words!—for it is generally believed that lasting happiness is bound up with plenty of money and possessions!

The Lord now proceeds to the “single eye”. The eye is called “single” in a moral sense. The Jew often used it in this way, a good eye signifying generosity and an evil eye

a grasping and grudging one (Deut. xv. 9; Prov. xxiii. 6; xxviii. 22). *Haplous* (single) means “free from distortion” and so able to see the true value of things. The opposite is true of the “evil eye” and can only lead into darkness:

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (vi. 22, 23, N.I.V.).

The subject now passes to freedom from anxiety, but is linked to the context by verse 24:

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (N.I.V.).

Yet many try to do so, but failure awaits them all. The issue is clear cut. To be a slave to money, at the same time trying to serve the Lord, is to attempt the impossible. This only amplifies what we have seen before about materialism. Alas, there are millions of idolaters about today whose only god is money. And the bondage that this god demands is terrible indeed. The *possession* of money is not condemned in the Bible; it is being *enslaved to it* that is fatal. James v. 1-6 is a warning where money can lead us and Paul warns that a *love of it* is a root of all evil (I Tim. vi. 9, 10). It has been said with truth that “money is a trust, not absolute property; an instrument, not an end. It is to be used, not for selfish enjoyment, but for the well-being of ourselves and others”. Another danger with money is that it tends to make us independent of God. Both this and its opposite, worry regarding the future, is wrong, for this denies God’s care for us and our needs:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not the life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow or reap, or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (Matthew vi. 25-27, N.I.V.).

It is the responsibility of parents to clothe and feed their children, and if human beings do this, how much more will the heavenly Father do so to all His family? In this context there is a *threefold* occurrence of *merimnao*, “to take anxious thought” (vi. 25, 31, 34). This word does not forbid foresight or provision for the future. In fact the N.T. asserts that “if a man provide not for his own, specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (A.V. infidel)” (I Tim. v. 8). The A.V. “take no thought”, however suitable for 1611, is quite misleading today. In the seventeenth century ‘thought’ meant anxiety or worry, and the Lord always wants to save us from this.

Nothing is more destructive of peace of mind and good health than worry. Prolonged anxiety takes more lives than hard work. Worry and full trust in the Lord cannot exist together. If we worry we do not trust, and if we trust we do not worry. And how often it turns out that what we worry about does not take place!

The Lord gives the examples of the lilies of the field growing, and the grass of the field (verses 29, 30) and says, “How much more will He (the Father) clothe you, O you of little faith?”. There is therefore no need to worry about eating, drinking or clothes (verse 31). These are what the darkened pagans run after and the Father knows we need these things (verse 32). The Lord then sums up this section of the sermon:

“But seek *first* His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well, therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own” (vi. 33, 34, N.I.V.).

It is noteworthy that it is the *disciples* who are described by Christ as those of “little faith” (see also viii. 26; xiv. 31; xvi. 8), whereas to two Gentiles, who were outsiders, he ascribed “great faith” (viii. 8-10, xv. 28).

The all important thing is to get priorities right—*first, God and His Kingdom*, and then follow the normal needs of life and all other temporal things which are necessary.

The habit of criticism.

The Lord now deals with the common habit of criticizing others:

“Do not judge, or you will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (vii. 1, 2, N.I.V.).

The verb here is *krino* from which we get the word ‘critic’. This is censoriousness, sharp unjust criticism which is a violation of the law of love and is so easy to do. Other people’s faults stand out clearly to us, but our own are often forgotten. It is possible that here the Lord is alluding to current sayings, similar to our proverb about “those who live in glass houses”:

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘let me take the speck out of your eye’, when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (vii. 3-5, N.I.V.).

The point here is that criticism should begin with ourselves before we judge other people. And if it does, the probability is that we shall not criticize others because we shall have enough to occupy us in seeking to correct our own faults. Also the Lord warns that the judgment that we mete to others will one day be applied to ourselves.

The Apostle Paul suffered much from the harsh criticism of others, but remembering that it is the *Lord’s assessment* of us that finally matters, he said to the Corinthian church:

“I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. *It is the Lord Who judges me.* Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes” (I Cor. iv. 3-5, N.I.V.).

One day every believer will have to stand before Him and get His assessment of their witness and work for Him (II Cor. v. 10), and this is the only judgment that really matters. In his last letter, Paul referred to Christ as the *righteous Judge* who, with absolute fairness, bestows crowns upon the faithful and those who have constantly loved and been influenced by His appearing (II Tim. iv. 7, 8).

Every believer needs to remember that criticism should first start with ourselves and then I Cor. xi. 31 states:

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”

**No.14. vii. 6 - 29.
pp. 221 - 225**

“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet and then turn and tear you to pieces” (vii. 6, N.I.V.).

This is proverbial counsel regarding discrimination. While we are to preach the truth when opportunity offers, yet heavenly wisdom will guide us so that we do not give it to people who, by their actions, show that they do not value but rather despise it. Trench, commenting on this verse, says that the reference is to meat offered in sacrifice to God and such must not be flung to dogs (which in Palestine were undomesticated and regarded as unclean, just as pigs were). The dogs would eat it, but it would be profanation to give it to them.

In the same way the pigs are probably the wild boars that apparently still haunt the Jordan valley, who might attempt to eat the pearls and then attack those who flung them there. There now follows another triplet:

Ask, Seek, and Knock.

“*Ask* and it will be given to you; *Seek* and you will find; *Knock* and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened” (vii. 7, 8, N.I.V.).

The Lord has stressed the importance of prayer, and we have seen the need for praying and leaving the answer to the Lord and the fulfillment of His will. But one can go to the other extreme and not ask at all. This is just as wrong, for our prayers show clearly what our attitude of mind and desires are and these should be expressed, for we are not treated as machines by God. “Ye fight and war, *yet ye have not, because ye ask not*” (James iv. 2).

It is part of our Christian schooling and discipline to pray to the Lord. In Ezek.xxxvi. we have a wonderful chapter where God explains what New Covenant truth will finally

mean to Israel, in forgiveness, cleansing, restoration and enjoyment of the promised land. Yet verse 37 reads:

“I will yet for this *be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.*”

Israel must one day express their *need* for this to the Lord. Likewise, we must engage in prayer constantly, but finally leave the answer to the Lord’s will, for after all, He knows best and must have the last word. If human parents though imperfect, give good gifts to their children, will the heavenly Father do less? (Matt. vii. 9-11). Then follows the Golden Rule:

“In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (vii. 12, N.I.V.).

Luke puts the Golden Rule in the same context as Matt. v. 42, and this rule sums up a large portion of the Sermon. It is of course a complete denial of one of the worst of sins, namely selfishness. Instead, it has continual regard for one’s neighbour and his needs. Partial gleams of this golden maxim have been seen by many moralists and thinkers. It is found in Isocrates, in Philo and in the Stoics; but none have expressed it so compactly and clearly as the Lord Jesus has done. It is the golden rule of all social life, the family life, commercial life, church life, national life. It is the rule of international prosperity.

The human expressions have mostly been in a negative way, what we should *not* do to others. But the Saviour’s maxim covers the whole breadth of our conscience, in a man-ward direction. It is a summing up of the law of love expressing itself in sheer unselfishness. The Lord continues:

“Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (vii. 13, 14, N.I.V.).

A. Plummer’s comment here is:

“The gate (Matthew) or door (Luke) is that which leads to the Kingdom, and we have returned to the thought with which the sermon began—admission to the Kingdom” (5:3).

This is correct, and it fits the context perfectly, which is not dealing with heaven or hell, but the all-important question as to the searching rules for admittance into the Messianic Kingdom. The A.V. “at the strait gate” has misled some who do not distinguish between “strait” and “straight”. The narrow way is repeated in verse 14. It is “compressed”, and narrowed like a path between two almost adjoining rocks. The broad way is popular because it requires no self-discipline, and seems to promise greater freedom. The majority go this way because it appeals more to the senses. What they cannot see is that the restrictions of the “narrow way” are not denials of liberty, but protections against evil and the things that can never satisfy. Christ Himself is the Way, and as the Reformers expressed it, “His service is perfect freedom”.

The Lord Jesus goes on to teach that, if the right way is really desired, then false guides must be avoided:

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheeps’ clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them” (vii. 15, N.I.V.).

Primarily this referred to the religious leaders, the Scribes and Pharisees. Outwardly they had a lamb-like appearance posing as angels of light, but this merely hid their rapacious character, greedy for gain and power. There have always been false teachers. Satan sees to that. The O.T. contains many of them. They were active too in the lifetime of Christ and, as He forecast, they will be prominent at the end of this age (Matt.xxiv.11). One is always amazed at the credulity of people, for these false leaders never lack a following. It does not matter how stupid or preposterous their claims are, some will gladly accept them and deception surely follows.

The illustration of good and bad trees is found again in James iii. 11, 12 and there are parallels in ancient writers:

“Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them” (vii. 16-20, N.I.V.).

This illustration was used by Christ on other occasions (xii. 33). A bad tree will finally display this quality by bearing bad fruit, and in the same way the falsity of corrupt teachers will be manifest.

The Lord not only warned His hearers of listening to false teachers, but also of deceiving themselves:

“Not every who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will *enter* the kingdom of heaven, but only he who *does* the will of My Father Who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from Me, you evil doers!” (vii. 21-23, N.I.V.).

Those words of the Lord are very searching. It was possible to be very orthodox and yet miss entry into the kingdom. There is a sharp contrast here between *saying* and *doing* the will of God. The external words sounded correct, but the internal obedience to the Lord and His Truth was lacking. The Greek negative *ou* in the question expects an *affirmative* answer and the Lord does not deny this. But He say “I was never acquainted with you”; “I do not recognize you”. The threefold repetition of “in My Name”, which in the Greek is placed first in all three cases for emphasis, shows that apparent orthodoxy was of no avail. It is startling to realize that prophecy and the working of miracles was not enough to prove genuineness. But then we know that Satan can perform certain miracles and it only shows how he can travesty the Truth. The Lord cannot be deceived, however.

In both reports of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew and Luke), the parable of the *wise and foolish builders* forms an impressive conclusion. Each contain the important words “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and *puts them into practice*”

(Matt.vii.24; Luke.vi.47). Listening to them is not enough. Entering the Messianic Kingdom demands *obedience* to them and this reminds us of the words of the Lord at the beginning of the address, “Whosoever shall *do* and *teach* them (these commandments), the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. v. 19); “Doing” again coming before “teaching”. Hearing this sermon was dangerous if it was not put into practice. The Lord divides into two classes only, the wise who put into practice what they have just heard and the unwise who merely listened and were likened to fools.

The effect of all this on the crowds who had evidently gathered around Him as He talked, was tremendous:

“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as One Who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (vii. 28, 29, N.I.V.).

The verb “amazed” is in the imperfect tense, which means they became more and more astonished as they considered the Lord’s words. It was the *authoritative* manner of His teaching that astounded them. Their teachers frequently quoted some authority, Scripture or tradition. The Lord Jesus spoke without argument or production of credentials. He spoke on His own authority. The words, “*but I say unto you*” were given in absolute confidence and were the words of the greatest Legislator the world has ever seen or will see.

The metaphor of building occurs later on in the epistles. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian church, refers to a building whose foundation was Christ (I Cor. iii. 10, 11). But on this foundation every believer was erecting a building. Again there are only two classes of builders and two kinds of material. At the end comes the testing fire of God’s holiness. “The fire shall try (or test) every man’s work of what sort it is” (verse 13). “Every man’s work shall be made manifest” (13). There is no exception to this. The only service that will endure this searching test is likened to “gold, silver, and precious stones” (12). That which is likened to “wood, hay, stubble” is consumed and the believer “suffers loss” (15) of *reward* (14), but his *salvation* is still secure (15) for that does not depend on his service, but on the perfect redemptive work of Christ on his behalf.

There are those who try to eradicate reward and loss from the later epistles. This is foolish and dangerous, for the One Who is the “righteous Judge” (II Tim. iv. 8), because of the very fact that He is righteous, will take account of the *quality of service* rendered by members of the Body of Christ. Those who have been faithful and have a good conscience towards the Lord and His claims, have nothing to fear. They have no need “to be ashamed” (II Tim. ii. 15).

The Great Commission of Matthew xxviii. **pp. 145 - 149**

Those who value dispensational truth often have a problem with the so-called Great Commission of Matt. xxviii., for it seems to conflict with the commission given by the Lord Jesus to the twelve apostles in Matt. x.:

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, *Go not* into the way of the *Gentiles (the nations)*, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt. x. 5, 6),

and this was in line with His own ministry, for to a Gentile woman He said,

“I am not sent but unto *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt. xv. 24).

The Lord restricted His earthly ministry to Israel and also that of the twelve apostles.

However, after His resurrection He appeared to contradict this to the same apostles:

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee and Jesus came and spake to them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and *teach all nations (Gentiles)*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (age). Amen” (Matthew xxviii. 16-20).

It is quite clear that now their ministry was greatly enlarged to embrace all nations, but what was the reason for this? Many interpret it of the future gathering in of the church, but in the Scriptures that follow, this is shown to be wrong. The Body of Christ at this time was still a secret “hid in God” (Eph. iii. 1-11; Col. i. 24-27) and when God hides no one can find until He chooses to reveal. He did this through Paul’s prison epistles. We quote from a future article on Matthew’s Gospel which deals with this problem:

“In the passage quoted in Matt. xxviii. (verses 19 and 20) the Lord Jesus speaks as the One having all the resources of heaven as well as earth at His command. This can mean nothing less than sovereignty in both spheres of heaven and earth. His authority and power in His earthly life had been great (Matt. vii. 29; xi. 27). Now it is boundless and it is this fact that must be proclaimed the world over, so that His kingdom and authority may at last be realized.”

As we have seen, the Gospel of Matthew commences with the restriction of His ministry and that of the disciples to *Israel* (Matt. x. 5-8; xv. 23, 24). In Mark’s account, to the Gentile Syro-Phoenician woman, the word of Christ were, “let the children *first be filled*” (Mark vii. 26, 27). The children were Israel; they were to have the message *first*, but not *first and last*, that is for the kingdom message to be permanently restricted to them. Its world-wide extent is implicit in God’s unconditional promise to Abraham, that through his seed (posterity) *all families of the earth* would finally be blessed (Genesis xii. 1-3).

In God's earthly kingdom purposes redeemed Israel was to be the channel of blessing *to the whole world*, and it was for this purpose alone that God planned to make them the premier nation of the earth, spiritually and temporally, for they were to be a priestly nation (Exod. xix.) that could mediate God's truth (Deut. vii. 6; xxviii. 1, 13; Psa. cxxxv. 4; cxlvii. 19, 20; Acts xiii. 46, 47 and many other Scriptures). Israel was to be the divine agent God would use to make Himself known to all nations, so that at last His kingdom on earth could be established.

This also explains why there is the stress on the word "world" in the Gospel of John (79 occurrences). It in no way contradicts the Lord's statement in Matt. xv. 24, that His earthly ministry was *to Israel*. We must remember that the words of Christ recorded by John were part of this earthly ministry and they must primarily be kept in this setting and all of them must be studied with this in mind. Whether the *dating* of John's Gospel was early or late cannot alter this important fact. However late it was, it could not be revealing the great secret of Eph. iii. and Col. i. concerning the Body of Christ, for that was kept for Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, to make known under the guidance of the Holy Spirit after Israel was laid aside in unbelief (Acts xxviii.). It is in the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians we find the revelation of the Body of Christ, giving its calling, constitution and heavenly destiny.

In the O.T. and during the Lord's earthly ministry, Israel had alas forgotten that God's choice and purpose for them had the *whole world in view*. They looked on the Gentiles as "dogs" therefore the Lord Jesus *emphasizes the word "world" as a corrective in His ministry to them, recorded in the Gospel of John, showing them that He had a wider purpose*. The earthly kingdom made known in the Gospels was the great Messianic kingdom of the Old Testament prophets, and it was this kingdom that the fore-runner, John the Baptist, proclaimed followed by the Lord Himself. It was already known, being revealed in its wondrous details in the O.T.

Thus it was that this kingdom was described in the model kingdom prayer, given by the Lord, "Thy will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 9-13). Even when Israel had crucified her King and Redeemer, this purpose of God was not ended, for the period covered by the Acts followed in which Israel had another opportunity of repentance and turning back to God. The Jew was still first both for judgment and blessing (Rom. i. 16, 17; ii. 8-11). We find both Peter and Paul putting them first in their ministry. God's tremendous long-suffering had not run out as Peter made clear in Acts iii. 19-26. If they repented and turned back, their sins and opposition would be forgiven and their King would be sent back to them again. The kingdom was still "the restoration of all things, which God hath spoken *by the mouth of all His holy prophets*" (verse 21). They had "*foretold of these days*" (verse 24) and Israel was still "*the children of the prophets*, and of the covenant which God made with the fathers, saying unto Abraham, *And in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (verse 25).

The great implication of these most important verses has been missed by so many that we do not wonder at all the confusion of ideas about the Kingdom of God (The reader is directed to the author's *The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth*).

Prophecy makes it quite clear that finally many nations (Gentiles) are to be blessed with Israel (Zech. ii. 10-13 and Isa. xix. 23-25). Christ will then become *King and Lord of the whole earth* (Zech. xiv. 9). Once we keep this in mind we shall be in a better position to understand the great commission of Matt. xxviii. 18-20. We shall then be able to appreciate this ministry in its rightful God-given setting and avoid divorcing it from the kingdom of heaven, finally to be established on earth. It concerns discipling or teaching the Gentiles in every land and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The water baptism of the Acts period was in the name of Jesus Christ as the God-man, the great Mediator and King. This great commission is essentially one of *teaching* and it must be one of the greatest teaching ministries of Scripture. To understand it in any measure we must not only keep it to the setting given in Matthew's Gospel, but also to the other Scriptures which pertain to it relating to the Messianic kingdom.

Perhaps we have wondered how the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will one day "*cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea*" (Isa. xi. 9)? The commission given to the apostles in Matt. xxviii. is doubtless one of the means used by God as well as the ministry of redeemed and restored Israel during the millennium. Even in the Acts period the Lord Jesus commanded the eleven and said, "ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and *unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts i. 8, see also Luke xxiv. 46, 47). Jerusalem in prophecy is the geographical pivot of the kingdom on earth and the light and knowledge radiate from it world-wide. This is in accord with *the gospel of the kingdom which is also preached to all nations of the earth* (Matt. xxiv. 14).

The final words of the Lord Jesus before His ascension were:

"I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age (literally)" (Matt.xxviii.20).

Note the present tense "I am", not "I have been or will be". The Lord uses the prophetic perfect here to stress His constant presence and enabling. And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). Satan and the powers of darkness have been conquered for ever by the victorious risen and ascended Lord and He will finally reign forever and ever both on earth and in all regions of the heavens.

To sum up: we have seen that the great stress on the word "world" in John's Gospel, mankind in general, was to remind Israel of their responsibility that, through them, *all families of the earth* should be blessed. This does not mean that this Gospel is Jewish in the sense that it was addressed solely to Israel and was entirely *about* Israel. This is the province of Matthew's Gospel. John's parish, so to speak is mankind as a whole, whether Jew or Gentile and it has a *basic message for each*, namely eternal life through faith in Christ alone which gives either of them *new birth* and *freedom from condemnation* (John iii. 3; v. 24). Without this new birth a man "cannot see the kingdom of God", but with it he can, for he is now "born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8) and has this new life which is eternal and now is linked with Christ by faith. If anyone is troubled by the word "water" in these verses they should consult Dr. E. W. Bullinger's *The Giver and His Gifts* page 63-68 where he shows that the meaning is "spiritual water"

by the figure Hendiadys. In this context is the precious message of John iii. 16 which has been the means of salvation to thousands in this present age.

God is using more than one way of bringing Gentile sinners to Himself in order to realize His earthly kingdom. He is using the Gospel of John with its emphasis on “he that believeth in Me hath everlasting life”. He will later on use the gospel of the kingdom to all the nations of the world (Matt. xxiv. 14). He will also use redeemed Israel after His second Advent to be His witnesses ‘to the uttermost parts of the earth’ (Luke.xxiv.46-48; Acts i. 8), so at last the time will come when “the *kingdoms of this world* are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev.xi.15). Then the Lord shall be not just the King of Israel, but “*king over all the earth*” (Zech. xiv. 9).

The Miracles of the Apostles

No.6. They gave forth their Lots. pp. 5 - 13

In this series we are considering the *evidential* miracles performed by the apostles. Evidential, i.e. that which furnishes *external* evidence of direct intervention by the Almighty. Such miracles were not only displays of power which made people wonder, but also were signs to those who observed them and a testimony to those who performed them. We have been concerned with neither:

“The gospel of Christ: for it is the power (miracle, *dunamis*) of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. i. 16).

nor:

“The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power (miracle, *dunamis*) of God” (I Cor. i. 18).

There can be no doubt about it. The gospel of Christ and the preaching of the cross do work miracles when people believe and are saved. This is no less true today than it was during the Acts period but such miracles work *inside* people, in the heart and in the mind. During the Acts period such occurrences were accompanied by *external* signs of God’s *internal* action but this is not the case today.

The first evidential miracle performed by the Apostles in the book of Acts is the casting of lots (Acts i. 26). Judas had betrayed the Lord and then killed himself. There was a need for the apostles to replace him, to make their number up to twelve (Matt.xix.28). However, the replacement had to have certain credentials. If they were to be witnesses, according to the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Ye also shall bear witness, *because ye have been with me from the beginning*” (John.xv.27).

It is obvious that Peter and the others appreciated this:

“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the Baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, *must* one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts i. 21, 22).

How many people had the necessary qualification? Acts i. 23 states “they had appointed two”. Whether these were the only two or whether they had been selected from other possible candidates is not clear. What is clear is that both men were so well-suited for the office that the apostles could not decide who was the better qualified. However, all agreed that it must be one of these two so in what sense did the apostles “appoint these two”?

Appoint. In Acts i. 23 with reference to Joseph and Matthias the Revised Version has 'put forward', for these were not both appointed in the accepted sense of the term, but simply *singled out, in order that it might be made known which of them the Lord had chosen* (Vine).

Following this, they prayed, and:

"They gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts i. 26).

The first time that lots were used to ascertain the will of the Lord is recorded in Leviticus xvi. 5-10:

"And he (Aaron) shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering And he shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat in the wilderness" (Leviticus xvi. 5-10; see also verses 20-22).

Then in Numbers (xxvi. 55, 56; xxxiii. 54; and xxxvi. 3, 4), throughout the whole of Joshua and in various other parts of the O.T. there are references to the land being divided among the different tribes by lot. This was to ascertain which part of the land the Lord willed for each tribe.

"And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit" (Numb. xxxiii. 54).

This was not an allocation by mere chance and Ezekiel (xlv. 1; xlvii. 22; xlvi. 29) seems to indicate that this method will again be used in the future for a second distribution of the land. No doubt then, as in the past, the larger tribes will obtain the larger inheritance and the smaller ones a reduced portion but how is this possible by what appears to be the chance of the lot?

"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xiv. 33).

There, working silently and supernaturally behind this apparently chancy system was the Lord. His hand was seen disposing the lot and so:

"The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty" (Prov. xviii. 18).

Was it to be Joseph or Matthias who was to replace Judas? No doubt they were both mighty men and the issue could have been contentious. Thus "they put forward two . . . prayed . . . gave forth their lots . . . the lot fell on Matthias". They desired to know which of these two God would choose and so they restored to this well tried system that was clearly in accordance with the Lord's will. The choice was the correct one as Acts ii. 4 states "they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost"; *all* must have included Matthias.

In Judges lots were cast to see which tribe was to “go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin” (see Judges xx. 9, 18, 23, 28). In I Samuel the Lord did not answer Saul over the issue of the Philistines because sin had been committed by the people. The lot was used to determine the culprit, Jonathan (I Sam. xiv. 24-42). In I.Chronicles we read of:

- (a) the divisions of the sons of Aaron by lot in 24 orders (I Chron. xxiv. 5, 7 and 31).
- (b) the number and offices of the singers and their divisions by lot into 24 orders (xxv. 8, 9).
- (c) the divisions of the porters and the assignments of the gates by lot (xxvi. 13-16).

In Nehemiah lots were used to select the people and the priest to bring the wood offering (x. 34) and to determine who was to live in Jerusalem (xi. 1). There are many examples of how the people of Israel ascertained the will of the Lord by lots but how did it function? What did lots look like? How did the system work?

“The various names, dates, etc. for selection were marked on pieces of wood, potsherd, etc., and these ‘lots’ were then shaken together either in a vessel or in the fold of a garment till one came out” (*New and Concise Bible Dictionary*).

“Lots: *kleros*, denotes an object used in casting or drawing lots, which consisted of bits, or small tablets, of wood or stone (the probable derivation is from *klao*, to break; these were sometimes inscribed with the names of persons, and were put into a receptacle or a garment (a lap, Prov. 16:33), from which they were cast, after being shaken together; he whose lot first fell out was the one chosen” (Vine).

However, *The Companion Bible* note on the word ‘fell’ in Lev. xvi. 9 seems to disagree with this. That verse states “And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord’s lot fell and offer him for a sin offering”. *The Companion Bible* note is:

“*fell*: Hebrew ‘came up’: i.e. out of the bag containing the Urim and Thummim. No other means of taking Jehovah’s lot or judgment.”

The first occurrence of Urim and Thummim is found in Exod. xxviii. 30 and the extended *Companion Bible* note there draws attention to the fact that in Josh. xviii. 11 the lot ‘came up’; in Josh. xix. 1 it ‘came forth’ and in Josh. xix. 17 it ‘came out’. The claim is that the lot came ‘out’ or ‘forth’ from the bag of the ephod worn by the priest, into which the Urim and Thummim were placed. But what did the priest wear? What exactly were the Urim and Thummim? Exod. xxviii. 15-19 contains instructions about the construction of the breastplate of judgment and this section concludes with the words:

“And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and Thummim and Aaron shall bear judgment of the children of Israel” (Exod. xxviii. 30).

But this is judgment neither in the sense of punishment and condemnation nor in the sense of appraisal and reward. This is judgment in the sense of “giving a judicial decision”, as the N.I.V. translation of this verse makes clear:

“Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions—the work of a skilled craftsman And put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of

making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord” (Exod. xxviii. 15, 30, N.I.V.).

In agreement with this translation and with the view that the lot was cast by Urim and Thummim is Moffatt’s translation:

“Then you must make a judicial pouch also you must put the sacred lots into the judicial pouch that Aaron may constantly bear on his heart before the Eternal Israel’s appeal for guidance” (Exod. xxviii. 15, 30, Moffatt).

Joshua’s appointment was confirmed to the people by the Urim (Numb. xxvii. 21) and these are also mentioned in Lev. viii. 8 and Deut. xxxiii. 8. In I Sam. xxviii. 6 it is recorded that “when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets”. Thus we must not think that either the casting of lots or the use of Urim and Thummim, or both, were the only ways the Lord used to guide the people of Israel. There were others but the Urim and Thummim were important. For example, when the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity some claimed to be priests but they could not show their genealogy. These were not allowed to eat holy things until a priest could stand up with Urim and Thummim and an answer be obtained from God as to whether or not they were true Aaronic priests (Ezra ii. 63; Neh. vii. 65).

It is interesting to note that nowhere in Scripture are the exact details of the Urim and Thummim recorded, neither is it explained exactly how they were used. The construction of many items for the tabernacle and temple and the clothes for the priest are described in vivid details (e.g. the “judicial pouch” in Exod. xxviii. 12-29) but there is not even a command from God to make the Urim and Thummim. Scripture merely records that Moses was to put them in the “breastplate for making decisions”, almost as if God had given them to Moses Himself!

The Hebrew for Urim is *Uwriym*, the plural of *uwr* which is translated fire and light and which comes from *owr*, a primitive root which means to be luminous (Strong).

The Hebrew for Thummim is *Tummiym*, the plural of *tom* which is translated full, integrity, perfect, perfection, simplicity, upright, etc. and which comes from *taman*, a primitive root which means complete (Strong).

That does not help us much and the problem of exactly what the Urim and Thummim were is shown by the following quotation from the *New and Concise Bible Dictionary*:

Urim and Thummim: The significance of these Hebrew words is “lights” and “perfections”.

The greatest help comes again from *The Companion Bible* note on Exod. xxviii. 30:

“The Hebrew Urim and Thummim means ‘lights’ and ‘perfection’. Probably these are the plural of majesty, the singular ‘light’ (being put by *Metonymy* for what is brought to light, i.e. *guilt*), and ‘perfection’ (put by *Metonymy* for moral perfection, i.e. *innocence*). Thus these two placed in the ‘bag’, and one drawn out, would give the judicial decision which would be of the Lord.”

The figure of speech *Metonymy*, or change of noun, is when one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation. Thus “light’ instead of ‘guilt’ and “perfection” instead of ‘innocence’.

Some have confused the Urim and Thummim with the precious stones upon the judicial breastpiece but this cannot be correct as a careful reading of Exod. xxviii. 15-30 makes clear. Also Leviticus records that Moses put the breastpiece upon Aaron and then, afterwards, put the Urim and Thummim in the pouch or bag of the breastpiece. However it is quite possible that they were two precious stones for the word generally translated ‘lot’ in the Hebrew *goral*, which means a stone. One of these was drawn out to give Jehovah’s decision on any particular issue. It was essential when using Urim and Thummim, that a priest be present and if he was the lot would be cast using the Urim and Thummim. The allocation of the land by lot was done in this way by “Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun” (Numb. xxxiv. 17). Similarly the Urim and Thummim were used for the two goats in Lev. xvi. 5-10, the battle against Benjamin in Judges xx. 9-28, the divisions of the priests & singers and the allocation of the gates in I.Chron.xxiv.-xxvi. Urim and Thummim were used to find the culprit Jonathan as Saul said unto the Lord, “give a perfect lot” (i.e. give *perfections* = Thummim). Thus there seems to be much substance in the view that all lots were cast by Urim and Thummim but there are other sides to the debate.

In Neh. vii. 65 they had no priest with Urim and Thummim yet lots were cast in Neh. x. 34 and xi. 1. Had they acquired such a priest by then? Possibly but was there a priest with Urim and Thummim among the 120 disciples in Acts i. 15-26? The context seems to indicate that there was not, and “*they gave forth their lots*” (verse 26) adds further weight to the view that, in this case, neither the Urim and Thummim nor the priesthood were involved. Thus *The Companion Bible* note on Lev. xvi. 9 seems to be incorrect when it states that except for the Urim and Thummim there was no other means of taking Jehovah’s lot or judgment. However one must never take any writings out of their context and one wonders if the writer of that note, Dr. E. W. Bullinger, actually meant that note to embrace the whole of Scripture and every reference to lots or just the ones mentioned in that note or in the O.T. The following definition from his *Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* shows he thought that lots could involve other than Urim and Thummim in the N.T.

“Lots: *kleros* (probably from *klao* to break, because twigs and other *klasmata* ‘fragments’ were used for the purpose of casting lots).

Thus generally lots were cast using Urim and Thummim but not always and Acts i. 26 seems to be one of the exceptions. It is indeed significant that there are no instructions for making the Urim and Thummim in Scripture, neither is there any description of them nor is there any detail of how they were to be used—and we can appreciate why! Imagine what would happen in today’s society if the Bible contained such information! Imagine the number of people who would make them and use them! Indeed the casting of lots was practiced by the Gentiles in Biblical times but the use of such was mere mimicry. The hand of the Lord was not behind it and quite often the issue for decision

was sinister, being against the people of Israel and therefore against God's plan and purpose.

“And they (the nations) have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink” (Joel iii. 3).

“. . . . strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem” (Obad. 11).

“. . . . and when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them” (Mark xv. 24).

Here the Gentiles are seen casting lots as a means of apportioning the people of Israel, Jerusalem and our Lord's garments. This method was, and still is, a common one of distributing, without bias items of different worth among people. The Gentiles would not pretend that in doing this they were endeavouring to ascertain how their god(s) had willed such distribution. To them it was chance, which it was. However, in Jonah i. 7 the pagan sailors cast lots to know “for whose cause this evil is upon us and the lot fell on Jonah”. Could it be that here the Lord was working behind the scenes, guiding the Gentile lot? Again the book of Esther records:

“In the first month (that is, the month of Nisan), in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar” (Esther iii. 7).

The ones who cast the Pur, the lot, before Haman were possibly one of the types mentioned in Isa. xlvii. 12, 13. The Pur was cast from “month to month” possibly by the “monthly prognosticators” and the reason Haman wanted the lot cast was to ascertain a favourable time for the destruction of the Jews!

“Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them” (Esther ix. 24).

They started to cast lots on the first day of the first month and the lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (Esther iii. 7, 13), but why did it take so long? If this was a choice of one in two (i.e. like the Urim and Thummim), then to go to the 13th day of the *first* month is a one in ten thousand chance! To go to the 13th day of the *twelfth* month!! Could it be that the Lord was at work here, directing the heathen lot in order to work out His own purpose? The extremely lengthened period of time before the day of execution of the Jews gave time for the action of Esther and for new edicts to be issued and sent over all the kingdom—thus the Jews were saved from destruction.

A detailed study of Urim and Thummim and the casting of lots shows them to be of a miraculous nature peculiar to the people of Israel and evidence to them that they were in covenant relationship with God. We must be careful of such views as “this method of selection was not repeated by the apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit” (*Cassell's Concise Bible Dictionary*) and “when Israel is restored, Christ Himself will take the place of the ancient Urim and Thummim” (*New and Concise Bible Dictionary*). Ezek. xlv. 1, xlvii. 27 and xlviii. 29 indicate a distribution of the land to a restored Israel “by lot” and remembering that John did not record every miracle of Christ's (John xx. 30, 31; and

xxi. 25), we must be careful in dismissing Acts i. 26 as the last use of this miracle which testified to the Jews who practiced it that they had God's approval and were His people. Certainly the last reference to lots is in Acts i. 26 and although it may have been used elsewhere during the Acts period, there is no record of it. However at Acts.xxviii.26-28 the people of Israel were set aside by God and salvation was then sent directly to the Gentiles, independently of the Jews. Then, from that time, the people of Israel ceased to be a nation in covenant relation with God, they became *lo-ammi*, not my people (Hosea i. 9). Thus the privileges of such a covenant position were put into abeyance and then the miracle of lots and the Urim and Thummim would have ceased. Naturally there is no record of them in any of the epistles written after the end of the Acts period (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Titus, I & II Timothy) and for the Gentiles of this dispensation to attempt to copy a Jewish practice of a previous dispensation is not only folly, but also dangerous, yet it can creep up unawares.

“Shall I send my friend this Christian tract? I will write to him. If his reply comes back on a Monday, a Wednesday or a Friday—I'll send it to him! If on another day, I won't.”

This incident is not fiction, it is fact. It actually happened. Sadly some Christians indulge in such practices, not being aware that at best it is mere superstition and failure to use our God given wisdom and responsibility and at worst they could be allowing themselves to be influenced by “seducing spirits and the doctrines of demons”, words addressed to Christian believers, not unbelievers, in I Tim. iv. 1.

Lastly there is the view that the disciples of Acts i. 15 were too hasty in replacing Judas. If they had waited, the right man, Paul, would have appeared. Such a view is totally wrong as Paul did not have the qualification of being with the Lord from the time of His baptism by John to His ascension (John xv. 27 and Acts i. 22). Paul probably never even met our Lord when He was on earth. Also such criticism fails to appreciate that *lots* was a divinely appointed method for making judicial decisions and that that decision was confirmed by the Holy Spirit filling *all* of them, including Matthias (Acts.ii.4). In I Cor. xv. 5 Paul himself speaks of “the twelve” as separate from himself and this testifies to the correctness of Matthias' appointment. Lastly:

“The idea that Paul was divinely intended to be the twelfth, and that the apostles here wrongly anticipated God's plan, betrays a misunderstanding of the unique character of Paul's apostleship” (*New Bible Commentary Revised*).

The twelve were the twelve apostles for the Jews. They “shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. xix. 28). Paul, on the other hand, was “the apostle of the gentiles” (Rom. xi. 13) and as such could have no place as one of the twelve.

**No.7. Cloven Tongues Like as of Fire (Acts ii. 3).
pp. 25 - 30**

The Lord Jesus Christ was “*the* Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29). He “who knew no sin” was made sin on account of us “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. v. 21). “The wages of sin is death” but He received those wages on Calvary’s Cross so that the “free gift of God, eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” may be open to all (Rom. vi. 23). “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all them that believe” (Romans iii. 22).

Speaking of that great act, Paul said “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (I.Cor.v.7). He fulfilled that passover which was instituted when the Israelites were in Egypt many centuries earlier. As a last resort to make Pharaoh let the people of Israel go, God was to strike dead the firstborn males in all the land but the Israelites were ordered to sacrifice a lamb and to sprinkle its blood on the lintel and two side posts of the doors of their houses.

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Exod. xii. 13).

The people obeyed and in perfect safety fed upon the lamb whilst under the shelter of the blood. After they had left Egypt and had crossed the Red Sea, the law was given to them through Moses and part of this law was that they had to keep the Passover feast (Lev. xxiii. 4-8). This was held on the fourteenth day of the first month, Abib—later known as Nisan.

Leviticus xxiii. 15-21 records that fifty days afterwards there was the feast of weeks. A new meat (meal) offering of two loaves baked with leaven was offered; also seven lambs, one bullock and two rams for a burnt offering were to accompany the meat and drink offerings, “even an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto the Lord” (Lev.xxiii.18). Also there was to be a kid of the goats for a sin offering and two lambs for a peace offering (verse 19). It was proclaimed a holy convocation in which no servile work was to be done. It was a day of universal rejoicing before the Lord (Deut.xvi.9-12). Some commentators suggest that this feast marked the commencement of the ingathering of the harvest but Deut. xvi. 10, and other passages, imply that the harvest started just after the wave offering of Lev. xxiii. 9-14 and so the feast of weeks marked the end of that harvest.

A detailed study of Lev. xxiii. is most edifying as all the feasts described were prophetic of some aspect of God’s great plan centred in our Lord Jesus Christ. Some have been fulfilled (e.g. Passover, Firstfruits/Wave offering, Weeks), others await fulfillment (e.g. Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles).

Following His fulfillment of Passover and Firstfruits, for forty days the Lord Jesus Christ taught the disciples and opened “their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke xxiv. 45). He also told them:

“Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke xxiv. 49).

Why did they have to tarry? To suggest that they were not ready or were not sufficiently mature is to cast doubt on the ability of the One Whom they had followed for over three years and Who had just opened their understanding of the Scriptures. Again, He said unto them:

“that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts i. 4, 5).

Why “not many days hence”? Why not *there and then*? Some of those of Pentecostal or Charismatic persuasion have made much out of the need to “tarry” or to “wait for the promise”, failing to realize that the only reason for the delay was that in the O.T. there were exactly fifty days between Firstfruits and the feast of Weeks! God’s symbols and His types and shadows are exact, and just as the Passover had been perfectly fulfilled, so now the feast of Weeks was to receive its realization—at the right time. When the fifty days were up, and Pentecost means “the fiftieth (day)”, the feast would be fulfilled. (The name Pentecost, describing the feast of Weeks, is found only in the N.T. and occurs in Acts ii. 1, xx. 16 and I Cor. xvi. 8). Thus the reason for the “wait”, the reason why they had to “tarry” was nothing to do with the disciples themselves. It had nothing to do with their spiritual condition or lack of readiness. It was to do with the perfect fulfillment of the feast of Leviticus, and so we read:

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come (lit. being fulfilled: Gk. *sumpleroo*) they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts ii. 1).

What happened next must have been a complete surprise to all those present. Not one of them could have foreseen what was about to happen.

“All of a sudden a sound came from the sky like a blast of violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them what looked like tongues of fire, which divided themselves up, and settled on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts ii. 2-4, William Barclay).

In John iii. 8 the Lord Jesus Christ likened the Spirit to the wind. It “bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth”. Thus in Acts ii. it is not surprising that this great work of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the “sound as of a rushing mighty wind”. What is unusual is that there was a *visible* manifestation of the Spirit. Such had happened only once before. Just after His baptism by John :

“Jesus went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him:

and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. iii. 16, 17).

On another occasion there was a voice from heaven (John xii. 28, 29), and of that the Lord Jesus Christ said:

“This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes” (John xii. 30, K.J.V.).
“The voice was for your benefit, not mine” (John xii. 30, N.I.V.).

Similarly the voice from heaven, following John’s baptism, and the appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove could not have been for His sake. It was for John the Baptist’s sake (John i. 33) and for the benefit of others who were there, including the twelve (Acts.i.22).

“but that He should be made manifest (revealed) to Israel, am I (John) came baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John i. 31-33).

Thus Christ was to baptize them with the Holy Ghost but if the Holy Ghost is just like the wind, how would they know the promise had been fulfilled? One possibility was that the Spirit would again take, briefly, a visible form and this was what happened, but why cloven tongues of fire? Why this form? Some point to Matt. iii. 11 where John says of Christ:

“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”

They claim that the fire mentioned there refers to the tongues of fire seen on the day of Pentecost but from the context this does not seem to be correct. Matt. iii. 10 speaks of the fire of judgment:

“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. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matt. iii. 10, 11).

The next verse makes the link between judgment and baptism with fire even stronger.

“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt. iii. 12; see also Luke iii. 16, 17).

Thus the baptism “with the Holy Ghost” was to follow His first coming whilst the baptism “with fire” is to do with judgment and will follow His second coming. Any who object to such a division of these words should note that John was a typical prophet (Luke xvi. 16), just like Isaiah and others of the O.T. Luke iv. 19, 20 records how the Lord Himself divided Isa. lxi. 2 into two halves. The first half, “the acceptable year of the Lord”, was fulfilled then but the second half, “the day of vengeance of our God”, waits until His second coming for fulfillment. Thus we cannot use the words of John the Baptist to give a reason why the Spirit appeared as cloven tongues of fire on the day of

Pentecost. Also Acts i. 5 mentions “baptized with the Holy Ghost” but it omits “and with fire”, indicating it was not applicable to the “not many days hence”.

The explanation may be simply that “the Jews require a sign” (I Cor. i. 22), and what sign could be more appropriate than fire. God spoke to Moses on Mount Horeb from out of the burning bush (Exod. iii. 1-6). On Mount Sinai “the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire” (Exod. xxiv. 17), and Moses wrote that “the Lord thy God is a consuming fire” (Deut. iv. 24). When Aaron began his administration in the tabernacle, fire came out “from before the Lord, and consume the altar and the burnt offering and the fat” (Lev. ix. 24). Again, God vindicated His servant Elijah when he stood against the prophet of Baal, by consuming the sacrifice with fire from heaven (I Kings xviii. 38). Similarly, the burnt offerings of both David and Solomon were consumed with fire from heaven (I Chron. xxi. 26 and II Chron. vii. 1).

Fire from heaven was an unmistakable sign to the Jews that God was behind the activity. Such a sign was proof to them of God’s existence and it signified to those who benefited from its consequences that they were acceptable to Him and were in His will. Thus for the Holy Spirit to assume the appearance of fire was perhaps not all that surprising, and the disciples would appreciate the significance of such a manifestation even though we may not. But was this the only occasion when there were tongues of fire? Peter and John laid their hands on those from Samaria:

“. . . and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money” (Acts viii. 17, 18).

How did he know that the Holy Ghost had been given? Did he see anything? Were there tongues of fire? Did they speak in tongues? We are *not* told. Again, at the house of Cornelius:

“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, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts x. 44, 45).

Again, how did they know that the gift of the Holy Ghost had been poured out? Did they see tongues of fire? The next verse states how they knew:

“For (because) they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God” (Acts x. 46).

However, some make a case for tongues of fire upon Cornelius and his house because of what Peter says about the incident in the next chapter.

“The Holy Ghost fell on them, *as* on us at the beginning” (Acts xi. 5).

The problem here is reading too much into the word *as*. It does not mean “in like manner” but, as *The Companion Bible* note states, “even as”. With this J. N. Darby’s translation agrees:

“The Holy Spirit fell upon them even as upon us also at the beginning” (J.N.D.).

At Ephesus Paul laid his hands upon the disciples and:

“The Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied”
(Acts.xix.56).

But again, there is no mention of “cloven tongues like as of fire”. Thus the overall evidence of Scripture is that, whereas the baptism and the filling of the Holy Ghost occur on many occasions, the accompaniments of the “rushing mighty wind” and the “cloven tongues like as of fire” were unique features of the Day of Pentecost, not repeated anywhere else in the N.T. and certainly not applicable to us in this dispensation. If anyone is tempted to look for such things he would do well to study these passages of Scripture relating to the days leading up to the return of Christ:

- (1) Matt. xxiv. 1-33 and note verse 24 where the Lord speaks about false Christs and false prophets which “shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”.
- (2) II Thess. ii. 1-12 and note verse 9 where Paul speaks about “the workings of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders”.
- (3) Rev. xiii. 1-18 and note verse 14 where John speaks about being deceived “by means of those miracles which he had power to do”, and one of those miracles is, according to verse 13, “he maketh fire to come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men”. It may have been a sign from God in the past but then it will be a sign from Satan.

No.8. Baptized with the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 5) Part 1. **pp. 45 - 50**

In Acts i. 5 the Lord Jesus Christ told the disciples that they were to be “baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” and this was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost described so dramatically in Acts ii. 1-4:

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

What exactly happened is perhaps not clear to those who were not present, but two separate things seemed to have occurred at the same time, first the promise of Acts i. 5 was fulfilled: they were *baptized* with the Holy Ghost, and secondly they were also *filled* with the Holy Ghost. Scripture exhorts us to “rightly divide the word of truth” (II.Tim.ii.15) and to “test things that differ” (Phil. i. 10 K.J.V. margin); to ignore such commands is detrimental to spiritual growth. Some believers refuse even to consider if there is a difference between being *baptized* and being *filled* with the Holy Ghost. As two different Greek verbs are used it is necessary to test the occurrence of each

expression in the Scriptures and, if necessary, to change what we believe, making our views agree with what is revealed in the Word of Truth. Both phenomena have to be investigated to see if there are any differences between them and if either, or both, are applicable to this dispensation. It will be necessary to find out whether the speaking in tongues, referred to in Acts ii. 4, was the result of being *baptized* or *filled* with the Holy Ghost. Then finally, Scripture must be searched to see if the result of the *baptism* and the result of the *filling* remains the same after the Jewish nation had been set aside at the end of the Acts period (Acts xxviii. 26-28). First, however, the expression “baptized with the Holy Ghost” will be considered.

The word *with* is the Greek preposition *en* and the note on this word in Appendix 104 of *The Companion Bible* is illuminating:

“*en* governs only one case (the Dative) and denotes being and *remaining within*, with the primary idea of rest and *continuance* *En* denotes also *continuance in time*.”

The important point to note is that this word denotes “*remaining within*, with the primary idea of rest and *continuance*”. The expression “baptized with the Holy Ghost” does not occur anywhere in the O.T. Its first occurrence is in Matt. iii. 11 where, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, John the Baptist said, “He shall baptize you with Holy Ghost”. Mark i. 8, Luke iii. 16 and John i. 33 are similar and relate to the same event. In Acts i. 5 the Lord repeats the promise made earlier by John the Baptist and in Acts.xi.16 Peter recalls that promise of the Lord’s. These are the *only* passages in Scripture which contain the expression “baptized with the Holy Ghost”. The only other reference which directly links the Spirit and baptism is I Cor. xii. 13:

“For by (*en* = with) one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

With so little to go on it is difficult to ascertain exactly what was the significance and the result of being *baptized* with the Holy Ghost. One approach in attempting to come to a Biblical understanding of the expression is to put ourselves in the position of those who heard the proclamation of John the Baptist. What did *they* understand by being baptized with the Holy Ghost? What did the word *with* convey to them? What, to them, was the meaning of baptism?

In the O.T. there are many references to the work of the Holy Spirit. In those days He came upon people to strengthen them (Judges xiv. 5, 6), and to enable them to do all manner of skilful work (Exod. xxviii. 1-5; xxxi. 1-5). He gave them the ability to prophesy (Numb. xi. 24-30), to administer with wisdom (Judges iii. 10; vi. 34; xi. 29; xiii. 25) and many other talents that were required, but He did not abide with them *continually* and neither did He indwell them *permanently*. When the task was over, when the work was completed, He departed. If, as in Saul’s case, there was extreme disobedience, He left. Also, not everyone had the enabling of the Spirit, but Joel testified that a time was coming when the Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh (Joel ii. 28). However, nowhere in that context is it ever suggested that the Holy Spirit would be a permanent possession, indwelling continually. Those who heard that the Lord Jesus

Christ was to baptize them *with* the Holy Spirit would have heard something very new. Instead of the Holy Spirit staying and enabling for just short periods of time, He was to remain within, “with the primary idea of rest or continuance *En* denotes continuance in time”. This new truth was made very clear by the Lord Jesus Himself in John xiv. 16, 17:

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may *abide with you for ever*; even the Spirit of Truth He dwelleth with you, and shall be *in you*.”

This baptism *with* the Holy Ghost would result in Him being permanently within those who experienced it but what, to them, was the significance of baptism?

Baptism = *Baptisma*, consisting of the process of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *bapto*, to dip).

Baptize = *Baptizo*, primarily a frequentative form of *bapto*, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another (Vine).

A very informative comment on baptism is found in *Classic Baptism* by James W. Dale:

“Whatever is capable of thoroughly changing the character, state or condition of any object is capable of baptizing that object and by such change of character or condition, does in fact baptize it.”

Associated with a baptism is an agency; water, a dye or whatever, but an agency is essential. Also associated with baptism is a change of character or condition. In baptism with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit Himself is the agency and there must be a change of character or status or condition for He is certainly able to bring about such changes. These points, so essential to the understanding of baptism, are clearly demonstrated in the first baptism of the Bible which so dramatically changed all who underwent it.

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in (*en*) the cloud and in (*en*) the sea” (I Cor. x. 1, 2).

Here the agency was the cloud and the sea, and the condition and status of the people changed dramatically. In Egypt they had been slaves under the domination of Pharaoh. There they had sacrificed the passover lamb which redeemed the firstborn and caused the Egyptians to let them go. They went but were pursued by the army and escaped by passing through the Red Sea to safety. This was the “baptism unto Moses in (*en*) the cloud and in (*en*) the sea”.

“All were baptized *unto Moses* *It united them with all that Moses stood for in divine law and ceremonial* and that is the *first great underlying teaching of baptism* there the whole nation of Israel, redeemed and brought out of Egypt, is linked with all that Moses stood for in law and ceremony” (Stuart Allen, *Baptism*).

“The Israelites were *baptized unto Moses by the cloud and by the sea*. In this way they were separated from Egypt and Pharaoh, came under the leadership of the deliverer (Moses) and identified with him in hope and destiny” (Merril F. Unger, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*).

The point both these writers bring out is that in this first baptism the Israelites were baptized with (*en*) the cloud and the sea and the result was that they were baptized unto (*eis*) Moses, being identified with all that he stood for. However, is there any link in the O.T. between baptism and identification?

The Greek translation of the O.T., *The Septuagint* (LXX), used *bapto* to translate the Hebrew *tabal* which is a primitive root meaning to dip and is translated to dip and plunge in the K.J.V. The first occurrence is in the passage describing the institution of the passover.

“Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip (*tabal*) it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason The Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you” (Exod. xii. 21-23).

The people were identified with the lamb. Its death was in place of the death of the firstborn in the household and this was guaranteed by the symbol of dipping (*baptizing*) the hyssop in the blood and striking the lintel and two side posts.

Leviticus iv. deals with the sin offering of ignorance and there, after the sacrifice of the bullock, “the priest shall dip (*tabal*) his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the vail, of the sanctuary” (Lev. iv. 6; see also verse 17). Lev. iv. 4 shows the strong link with identification. The priest “shall lay his hand upon the bullock’s head, and kill the bullock before the Lord” (see also verses 15, 24 and 29).

Lev. xiv. deals with the cleansing of lepers and their houses. Verses 4 and 5 record that two birds were taken and one sacrificed. “As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip (*tabal*) them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed” (verse 6, see also verse 51). Thus the living bird was identified with the one that had been sacrificed.

The link between baptism and identification is seen in the N.T. in such passages as:

“I indeed baptize you with (*en*) water unto (*eis*) repentance” (Matt. iii. 11).

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in (*eis*) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. xxviii. 19).

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto (*eis*) Jesus Christ were baptized into (*eis*) His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into (*eis*) death” (Rom. vi. 3, 4).

“For as many of you as have been baptized into (*eis*) Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians iii. 27).

“And were all baptized unto (*eis*) Moses in (*en*) the cloud and in (*en*) the sea” (I.Cor.x.2).

An important word in the above passages is the preposition *eis*. *The Companion Bible* note in Appendix 104 is as follows:

“*eis* governs only one case (the Accusative). Euclid uses *eis* when a line is drawn to meet another line, at a certain point. Hence, it denotes motion to or unto an object, with the purpose of reaching or touching it.”

Those who responded to the call of John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 2), were baptized by him “with (*en*) water unto (*eis*) repentance”. In the wilderness John preached “the baptism of repentance for (*eis*) the remission of sins” (Mark i. 4). By listening to John’s message the people made their first step in moving towards his teaching. By undergoing his baptism with (*en*) water they were associating themselves with his message. They were identifying themselves with repentance and remission.

Baptism with water was carried out by the disciples (John iv. 1, 2) and after His resurrection the Lord Jesus told them, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark xvi. 15, 16). Is this referring to water baptism? Was water baptism necessary for salvation? It would seem that from Peter’s point of view the answer to both questions is ‘yes’ for this is exactly what he preached and performed during the Acts period:

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts ii. 38).

There are a number of similarities between the ministries of John the Baptist and Peter. In both there was the call to repent. There was also water baptism and for both “the kingdom of heaven was at hand” (compare Matt. iii. 2 with Acts iii. 19-22). If the people to whom John preached had accepted the Lord Jesus as Messiah, that millennial kingdom would have come soon afterwards. It was *at hand*. It had *drawn near*. Matthew xii. records that they rejected Him as Prophet, Priest, and King so *that* offer of the kingdom was withdrawn. However, another offer was made to them in the book of Acts and Peter’s speech in Acts iii. 19-26 makes it clear that if they repented, Christ would return (Acts iii. 19, 20) and the kingdom would be restored (Acts i. 6; iii. 21 restitution = restoration), Bearing in mind these parallels and the Lord’s command to him in Matt. xxviii. 19 and Mark xvi. 16, Peter’s insistence upon water baptism is very understandable but what about the apostle Paul? Commenting upon the issue of water baptism he wrote:

“Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (I Cor. i. 17).

We shall look at Paul’s teaching on baptism next time.

No.9. Baptized with the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 5) Part 2. pp. 66 - 73

Last time we saw how water baptism had been carried out by the Apostles during the period of our Lord's earthly ministry (John iv. 1, 2). After His resurrection He gave instructions concerning this rite in Matt. xxviii. 19 and Mark xvi. 16. Thus Peter's insistence upon water baptism in Acts ii. 38 is very understandable but what about the Apostle Paul? Commenting upon the issue of water baptism he wrote:

"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Cor. i. 17).

Earlier in that chapter it is obvious that water baptism was not essential to Paul's ministry:

"I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other" (I Cor. i. 14, 16).

Any who are perplexed by this difference between these two great men of God should note that Paul was "the Apostle of the *Gentiles*" (Rom. xi. 13), whereas Peter was appointed "to the apostleship of the circumcision (i.e. the *Jews*)" (Gal. ii. 8). To the Jews the meaning and implication of baptism was obvious from their (O.T.) Scriptures but to the Gentiles it would have little or no meaning.

"The gospel of the uncircumcision (*Gentiles*) was committed unto me (*Paul*), as the gospel of the circumcision (*Jews*) was unto Peter" (Gal. ii. 7).

The foundation of both gospels was Christ's completed work on Calvary's cross but there were differences in the two sets of "good news", one of which was the place of water baptism. To Peter it was essential (Mark xvi. 16; Acts ii. 38), but to Paul it was not (I Cor. i. 14-17). The second half of the Acts of the Apostles highlights many differences between the Jewish and Gentile believers (e.g. Acts xv. 12-22) but they had much in common including the need to repent and to have faith in the sin offering of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also there was the message of eternal life through resurrection but how could such a resurrection be achieved?

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into (*eis*) Jesus Christ were baptized into (*eis*) His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into (*eis*) death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. vi. 3-5).

The believer's resurrection is assured because he has been planted together with Christ in His death. This ensures that he shall be united with Him in His resurrection. The N.I.V. is helpful and clear on these verses:

"We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into (*eis*) death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a

new life. If we have been united with Him in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection” (Rom. vi. 4, 5, N.I.V.).

To be united with Christ in His resurrection a believer must be united with Him in His death. This is achieved by being “buried with Him through baptism into (*eis*) death” but to which baptism is Paul referring? Is it baptism with (*en*) water or baptism with (*en*) Spirit? Nowhere in this passage, or indeed the whole epistle, is it stated what the baptizing agency is. Yet a baptism requires an agency. It must have one to change “the character, state or condition”. The N.T. knows of only two such agencies: water or the Holy Spirit. To which is Paul referring in Rom. vi. 3-5? Certainly it cannot be water. Paul’s words in I Cor. i. 17 and the attitude he displayed towards it in I Cor. i. 14-16 preclude it. Thus Rom. vi. 3-5 must be the result of being baptized with (*en*) the Holy Spirit.

“In these passages (Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12; Eph. iv. 5) the holy Apostle is not considering ritual baptism at all. The sublimity of thought, the context of the argument, the exalted nature of the spiritual verities taught, support this position. He is speaking of something infinitely higher, not of a mere symbolic ordinance that is powerless to effect intrinsic change, but of a divine operation which places us eternally in Christ, and into His experience of crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection” (Merrill F. Unger, *Bibliotheca Sacra*).

“The conclusion therefore at which I arrive is that baptism by water is not in the mind of the Apostle at all in these two verses (Rom. vi. 3, 4); instead it is the baptism that is wrought by the Spirit that is because water baptism does not achieve union, it does not produce it; indeed at that point it does not even represent it. This is a baptism which is carried out by the Holy Spirit when He incorporates us into and engrafts us into the Lord Jesus Christ” (Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Romans Chapter 6*).

Both these great writers reject water baptism in Rom. vi. but Martyn Lloyd Jones speaks of a baptism “wrought by the Spirit carried out by the Holy Spirit”, but is he correct? In the N.T. there is the baptism with (*en*) water for (*eis*) repentance and remission of sins and this was carried out by men; John the Baptist, Peter, etc. Also there is the baptism with (*en*) the Holy Spirit which is carried out by Christ Himself (Matt. iii. 11). Rom. vi. implies that this baptism “incorporates us into, engrafts us into the Lord Jesus Christ”. It identifies believers with His work on the cross and ensures them identification with His resurrection.

It is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself links together baptism and His death. In Luke xii. 50, speaking of the crucifixion which lay ahead of Him, He said, “Behold I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished”. That wasn’t the only occasion He brought the two together. The mother of Zebedee’s children came to Him to ask if her sons could sit on His left and right hand when the kingdom came in. His reply in Matt. xx. 22, 23, contains the words, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”.

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul stated that “by (*en*) one Spirit are we all baptized into (*eis*) one body” (I Cor. xii. 13). Again he cannot be referring to water baptism as the reference to the Spirit here, and later in the verse, makes clear. Also

Paul's words in the opening chapter of I Corinthians (i. 14-17) make it unlikely that he would write about water baptism in chapter xii. Again, in I Cor. x. 2, Paul wrote about a dry baptism unto (*eis*) Moses. Commenting upon I Cor. x. 1, 2 Charles H. Welch wrote:

“This baptism was ‘unto Moses’, even as in its fullest sense; the baptism of the N.T. was ‘unto Christ’ but I Cor. x. 1, 2 prefigures the baptism of the Spirit, *not immersion in water*, for we have seen the Scripture seems to go out of its way to impress upon us the absence of water at this time” (See Exod. xiv. 22; xv. 19; Psa. lxvi. 6; Heb. xi. 29) (*An Alphabetical Analysis* Volume 1).

“The Israelites were baptized into Moses by the cloud and by the sea. In this way they were separated from Egypt and Pharaoh, came under the leadership of the deliverer (Moses) and identified with him in hope and destiny. Likewise the believer, by being baptized into Christ by the Spirit, is cut off from the world of Satan, and identified with Christ, coming under Christ's influence and control, and made one in hope and destiny with Him” (Merril F. Unger, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit*).

It was the action of being baptized with (*en*) the Holy Spirit which baptized the Corinthian saints into (*eis*) one body and which had caused them all to drink from the same source (I Cor. xii. 13). It is impossible for it to have been a baptism with (*en*) water.

Neither could baptism with (*en*) water have been what Paul meant when he wrote, “for as many of you as have been baptized into (*eis*) Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. iii. 27). Again no agency for baptism is specifically mentioned but earlier Paul had dealt with the gospel of the circumcision and the gospel of the uncircumcision (Gal. ii. 7, 8). He had raised the issue of the apostleship to the Jews and apostleship to the Gentiles. Common to both gospels and both apostleships was the one foundation of Jesus Christ but the buildings on that foundation were different and one of the differences was water baptism. Thus it is not possible for Paul to be speaking of this ritual in Gal. iii. 27. In fact this verse is similar to Rom. vi. 3-5 where verse 3 speaks of being “baptized into (*eis*) Christ”.

This concludes a study of being baptized with (*en*) the Holy Spirit in the gospels, the book of Acts and the epistles written during the Acts period. Perhaps, surprisingly, there has been no association between the baptism with (*en*) the Holy Spirit and gifts, signs, evidential miracles and external displays of power. Obviously these are to do with the Holy Spirit but they do not form part of His baptizing work which identifies the believer with the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross and so ensures that the believer will be united with Him in His resurrection and thus eternal life is guaranteed.

But what about the epistles written after the Acts period, after the Jew had been set aside? Do these contain any instructions on baptism, either with (*en*) water or with (*en*) the Holy Spirit? Did the failure and rejection of Israel cause any changes in God's economy? A study of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Timothy, Titus and Philemon reveals that there are two references to baptism in the epistles written after Acts xxviii. 28.

“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” (Eph. iv. 4-6).

To which does the *one baptism* refer? Is it baptism with (*en*) water or baptism with (*en*) the Holy Spirit? Or is it both (!!!), as some would maintain? Merrill F. Unger is adamant that what Paul meant was “one (spiritual) baptism” and that the apostle was not excluding baptism with (*en*) water. However to state that this passage teaches that there is “one (spiritual) baptism” and allow a second (ritual) baptism destroys the important features of these verses. The *oneness*, the singleness, the uniqueness of each item mentioned is essential. To allow another baptism, a second one, would open the way to permitting another hope or another faith or another body. Even another Lord or another God could be introduced, or another Spirit—a subject on which Paul expressed himself forcibly in II Cor. xi. 3-15.

To say that Paul had in mind both baptism with (*en*) the Spirit and baptism with (*en*) water shows a lack of appreciation of the differences between the ministries of Peter and Paul during the Acts period. Baptism with (*en*) water was of vital importance to Peter’s ministry but it wasn’t to Paul’s. Thus in writing Eph. iv. 4-6 Paul could not be alluding to water baptism in either a primary or a secondary sense. Commenting on the one baptism of Eph. iv 5, I. M. Haldeman writes:

“If it be Holy Ghost baptism, water baptism is excluded. There is no authority; no place for it. No minister has a right to perform it; no one is under obligation to submit to it. To perform it, or to submit to it, would be not only without authority, but useless, utterly meaningless. If it be water baptism, Holy Ghost baptism is no longer operative. But it must be either one or the other, Holy Ghost or water. It cannot be both. Two are no longer possible” (*Holy Ghost or Water?*).

With this every unbiased reader will agree, it being impossible to make one into two. However, what follows in Haldeman’s book is quite incredible! He states that the one baptism of Eph. iv. 5 is baptism with (*en*) water. To make such a statement shows that he has failed to take into account three important facts:

- (1) Paul’s attitude to water baptism in I Cor. i. 14-16 was a result of the orders he had been given by the glorified, ascended Christ. “*Christ* sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (I Cor. i. 17). Nowhere in Paul’s ministry, either before or after Acts xxviii. 28, does baptism with (*en*) water have an important role let alone an essential one.
- (2) The structure of Eph. iv. 4-6 parallels *baptism* and *Spirit*:
one body
one Spirit
one hope
one Lord
one faith
one baptism
one God and Father.

This shows that the One Who inspired the writer wanted to show that the one baptism of this dispensation is one associated with the Spirit.

- (3) It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who baptizes the believer with (*en*) the Holy Spirit (Matt. iii. 11). This act ensures that the believer is identified with,

baptized into (*eis*) Christ *and* identified with, baptized into (*eis*) His death. Thus the believer is “united with Him in His death” and “will certainly be united with Him in His resurrection” (Rom. vi. 5, N.I.V.). That identification, that union with Him in death *and* resurrection is as essential for believers in this dispensation as it was for those during the Acts period. Thus Eph. iv. 5 must be referring to this baptism.

Weighing up the whole ministry and writings of Paul one can but conclude that to the Apostle of the Gentiles, water baptism was not essential during the Acts period. To Paul, “the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles” (Eph. iii. 1), there was only one baptism permitted after the rejection of Israel at the end of the Acts period and that was the one in which the believer was baptized with (*en*) the Holy Ghost.

Colossians ii. 10, 11 is the only other passage, written after the setting aside of the Jewish nation, which mentions baptism:

“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 (*en*) baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead.”

To try and make this passage refer to the ritual of being baptized with (*en*) water is simply not possible. To attempt to do so would show failure to appreciate that Colossians is parallel to Ephesians and in the latter there is but *one* baptism and that must be the baptism with (*en*) the Spirit. Also the context of Col. ii. is suggestive. Verse 11 mentions “the circumcision made *without* hands” and the reference, in the same verse, to “the circumcision of Christ” cannot refer to the rite performed on the eighth day old baby but to His death, to Him being cut off (Dan. ix. 26). Also Col. ii. 14 refers to “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances” and verse 16 gives freedom concerning food, drink, holy days, new moons, and sabbaths. Col. ii. 17 states that all these were but “a shadow of things to come; but the body (i.e. the reality) is of Christ”. In the light of all this, to insist that Col. ii. 12 refers to baptism with (*en*) water not only ignores the context, it actually breaks with it.

As mentioned above, the second half of Col. ii. 11 “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” is referring to the Lord’s crucifixion and this verse has similarities to Rom. vi. 6. In fact Col. ii. 12 is saying much the same as Rom. vi. 3-5 and the expression “buried with Him” occurs in both. This does refer to the work of the Holy Spirit and is the result of being baptized by the Lord Jesus Christ with (*en*) the Holy Spirit into (*eis*) His death. Thus the conclusion is the same. Water baptism has no place after the Jewish nation was set aside at Acts xxviii. 26-28. The baptism for today is the one with (*en*) the Spirit which identifies the believer with His Lord and His crucifixion and His resurrection. This baptism is essential to eternal life but when does it take place?

In Luke xxiv. 29 the Lord told the disciples to “tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” and in Acts i. 4, 5 the Lord’s command was:

“That they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with (*en*) the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Here the waiting was essential to fulfil the feasts of Lev. xxiii. Thus they had to wait until the fiftieth day, until Pentecost. “And when the day of Pentecost was *fully come* (being fulfilled: Greek *sumpleroo*)” (Acts ii. 1), they were filled and baptized with (*en*) the Holy Ghost. However, for others there was no waiting period.

“. . . . ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph. i. 13, 14).

This appears to imply that sometime *after* believing, the believer is sealed with the Spirit but this is an inaccurate translation, a better one being “in whom also *having believed*, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”. See, for instance, the N.I.V.:

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, ye were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession” (Eph. i. 13, 14, N.I.V.).

To sum up: baptism with (*en*) the Holy Spirit is not associated with evidential miracles, signs and displays of power. These are to do with the filling and gifts of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Matt. iii. 11) baptizes with (*en*) the Holy Ghost and this act identifies the believer with his Lord and His death and ensures that he will be united with Christ in resurrection (Rom. vi. 3-5). Such union with Christ takes place when the believer is sealed with the Spirit at the moment of believing (Eph. i. 13, 14). This is an important fundamental truth which is as true for the believers of the Acts period as it is for believers today.

In concluding, consideration must be given to the view that there are three baptisms in the Acts period, namely (1) water baptism, (2) Holy Spirit baptism, (3) Rom. vi. baptism. This view states that it is the Rom. vi. baptism which is essential for today and which is the one referred to in Eph. iv. 4-6 and Col. ii. 11, 12. However, the N.T. knows of only two baptismal agencies, water and the Holy Spirit, and so there cannot be three baptisms. No agency is mentioned in Rom. vi. 3-5 and this study has shown that the relevant agency for the great work described in those verses must be the Holy Spirit. The idea that there are three baptisms in the Acts period, and views like Haldeman’s that the baptism with (*en*) the Spirit is not the one baptism of Eph. iv. 5, have as one of their roots the teaching that evidential miracles and signs are linked to the baptism with (*en*) the Spirit. They conclude that as such signs had no place once the people of Israel had been set aside (Acts xxviii. 26-28), then Holy Spirit baptism ceased also. However, the evidential miracles and displays of power were not associated with the baptism with (*en*) the Holy Spirit. They are associated with the filling and gifts of the Spirit.

No.10. Filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 4). pp. 93 - 100

In Acts i. 5 the Lord Jesus Christ told the disciples that “ye shall be *baptized* with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” and, because Acts ii. 4 records that “they were all *filled* with the Holy Ghost”, some conclude that being *filled* with the Holy Ghost is exactly the same as being *baptized* with Him but is this correct? In Matthew iii. 11, Mark i. 8 and Luke iii. 16, John the Baptist says of the Lord, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost”. This baptism was, to John, still future and no one, up to then, had even heard of it let alone experienced it. Also there is no record of the Lord baptizing anyone with the Holy Ghost during His earthly ministry; the first to be baptized in this way were those at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost but the O.T. and the Gospels record that a variety of people were *filled* with the Spirit (e.g. Exod. xxviii. 3; xxxi. 3; xxxv. 31; Luke i. 15, 41, 67). The conclusion must be that the baptism and the filling are different. This is further demonstrated by Peter being filled with the Holy Spirit at least three times (Acts ii. 4; iv. 8, 31) and Paul twice (Acts ix. 17; xiii. 9). The baptism of the Holy Spirit can be experienced only once (see previous article) and so there must be a difference between the two.

The expression “filled with the Holy Ghost” occurs ten times in the N.T. (A.V.) and in the majority of cases the word for filled is:

pimplemi: to fill, fill up. Passive, to become full of, be satisfied, have enough of (Bullinger).

pimplemi and *pletho*, lengthened form of *pleo*, to fill (*pletho* supplies certain tenses of *pimplemi*): is used . . . for persons filled with the Holy Ghost, Luke i. 15, 41, 67; Acts ii. 4; iv. 8, 31; ix. 17; xiii. 9 (Vine).

The first occurrence in Luke i. 15 refers to John the Baptist and he was unique, being “filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb”. John was to go “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke i. 17), and here a link is seen between being *filled* with the Holy Ghost and having *power*. In Luke xxiv. 29 the Lord Jesus told the disciples to “tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”. On the day of Pentecost “they were all *filled* with the Holy Ghost” (Acts ii. 4), and their subsequent actions show that the Lord’s promise of power was fulfilled.

The second reference is in Luke i. 41 when Elizabeth “was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said”. Verses 42-45 record her inspired words, the result of her being filled with the Holy Ghost. The effect upon her husband, Zacharias, was similar when he was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke i. 67). He “prophesied, saying” and verses 68-79 contain the inspired *Benedictus*.

When the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the result was not dissimilar. They spoke “with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance”

(Acts ii. 4, 11), and Acts ii. 14-36 records Peter's long speech containing the quotation from Joel.

In Acts iv., Peter and John were imprisoned but when they appeared before Caiaphas and company, "Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them" (Acts iv. 8). Then followed a brief but inspired and powerful speech, "and when they (Caiaphas and company) saw the *boldness* of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled and beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing" (Acts iv. 13, 14). Such incidents as these were fulfillments of the Lord's words in such places as Matt. x. 17-20:

"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before the governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Not long after being released, Peter and others were praying together (Acts iv. 23-30) and when they finished "they were all *filled* with the Holy Ghost and they *spoke* the word of God with *boldness*" (verse 31). This is the third time Scripture records that Peter was "filled with the Holy Ghost" and on each occasion the result was an inspired and empowered speech. This would not be unexpected by the Jew who knew his Scriptures for in the O.T. there is close connection between the Spirit and prophesying (i.e. speaking forth about God):

"And the Lord came down and took of the Spirit that was upon him (Moses), and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease" (Numb. xi. 25).

Thus the miraculous, empowered speeches of Elizabeth, Zacharias, Peter and others were the result of being "*filled* with the Holy Ghost".

On the road to Damascus, Paul met his Lord and the glory blinded him, but he heard Ananias say:

". . . . the Lord hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ" (Acts ix. 17-20).

Here some claim that the restoration of sight was the result of being "*filled* with the Holy Ghost" but this is not stated in the passage. In the context of Acts it makes more sense to recognize the restoration of sight as the result of Ananias laying his hands on Paul. Such a healing miracle would be a sign to Paul that God was working through Ananias. Paul received his sight and was filled with the Spirit and verse 20 states that "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues".

Paul was again filled with the Holy Ghost in Acts xiii. At Paphos, Elymas the sorcerer withstood Paul who, being "filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and

said” (Acts xiii. 9, 10). The short sharp speech that followed contained the pronouncement of the blindness judgment upon Elymas.

On four occasions the N.T. records that certain people were “full of the Holy Ghost”.

full = *pleres*: (1) full of, filled with, generally full, complete sufficient (Bullinger).
(2) denotes full, in the sense of being filled spiritually, of the Holy Spirit, Luke iv. 1;
Acts vi. 3; vii. 55; xi. 24 (Vine).

Luke iv 1 records that “Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness”. There the Lord underwent those testing temptations which He overcame with three quotations from Deuteronomy.

In Acts vi. 1 “there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations”. To solve this administrative difficulty the twelve looked for “seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost” (Acts vi. 3-5). The link between administrative gifts and the Holy Spirit would not be unknown to those who knew their Scriptures.

Such people as Othniel, Gideon and Jephthah needed wisdom, discernment and prudence to judge the Jewish nation and “the Spirit of the Lord came upon” them to equip them with the necessary administrative abilities (Judges iii. 10; vi. 34; xi. 29).

As well as Stephen being “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost” (Acts vi. 5), Acts vi. 8 records that he was “full of faith and *power*”; again a link between these two is seen. Acts vii. records Stephen’s mighty speech to the high priest and verse 55 states again that he was “full of the Holy Ghost”. He could never have made such a speech if he had not been.

The last reference to a person being “full of the Holy Spirit” is in Acts xi. 24 where Luke describes Barnabas, but nothing is said in the context which adds further detail and this concludes the study of being “filled (*pimplemi*) with the Holy Ghost” and of being “full (*pleres*) of the Holy Ghost”. Every occurrence in the New Testament has been considered and neither of these expressions occurs in any of the epistles, neither in those written during the Acts period nor in those written after the Jewish nation had been set aside at Acts xxviii. 26, 27. Does being filled (*pimplemi*) or being full (*pleres*) of the Spirit have any significance to members of the Body of Christ, a relationship revealed in those seven epistles written after the close of the Acts period?

Elizabeth, Zacharias, Peter, Paul, Stephen and others were filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied or spoke with power and boldness. For those alive in the Acts period this was a fulfillment of Matthew x. 17-20, but such a promise was not for this dispensation. We do the words of our Lord disservice if we try and apply that promise to ourselves. We are not likely to be scourged in the synagogues! (Matthew x. 18). Thus we cannot apply this promise to this age, and this aspect of being filled with the Spirit is not truth for today. Instead we are told the very opposite. We are not told to “take no thought of

what ye shall speak”. On the contrary, we are told to “study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim. ii. 15).

Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost, condemned a man and struck him blind but such miracles of judgment have no place in this dispensation of the grace of God (Eph. iii. 2). Paul’s restoration of sight may have been due to the filling with the Holy Ghost, but after Acts xxviii. 28 such healing miracles ceased. Timothy had stomach problems and other infirmities, and Trophimus was left sick at Miletum (I Tim. v. 23; II Tim. iv. 20).

Elizabeth “spake out” and Zacharias “prophesied” but in this dispensation the prophets of Eph. iv. 11 were to lay the foundations (Eph. ii. 20), a job done in the years just after the Jews were set aside at Acts xxviii. 26, 27.

I Corinthians xiii. 8 states that the gift of prophecy would fail. It states also that the gift of knowledge, the Acts period of fulfillment of Matt. x. 17-20, would cease, as would tongues. Peter and the apostles were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues, which was a sign to the unbelieving Jews (I Cor. i. 22; xiv. 21, 22). When that nation was set aside, the need for such signs ceased and then there is no record of them in the later epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Timothy, Titus and Philemon). The only conclusion one can come to is that being “filled (*pimplemi*) with” and being “full (*pleres*) of” the Holy Ghost with the resultant displays of miraculous power is not truth for today. But what about Eph. v. 18?

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God” (Ephesians v. 18).

Here the word translated filled is *pleroo*:

pleroo: (1) to fill, make full, to fulfil. Passive, to be filled or full (Bullinger). (2) to make full, to fill to the full; in the Passive voice, to be filled, made full; it is used of believers filled with the Spirit, Acts xiii. 52 and Eph. v. 18 (Vine).

Acts xiii. 52 states that “the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost” but Eph. v. 18 is not a description of the condition or state of believers. It is a command, telling them what they should be like: literally, “Be not drunk but be filled up to the full by the Spirit”. Commenting on the expression “be filled with the Spirit”, Charles H. Welch wrote:

“To understand this statement it is necessary to understand the use of the Greek verb ‘to fill’. *Pleroo*, ‘to fill’ takes three cases after it. As an active verb, followed by the Accusative, of the *vessel* or whatever is filled. As an active verb, followed by the Genitive, of what it is *filled with*. As a passive verb, followed by the Dative, of the *filler*, and as a passive verb, followed by the Genitive, of what the vessel is *filled with*.

In the passage before us the verb is *passive*, and ‘with the Spirit’, *en pneumati*, is Dative. This means that the Spirit is the One that fills, and not that the believer is filled *with the Spirit*” (*In Heavenly Places*, page 393).

To make the point clear: A glass may be filled with a tap but no one would imagine that afterwards the tap would be found in the glass. The tap fills the glass and here the Holy Spirit can fill the believer. The tap fills the glass with water but with what does the Holy Spirit fill the believer? The immediate context does not supply the answer but earlier, Paul had prayed:

“. . . . that He would grant you to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled (*pleroo*) with all the fullness of God” (Eph. iii. 16-19).

Here Paul prays that each individual may be filled with the fullness of God, i.e. each individual filled to the maximum of his capacity for no human being could ever contain *all* the fullness of God. Can believers achieve this filling themselves or do they need assistance? Obviously they need help and the One Who provides it is the Spirit.

“. . . . that He would grant, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. iii. 16-19).

It is significant that this word *pleroo*, to fill, is found in three other prayers in the epistles written after Acts xxviii. 28. Consider the following:

“. . . . this I pray, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being *filled* with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ” (Phil. i. 9-11).

“For this cause we pray that ye might be *filled* with the knowledge (or acknowledgment) of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. i. 9).

“Epaphras labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete (*filled* full) in all the will of God” (Col. iv. 12).

If any of us are to be filled to the fullness of our capacity with the fullness of God; if any of us are to be filled with the fruits of righteousness; if any of us are to be filled with the knowledge of His will *and* the acknowledgment of it, we cannot do it in our own strength. We cannot fill ourselves but the Holy Spirit can and will. However the initial desire and effort must come from us. Is there anything we can do? An answer may be provided by comparing closely two passages of Scripture:

“Be filled with the Spirit speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives . . .” (Eph. v. 18-22).	“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. Wives submit . . .” (Col. iii. 16-18).
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The parallels here are so close that many have decided that “to be filled with the Spirit” is synonymous with “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”. This may not be strictly correct but the two expressions must be closely related and perhaps the first step a believer must take in observing the command to “be filled with the Spirit” is to “let the word of Christ dwell” in him richly. Here “the word of Christ” does not refer exclusively

to the words spoken by Christ but means “the word concerning Christ” and that embraces the O.T. (Luke xxiv. 44), as well as the Gospels and the epistles. If the Spirit is to fill us with the knowledge of His will then it seems very sensible for us to first read and study the Book which contains His will. As Paul puts it elsewhere:

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim. ii. 15).

It is impossible for the Spirit to fill us with the fullness of God, with the fruits of righteousness and with the knowledge and acknowledgment of His will if we keep the Book shut.

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In concluding this study of being filled with the Holy Ghost, it should be pointed out that there are a variety of other expressions which occur in Scripture. For example:

“receive (*lambano*) the Holy Ghost” (Acts ii. 38; viii. 15, 17, 19; x. 47; xix. 2).

“the Holy Ghost fell (*epipipto*) on them” (Acts viii. 16; x. 44; xi. 15).

“poured out (*ekcheo*) the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts x. 45).

“the Holy Ghost came (*eitho*) on them” (Acts xix. 6).

To these could be added such O.T. expressions as: “the Spirit came upon them” (Judg. iii. 10; vi. 34; xi. 29; xiv. 6); “the Spirit rested on them” (Numb. xi. 25); “the Spirit began to move” (Judg. xiii. 25), as well as “filled with the Spirit” (Exod. xxviii. 3; xxxi. 3), and a variety of other expressions. (For example see II Sam. xxiii. 2; Psa.li.12; Joel ii. 28; Micah iii. 8; Zech. iv. 6). We make no comment on these as often they are either in the context of being *filled* with the Spirit or little is said in the text from which any positive deductions can be made. If any of our readers would like to study “came”, “rested”, “fell”, “poured out” etcetera then a concordance will help them greatly. Also Dr. E. W. Bullinger’s *The Giver and His Gifts*, published by Kregel, will answer many queries concerning the diverse workings of the Holy Spirit.

No.11. Speak with other Tongues (Acts ii. 4).
pp. 135 - 140

Tongues! Ecstatic utterances or languages? Languages of the earth or languages of heaven? For use in public speaking or for private prayer? A sign to the unbelieving Jew or confirmation of salvation to a believing Gentile? All these, and probably many more, are the opinions of people on the purpose of tongues. There is so much dispute over this subject and yet so little is said about it in Scripture. There is one verse in Mark's Gospel; three short passages in the Acts of the Apostles and three chapters in I Corinthians. If the Scriptural accounts are so few why is there such a divergence of views in Christian circles about this subject? Why are there so many interpretations of what actually happened and why it happened?

“In tongues movements, alleged experience and emotional excitement have attempted to be a substitute for accurate teaching and clear exposition of Holy Scripture. The result has been that the Word of God has been interpreted on the basis of human experience instead of experience being interpreted on the basis of the Word of God” (Merril Unger, *New Testament Teaching on Tongues*).

“Is experience wrong? Of course not. The Christian life is a love affair, ‘thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart’. Love is experiential, not theoretical. But the Lord Jesus Christ gave the proper pattern in the Gospel of John, chapter eight, verse thirty two, ‘ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’. What that truth is, is seen from the previous verse, ‘My word’. God's design is from truth to experience not from experience to truth! The formula, ‘I have had an experience. I find experience *like* mine in the Bible. Therefore my experience is Scriptural’ is dangerously misleading” (George E. Gardiner, *The Corinthian Catastrophe*).

Peter experienced one of the greatest events ever seen. He was there on the mountain when the Lord's glory began to be shown and he refers to this in his epistle (II.Pet.i.16-18). However, Peter goes on to say, “we have also a more sure word of prophecy” (verse 19). To Peter, what the O.T. prophets had written was “more sure” than what he had seen. Thus, like Peter, in this study on the subject of tongues, we will start off with the Bible and keep rigidly to it throughout.

There are two words which are translated “tongues”.

- dialektos* - language (English dialect) (Vine).
- a speaking through, or to and fro; hence language spoken by a people or province, especially a dialect, peculiar idiom (Bullinger).
- a language of a nation or region (Bauer).

Here there is total agreement amongst these three experts. This word, *dialektos*, occurs only six times in the N.T., all in Acts (i. 19; ii. 6, 8; xxi. 40; xxii. 2; xxvi. 14).

- glossa* - is used of (1) the ‘tongues . . . like as of fire’ which appeared at Pentecost.
(2) the tongue, as an organ of speech.

- (3) (a) a language, coupled with *phule*, a tribe, *laos* a people, *ethnos*, a nation.
 (b) the supernatural gift of speaking in another language without it having been learnt (Vine).
- glossa* the tongue, as part of the body; also personified (as in Phil.ii.11) *para glossa*, i.e. every person and also, a tongue, a language, a gift of language (Bullinger).
- glossa--* (1) (a) literally, as an organ of speech.
 (b) figuratively, of forked flames.
 (2) language (Acts ii. 6) every language = every person regardless of the language he speaks, Acts ii. 6, Phil. ii. 11.
 (3) a special problem is posed by the technical term *glossai*, *gene glosson en glosse (asi) lalein*, I Cor. xiv. 1-27, 39; xii. 10, 28, 30; xiii. 1, 8; Acts.x.46; xix. 6. There is no doubt the thing referred to, namely the broken speech of persons in religious ecstasy. The phenomenon, as found in Hellenistic religion The origin of the term is less clear. Two explanations are prominent today. The one (Bleek, Heinrici) hold that *glossa* here means antiquated, foreign, unintelligible, mysterious utterances The other (Reitzenstein, Baisset) see in *glossalia* as speaking in marvelous, heavenly languages (Bauer).

Here Bauer adds a meaning not given by Vine and Bullinger. Who is correct? There is no doubt that *dialektos* means a language, a dialect of this earth but what about *glossa*? Literally it means the tongue but what does the expression “to speak with tongues” mean? What was its meaning in classical Greek? How do the N.T. writers use it? To help in this study, a complete concordance of *glossa* is given. It occurs 50 times and is used in the following ways:

- (a) Speak in tongues (25); Mark xvi. 17; Acts ii. 4, 11; x. 46; xix. 6; I Cor. xii. 10, 10, 28, 30; xiii. 1, 8; xiv. 2, 4, 5, 5, 6, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39.
 (b) The tongue (literally) (17); Mark vii. 33, 35; Luke i. 64; xvi. 23; Acts ii. 26; Rom. iii. 13; xiv. 11; I Cor. xiv. 9; Philippians ii. 11; James i. 26; iii. 5, 6, 6, 8; I.Pet.iii.10; I John v. 9; Rev. xvi. 9.
 (c) Tongues of fire (1); Acts ii. 3.
 (d) Peoples, nations, tongues (7); Rev. v. 9; vii. 9; x. 11; xi. 9; xiii. 7; xiv. 6; xvii. 5.

The phrase *glossais lalein*, to speak with tongues, was not invented by the N.T. writers but borrowed from the ordinary speech of pagans. Plato (B.C.427-348) uses it and so does Virgil, who lived B.C.70-19, and he graphically describes the ancient, pagan prophetess as “speaking in tongues”, (see *Aeneid* VI49,98). Bauer points out that the origin of the term is uncertain but two explanations are prominent. One holds that *glossa* means “antiquated, foreign, unintelligible utterances” whilst the other sees it as “speaking in marvelous, heavenly languages”. All this leads to three different views of tongues (*glossa*) in the N.T.:

- (1) That it is a language of this earth, like *dialektos*.
 (2) That it is the language of angels, a heavenly language.
 (3) That it is ecstatic utterances.

Which is it? Is it all three or two of the three or just one?

The first occurrence of the phrase is in Mark xvi. 17, 18:

“And these *signs* shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

Here the Lord Jesus Christ was speaking to the disciples. How would they have understood the *sign* of speaking in new tongues? That they were to behave as the pagans did in their temples, by making ecstatic utterances!? This surely cannot be correct. Such behaviour would not have been a sign of God’s workings. To them it would have been a sign of Satanic activity for the practices of the pagan temples were strongly forbidden in the Old Testament.

The Lord, here, was speaking to Jews who were brought up on the Scriptures. What did “speak with new tongues” mean to them? How did they understand it? Were they perplexed? Did they know what to look for? We may never know the answers to such questions but if there was any uncertainty in their minds it must have vanished on the day of Pentecost when, in Acts ii. 4, this phrase occurs. In this passage, we get the most detailed description of this phenomenon:

“And they began to speak with other tongues (*glossa*) and devout men heard them speak in his own language (*dialektos*) ‘How hear we every man in our own tongue (*dialektos*) and we do hear them speak in our own tongues (*glossa*)’ (Acts ii. 4, 6, 8, 11).

Here there can be no doubt it, tongues (*glossa*) were foreign languages (*dialektos*). This was truly a remarkable sign to the Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem from every nation (Acts ii. 5). They heard them speak in their own language and “they were all amazed” (Acts ii. 12). If the disciples had been performing the ecstatic utterances of pagan temple-worship it would have been no sign to the Jews visiting Jerusalem. To them such a display would have been abhorrent.

The next occurrence of the phrase is in Acts x. 45, 46, “and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God”. Now the Jews who observed this would not have been astonished if the Gentiles had merely indulged in ecstatic speech for that was common place in Greek religion. It would have been *no* sign to the Jews. If those Gentiles had made the ecstatic utterances as heard in pagan temples, Peter would not have baptized them, he would have rejected them. It is clear that here tongues (*glossa*) are languages (*dialektos*) just as they were in Acts ii., and this is what is implied in Peter’s report of the incident in Acts xi. 15, 16. Also the result was similar on both occasions. Here they magnified God (Acts x. 46), with their tongues and earlier “we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts ii. 11). Again, if these tongues were not in languages known to Peter and company, then how did they know that they magnified God? No interpreter is mentioned.

The third and final reference in Acts is in xix. 6 where “they spake with tongues, and prophesied”. This would not have signified anything to Paul, and to the other Jews

involved, if the result of his laying on of hands was that they could copy pagan practices. We may have laboured this point but it is important. The *first* reference to tongues states:

“these *signs* shall follow them that believe they shall speak with new tongues”
(Mark xvi. 17).

In the last chapter which deals with tongues, Paul writes:

“wherefore tongues are for a *sign*, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not”
(I Cor. xiv. 22).

Is this a sign to the unbelieving Jew or Gentile? Either way, it wouldn't be a sign to either if it merely copied the prophetess at Delphi. Although the phrase *glossais lalein*, to speak with tongues, does occur in classical Greek and is used there of ecstatic utterances, this cannot be how the N. T. writers use it. But what about the Old Testament? Do we get any help there?

It is obvious that the speaking in tongues was primarily a sign to the unbelieving Jew, not Gentile. This is clear when I Cor. xiv. 22 is taken in context:

“In the *law* it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear Me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (I Cor. xiv. 21, 22).

Obviously this passage is aimed at the Jew, since quoting the Law to the Gentiles, who would not know it, would be of little value, but to which part of the O.T. is Paul referring? There are three possibilities and it is best to consider them all to see if *languages* or *ecstatic utterances* were what the O.T. writers had in mind.

Deut. xxviii. 49: “The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand.”

Isa. xxviii. 11: “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.”

Isa. xxxiii. 19: “Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand.”

In Isa. xxviii. 11, the Septuagint (LXX) uses *glossa* for tongues and this passage, addressed to the northern kingdom of Israel, refers to the Assyrians and their language. The Jews of that nation were not believing in the Lord and they were soon to hear a new tongue, a strange language.

Isaiah xxxiii. 19 again refers to the Assyrian language and to Deut. xxviii. 49. The whole of Deut. xxviii. 45-51 is worth reading. There the Jews were told, “these curses shall come upon thee because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God they shall be for a sign Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God the Lord shall bring a nation against thee a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand”.

If the Jews did not worship the Lord, if they strayed into unbelief then certain curses and judgments would befall them. *These were for a sign*, to signify to the Jews their

unbelief and one of these signs was to do with the tongue, the language of a foreign nation, i.e. another earthly language, one different from their own. Thus a copy of the ecstatic utterances of pagan priestesses could not have been what the N.T. meant by “speaking in tongues”. The writers may well have borrowed the expression from classical Greek but they gave it a new meaning. But what about heavenly languages, the tongues of angels? In I Cor. xiii. 1 Paul wrote:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

Here, some assert, Paul claims he has spoken in the tongues or languages of angels but *The Companion Bible* note on “though” is enlightening:

though = if, Greek *ean* = if haply, if so be that, haply, perchance. Here followed by the subjunctive mood, it expresses a hypothetical but possible condition, contingent on circumstances the future will show.

Up to that point of time, Paul had not spoken in the tongues of angels. Here, he was arguing hypothetically. “If I speak with the tongues of men, even if I speak with the tongues of angels, and have not love, I am as empty as a drum” is a possible paraphrase which makes the argument clear. It is interesting to note that throughout the whole of the Scriptures, whenever angels talk, they are always clearly understood by the human beings addressed. Thus in Scripture, angels have always spoken in the tongues of men.

To sum up, in Scripture to speak in tongues does not refer to angelic speech, neither can it refer to utterances made in religious ecstasy which were common in the pagan temples. It refers to a language, a *dialektos*, a speech of some other nation here on earth.

No.12. Pray in a Tongue (I Cor. xiv. 14). pp. 154 - 160

Much is made, nowadays, about “praying in tongues” yet the expression occurs but once in Scripture and then it is qualified by the word “if”.

“For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” (I Cor. xiv. 14, 15).

The word ‘unknown’ is in italics in the K.J.V. because it is not in the Greek manuscripts but the translators thought some word should qualify ‘tongues’. Possibly they inclined to the view that tongues were *unknown* ecstatic utterances or angelic languages but earlier we have shown that such views are untenable. Tongues were languages of the earth and the *unknown* should not be there.

Returning to “if I pray in a tongue”, the word for “if” is *ean* and the note quoted previously for the “though” of I Cor. xiii. 1 applies to this verse also. Thus Paul is not saying he has prayed in a tongue. He is saying what would happen if he did. If he were to pray in a tongue, his mind (understanding) would be unfruitful. What is to be done then? (What is it then?). Paul states that he will pray with the spirit *and* with the understanding also, i.e. at the same time. Here Paul rules out praying in a tongue. It was not to be done as it didn’t involve the mind, the understanding, which was so important. Just a few verses later Paul wrote “yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding (mind) that I might teach others also, than then thousand words in an unknown tongue” (I Cor. xiv. 19).

In an attempt to justify the present-day practice of praying in tongue, some have asserted that “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” does not imply these two are simultaneous but that they are separate and sequential. That is, on some occasions one should pray with the spirit (in tongues) and on others one should pray with the understanding (in everyday language). Naturally such an occasion is nowhere described in Scripture and both singing in tongues and praying in tongues must be rejected as neither is Biblical.

Some turn to passages such as Eph. vi. 18 in an attempt to justify praying in tongues but that verse states “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”. It has nothing to with praying in tongues. It is to do with praying in the strength and the will of the Spirit. (Jude 20 similar). Again the use of Rom. viii. 26 to justify praying in tongues is impossible as that verse ends with the words “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which *cannot be uttered*”. As said above, I.Cor.xiv.14 is the *only* reference in Scripture to praying in a tongue.

Others turn to I Cor. xiv. 18, 19 to support praying in tongues. There Paul states “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all; yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding”. Such people conclude that, as Paul preferred to speak with understanding in the church, yet spoke with tongues more than any of the Corinthians, he used tongues in private prayer, but note that Paul does not say “I *pray* with tongues more than ye all”. He was not referring to prayer, he was referring to *speaking* in tongues, and this he did more than any of the Corinthians. Also it is wrong to conclude that if Paul preferred ordinary speech in the church, then he spoke in tongues in *private*. That would be stupid. Such would be impossible because “tongues are for a sign to them that believe not” (I Cor. xiv. 22). They would hardly be a sign to unbelievers if they were practiced in private. No, the opposite of “in the church” is not “in private” but “out of the church” i.e. out and about on his travels, his missionary journeys. A quick read through the Acts of the Apostles will reveal that Paul was an energetic traveler and a keen witness to the truth in Christ. During the Acts period he made journeys all over the Roman Empire but always went to the Jewish synagogue first (e.g. Acts xiii. 14, 46; xiv. 1; xvii. 1, 2, 10 xxviii. 17). What sign would he give to the Jews he met on his travels? How would he convince them that the nation had been wrong to reject Christ and to refuse to believe He was their Messiah? What sign would he give to them of their unbelief? Tongues was for that very purpose (I Cor. xiv. 22), but

once an assembly had been formed, once a church had come together, how would tongues be used then? That is the issue of I Cor. xiv. Paul was concerned about the abuse of the gift, especially how an unbeliever might view it.

“If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” (I Cor. xiv. 23).

This verse again illustrates that tongues could not be ecstatic utterances. If a visitor to Corinth called on the Christian assembly there and saw them gabbling and babbling in religious ecstasy, he wouldn't be impressed. Such behaviour was not uncommon in the temples of that time. If, however, he went into an assembly where they all spoke Greek then another got up and spoke another foreign language and then a third, and a fourth and a fifth He would certainly think them mad, especially if he asked what each person was saying and no one knew. On the other hand, if a stranger entered the congregation and heard two or three messages in his own language and then heard an interpretation in the common to all Greek language, what an impact that would make, especially if he were a Jew.

Some have argued that I Cor. xiv. 1-5 refers to the private use of tongues but it does not. If the Apostle's point is that it is better to prophesy (i.e. speak forth about God) in ordinary, everyday speech, then to prophesy in private is nonsense. Thus if we keep rigidly, strictly and exclusively to Scripture we have to rule out the idea of tongues for prayer, either in public or in private. In private, tongues have no use whatsoever and ecstatic utterance and tongues of angels are foreign to the Biblical teaching. Tongues were the recognized languages of this world and people spoke in them, albeit to God (I.Cor.xiv.2), but for others to hear. In that way they were a sign (I Cor. xiv. 22).

Some have proposed that there are two types of tongues and that the ones used for praying are different from those used for the other purposes described in I Corinthians. From what is written above, this view is not tenable. Others have tried to argue that every believer should speak in tongues but such a view is completely contrary to Scripture. Certainly, during the Acts period, not everyone had the gift of tongues.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit for to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (I Cor. xii. 4, 8-10).

In concluding this chapter, Paul writes:

“Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” (xii. 29, 30)

Here is a list of rhetorical questions which all demand the answer, *No!*. No, not all spoke with tongues. If the teaching is as plain as this, why is it that some insist that all should speak in tongues? It is, perhaps, the result of compounded errors in their beliefs. If they fail to appreciate the change in God's administration subsequent to the rejection of

Israel at Acts xxviii. 26-28, then they have believe that what was experienced during the Acts period should be experienced today. A wrong appreciation of the baptism and filling with the Holy Spirit leads some to think that evidence required to prove that the Spirit indwells a person. This evidence is sought not in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23) but in the miraculous signs and displays of power which were common during the Acts period and peculiar to it. Naturally these wonders are not forthcoming. It is hard to heal *all* the sick, let alone do it immediately. It is even harder to raise the dead, to drink poison or to survive venomous snake bites, but to manifest tongues is easy! Thus, some conclude, tongues is *the* sign which signifies that the Holy Spirit indwells a person. Such a view is unscriptural and dangerous. If people do speak in tongues today, is it ecstatic utterance, angelic languages or foreign languages, and by whose power do they perform this feat?

“If *glossolalia* today are not explainable by demon power, they may be due to psychological suggestion and psychosomatic manifestation produced under high emotional excitability” (Merril Unger, *New Testament Teaching on Tongues*).

“The desire for experience coupled with *instruction*, motivation and the approval of the peer group produces ecstatic speech. I have publicly said, ‘Give me a group of people who will do what I tell them to do, sing, relax, anticipate and go through the right motions and it will be only a matter of time before some will speak ecstatically.’” (George E. Gardiner, *The Corinthian Catastrophe*).

Gardiner speaks of “instruction” and going “through the right motions”. Is it, then, possible to teach people to speak in tongues? Yes, and books have been written on it, and there are a variety of methods. In his book, *Speaking in Tongues*, Larry Christenson states:

“In order to speak in tongues, you have to quit praying in English you simply lapse into silence and resolve to speak not a syllable of any language you have ever learned. Your thoughts are focussed on Christ you take no thought of what you are saying. As far as you are concerned it is just a series of sounds.”

Stuart Allen discusses this in detail in his booklet *Tongues Speaking Today—a Mark of Spirituality or Deception?*. A comparison of this section of Christenson’s book with that of certain publication produced by the Transcendental Meditation people is rather enlightening. There are also similarities between it and certain literature dealing with the religions of the East which go in for self-hypnosis and trances. Such similarity is not surprising, for speaking in ecstatic utterances is not uncommon among Indian fakirs and Moslem dervishes. It has also been experienced by Mormons and Irvingites and, as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* puts it, by “savages and people of lower culture”. There is nothing particularly Christian about the phenomenon and it can be produced from within, by learning how to do it. Group pressure or mass hysteria coupled with the right instruction will also result in the language of religious ecstasy. However, if the tongues (*glossa*) of the N.T. were to be a specific sign to the unbelieving people of Israel then they could not be ecstatic utterances or languages of angels. They had to be recognized languages (*dialektos*), and this is exactly what they were, as is clearly demonstrated in the only passage which gives full details of the phenomenon, Acts ii. 1-11. Other passages of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of that chapter and not in the light of present-day experiences.

Some state that many who speak in tongues nowadays do so in foreign languages but this is extremely dubious. In one issue of the charismatic magazine, *Renewal*, the general secretary of the Assemblies of God (Pentecostal) Churches mentions one of their publications which contains seventy-five documented cases of tongues in foreign languages. The implication is that these were unusual and that the vast majority of tongues are ecstatic utterance, but what about these foreign language tongues? Are they genuine, a gift from the Holy Spirit? Some will argue that they are not because in translation some say nothing about God or Christ or anything religious. Others contain blasphemy and these can easily be ruled out, but what about those manifestations which have praised God? Does that imply the source was the Holy Spirit?

In Acts xvi. 16, 17 a “damsel possessed with a spirit of divination” met Paul and Luke and followed them, saying, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation”. Nothing could have been more true yet it grieved Paul (verse 18). Commenting on these verses, Jessie Penn-Lewis in *War on the Saints*, writes:

“When the spirit of divination spoke the truth that Paul and Silas were the servants of God, it was to suggest the lie that Paul and Silas derived their power from the same source as the girl under the evil spirit’s power. The devil and his wicked spirits will speak, or use, ninety-nine parts of truth to float one lie.”

The conclusion is that tongues speaking today can be learnt or self-induced, in the case of ecstatic utterances, but with foreign languages, without denying that these too may be psychosomatic, the likelihood is that the power originates from Satan. Some people are shocked by such a suggestion. They think it impossible that he can influence believers but he managed to deceive Peter (Matthew xvi. 23) and I Timothy iv. 1-3 is addressed to believers. Also during the Acts period the gift of discerning spirits was given (I Cor. xii. 10) as well as the test of I John iv. 1-3. These would not have been necessary if believers could not have been influenced and deceived by Satan and his spirits.

In *Pentecostalism—Is it of God, Man or Satan*, William Campbell suggests that the test of I John iv. 1-3 is applicable today but he fails to appreciate that such a gift was part of the Acts Period dispensation. When the Jews at Rome rejected Christ then that nation was laid on one side (Acts xxviii. 25-27). The miracles, signs and displays of power used by God to encourage them to repent ceased. That included the gift of tongues, the discernment of spirits and the tests of spirits (I John iv. 1-3). Now we have a completed Scripture and can see the whole picture.

Thus if we, who are Gentiles, go looking for things pertaining to the Jews we will open ourselves to deception. Initially it may be self-deception, as with self-induced ecstatic tongues, but it could grow into Satanic deception, with speech in a foreign language. Will God allow Satan to go that far? Rev. xiii. records how the false prophet is allowed to make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men (verse 13), a copy of the O.T. miracle which confirmed God’s existence and His blessing. A copy of the Acts

period miracle of tongues must be expected for he “deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast” (Rev. xiii. 14). Present-day charismatic movements are setting the scene for that future great deception.

No.13. Tongues, they shall cease (I Cor. xiii. 8). pp. 174 - 180

It seems appropriate at this point in the series to consider the very important but controversial verses 8-10 of I Corinthians xiii.:

“Charity (love) never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

In these verses, Paul takes three of the Acts period miraculous signs and states that they will cease. Prophecy was not exclusively to do with the future. The inspired prophet spoke of God saying what He had done in the past, was doing at the moment or what He would do in the future. Tongues were languages of various parts of the earth and were for a sign to the unbelieving Jew (I Cor. xiv. 21, 22). Knowledge was the Acts period gift which fulfilled the Lord’s words of Matt. x. 17-20. Paul takes these three as representatives of the long list of miraculous signs dealt with in I Cor. xii. All these signs, prophecy, tongues, knowledge, healing, interpretation, etc., were to cease. The unfailing, never-ending gift of love was the pre-eminent quality which the Corinthians, and we, should seek to practice.

These three verses of I Cor. xiii. are open to a wide variety of interpretations, and it is enlightening to consider each one.

(1) When the Church is a unity, Miracles will return.

This view seems strange in the light of I Cor. xiii. 10. “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away”. That is, the evidential miraculous signs will cease when “that which is perfect is come”. Whatever that may be, and whenever it may be, it is obviously something good and beneficial, as *true* unity would be. One could almost argue that if *true* unity ever came about then there wouldn’t be the need for miracles, but returning to the Scriptures, what about the Acts period? It abounded in miracles, yet it lacked unity. The most striking example of this is found in the opening chapters of this very epistle.

“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul: and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas: and I of Christ” (I.Cor.i.11,12)

This was written to a group who came “behind in no gift” (I Cor. i. 7). They had severe divisions and there was great disunity, but they had all the gifts. Further problems can be seen with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 1-11), who tried to deceive the assembly. Even Paul and Barnabas were so divided over John Mark “that they departed one from the other” (Acts xv. 36-39). Then there is Peter who “withdrew and separated himself” from the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 11-13) and Barnabas joined him. It is a fundamental truth that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 23). Thus there has never been a time when human beings did not disagree. For us the unity has been made by the Holy Spirit; we have to guard it (Eph. iv. 3), and by and large we do a poor job. So the view that miracles will return when the Christian Church is a unity is not supported by Scripture.

(2) Miracles cease when Christ return.

This view affirms that miracles should abound from the day of Pentecost, throughout this age and dispensation, right up to the return of Christ, when they should cease. I.Cor.xiii.10 “when that which is perfect is come”, refers to the second coming of Christ, so it is claimed. However the word ‘come’ is *elthe* which has nothing in common with *parousia*, the word for the Lord’s second coming. Also, “*that which is perfect*” could hardly refer to a person since it is neuter, but we need not resort to Greek grammar to show the view is unscriptural. Heb. vi. 5 refers to the miracles of the Acts period and describes them as a foretaste of the age to come, the Millennial age.

“. . . . tasted the good word of God, and the powers (miracles) of the world (age) to come” (Heb. vi. 5).

That millennial age is brought in by Christ at His return and miracles will abound. This is clear from various portions of the prophets. For example: healing—Isa. lviii. 8, Jer. xxx. 17, Mal. iv. 2; judgment (as experienced by Ananias & Sapphira)—Isa.lxv.20; prophecy—Joel ii. 28, 29. So it is not true that miracles will cease when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. It is the very opposite. They will abound.

(3) Miracles cease when the Bible was completed.

To any unbiased observer it is obvious that we do not live in the days of the Acts of the Apostles. The miracles, then so common, are not around us. This has led some to view the writing of the New Testament with scepticism, suggesting it to be exaggerated, in error and not true. It has caused others, who believe in the inspiration and accuracy of the Bible as God’s Word, to seek another explanation. The view that the miracles ceased upon the completion of the Bible is, perhaps the most commonly held explanation and Merrill Unger is its great advocate. His style is not easy to follow.

“But when that which is perfect is come (Greek *to teleion*, the completed and final thing, which means ‘the New Testament Scriptures’; the neuter in the Greek denotes neither Christ nor His second advent, both of which thoughts are foreign to the context), then that which is in part (partial or piecemeal revelation through the gift of directly inspired prophecy and knowledge before the New Testament was given) shall be done

away with (*kata gethesetai*, shall be superseded, rendered unnecessary and meaningless, because no longer needed and so shall be cancelled and done away with)” (Merril Unger, *New Testament Teaching on Tongues*).

There are problems with this view. What does he mean by the completed and final New Testament Scriptures? Does he mean once the last writer of the N.T. had been inspired and committed the message to paper? That is dated, *traditionally* about 90A.D. but J. A. T. Robinson argues sensibly for a date pre-70A.D. Or is Unger referring to when the canon of Scripture was eventually decided upon, some 200 or so years later? It is clear from the writers of the second and third centuries A.D. that the miracles of the Acts period were not in abundance but we reject this view by what is recorded in Scripture. Not only do we find no reference to any of the Acts period’s miraculous signs in the later epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon) but it is evident that immediate, universal healing had ceased (Phil. ii. 26, 27; I Tim. v. 23; II Tim. iv. 20). When imprisoned in Acts, Peter was miraculously freed (Acts xii. 6-11) but after, Paul spent years chained to a Roman guard. The gift of knowledge (Acts. iv. 13) ceased, to be replaced by the command to study (II Tim. ii. 15). The conclusion must be that prophecies, tongues and knowledge, as well as the other Acts period miracles ceased *before* the completion of the N.T., let alone before the canon was settled. Miracles and displays of power finished before the last books of the N.T. were written.

**(4) “That which is perfect” refers to
“the mystery” of Eph. iii. 9.**

At Gen. xii., the Lord took Abram and promised that he would be the father of a great nation which was to take the message of salvation to the other nations of the world. There was to be a kingdom upon the earth with miraculous physical blessings. For the next 2,000 years this people were the centre of the Lord’s attention but their rejection of Christ and their refusal to repent at the call of Peter and Paul in the Acts period caused the judgment of Acts xxviii. 25-27 to be announced. But what was God going to do next? He revealed a mystery, the secret which he had hidden in Himself (Eph. iii. 9). He would go direct to the Gentiles (Acts xxviii. 28): there would be spiritual blessings (Ephesians i. 3) with eternal life in the heavenly places (Eph. ii. 6). The Jews would no longer have special privileges (Eph. ii. 12-17). The Jews and the Gentiles would be fellowheirs (Eph. iii. 6). The substance of this secret (mystery) is found in Eph. i., ii., iii. and Col. i., where Paul wrote:

“. . . . the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God; even the mystery (secret) which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but *now* is made manifest to the saints” (Col. i. 25, 26).

The view of some is that the expression “that which is perfect” refers to the revelation of this secret (mystery) as the miracles ceased at the rejection of Israel at Acts. xxviii. 25-27, which was when this revelation was given to Paul in his Roman prison. There can be no doubt about the fact that the evidential miracles and external displays of power were signs for the Jews and that when they were, as a nation, set aside by God at the end of the Acts, such tokens were no longer needed. However, it was impossible for Paul to have had this secret in his mind at that time simply because he

didn't know it. God had not revealed it to him. Speaking of the mystery of Christ, Paul writes that in other ages it "was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is *now* revealed unto his holy apostles" (Eph. iii. 5). Similarly, as quoted above, Col. i. 25 states that "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but *now* is made manifest to His saints". That secret (mystery) having been "hid in God" (Eph.iii.9) could not have been known by Paul until God revealed it to him in his Roman prison, the time to which the *now* refers. Paul could not have known, when writing Corinthians, the secret of what God would do if the Jewish nation was rejected. Years after writing I. Corinthians, Paul wrote Romans, the last epistle he wrote during the Acts period, and in that it is obvious that he still saw the Jews playing the dominant role (e.g. Romans i. 16; ii. 10; iii. 1; xi. 1, 18, etc.). Thus the secret of Ephesians, with its absolute equality between Jew and Gentile in *all* things, must have been revealed to Paul after the writings of Romans. Thus "that which is perfect" of I Cor. xiii. 10 cannot refer to the revelation of the secret (mystery) of Ephesians.

(5) What was in Paul's mind in I Cor. xiii.?

One of the reasons why believers have trouble in agreeing on the meaning of a passage of Scripture is "backwards thinking:" not *backward* thinking but *backwards* thinking, retrospective thinking. It is so easy to read into an O.T. passage some truth not contained in it and not revealed until the New Testament. We can attribute to a verse in the Gospels something which was not known until after the Lord had ascended. We can read into an Acts period epistle knowledge which wasn't revealed until after the Jewish nation had been set aside and the secret (mystery) of Ephesians revealed. Thus in dealing with any passage, and especially those which are controversial and confusing, we should attempt to put ourselves in the writer's place. We should look on the passage *prospectively* from his point of view, and assume only the knowledge of God's plan that he had at that time. All too often we view the passage *retrospectively*, looking back from our point of view, assuming all the knowledge that is contained in the completed Scriptures.

Paul wrote I Corinthians during the Acts period and those alive at the time, knew that it was possible for Christ to return even then. This was why he wrote those controversial words on not marrying in I Cor. vii. 7: 7-11. Later he explained this and wrote:

"I suppose therefore that this is good for the *present distress*, I say, that it is good for a man so to be But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (I Cor. vii. 26, 29).

These Corinthian saints were "waiting for the coming (revelation) of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. i. 7) and in Rom. xiii. 12 Paul wrote "the night is far spent, the day is at hand". John stated "It is the last time (literally last hour)" (I John ii. 18) and James said "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James v. 8). In his epistle Peter wrote "the end of all things is at hand" (I Pet. iv. 7) but it is his speech in Acts that clears up any queries as to how the Acts period could be "the last hour":

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing (restoration) shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you” (Acts iii. 19, 20).

If the Jewish nation repented, “He shall send Jesus Christ”. To encourage that nation to repent, a foretaste of the Millennial miracles was given them (Heb. vi. 5). The gift of tongues was a special sign, signifying to the Jews their unbelief (I Cor. xiv. 21, 22). *Some* of the Jews were cast off (Rom. xi. 17), and Gentiles brought in to provoke the nation to fruitfulness (Rom. xi. 11). Would the nation respond? Would the olive tree of Israel blossom and bring forth abundant fruit? If they did, then Christ would return, miracles would abound and proliferate right throughout the Millennium, right to its end. Then they would cease at the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. Is that the goal that Paul had in mind in I Cor. xiii. 10? “When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part (the miracles) shall be done away.”

The word for ‘perfect’ is *teleios* and *The Companion Bible* note on the word is interesting.

teleios = that which has reached its end. From *telos* end. Latin *finis*, nothing beyond: hence perfect, in the sense of initiated.

In his *Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, Dr. E. W. Bullinger has:

teleios = which has reached its end, term or limit: hence complete, perfect, full, wanting nothing, with special reference to the end for which it was initiated.

In I Cor. xiii. 10 the Greek is *to teleion* i.e. *the* perfect or *the* end, not *an* end. Thus we must ask if Paul could be thinking of the end of this earth which, at the end of the Millennium, will have completed the purpose for which it was created and then:

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away” (Rev. xxi. 1, 4).

Neither will this new creation need miracles of Judgment (Isa. lxxv. 20; Acts v. 1-11), for Peter states that in it “dwelleth righteousness” (II Pet. iii. 13). All this follows the time of the last of the resurrections (Rev. xx. 13) and certainly Paul is referring to resurrection life in I Cor. xiii. 12, 13:

“For *now* we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face:
now I know in part, but *then* shall I know even as also I am known.
And *now* abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three;
but the greatest of these is charity (love).”

Why is love greater than faith and hope? “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. xi. 6) is a very strong statement and “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. xi. 1). When the believer’s hope of eternal life has been realized through resurrection, *hope* will no longer have any role to play, but neither will *faith*. On the day of resurrection, when the redeemed stand before God, all

things that have been hoped for will be seen. Thus faith will no longer have a role, but love!

At present we are encouraged to get “to know the love of Christ, which passeth (surpasseth) knowledge” (Eph. iii. 19). Certainly that love far exceeds human comprehension but when we no longer have the limitations of this frail body and limited mind, then we can start to learn much, much more about divine love. Human love is such that a person will die for a friend, a good man (Rom. v. 7), yet God’s love was such that in Christ He died for the ungodly, the sinners, for those who were *enemies* (Rom. v. 6, 8, 10). This is above human comprehension, but not above human gratitude and response.

It does seem as if this explanation of I Cor. xiii. 8-10 is along the right lines for when Paul has dealt with tongues in I Cor. xiv. he takes up the theme of resurrection in chapter xv. There he does look into the far future, to the days described in Revelation:

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at His coming. Then cometh the end (*to telos*), when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (I.Cor.xv.22-24).

This comes after the rebellion of Rev. xx. 7-9 and it seems possible that this is the meaning of “when that which is perfect (the end) is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (I Cor. xiii. 10). It is the end of the Millennium, the end of this present heavens and earth. It is looking for the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The fact that miracles ceased a few years after Paul wrote I Corinthians was due to the hardness of the hearts of the people of Israel (Acts xxviii. 27). They continued to reject the apostles’ plea to repent and, as a nation, they were set on one side for a period of time. In the future the Lord will again start to work with them and fulfil all the promises made to the fathers.

The Second Epistle to Peter.

No.4. Chapter ii.

p. 20

In Deut. xiii. 1-5 God says He will permit false prophets to show signs and wonders in order to test and prove them. Peter says “as then so now”. Compare I John iv. 1:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

Satan is busy in all ages and trims his snares to contemporary conditions. What pitfalls does he put in our path today? Instead of the all-wise God and Creator originating a perfect family of creatures and suitable environment in which to live and enjoy life with all the senses of their bodies, we are told that over millions of years dissatisfied living matter managed to change little by little its own body by thought, in order that its offspring might have a better chance to survive!

Paul in Rom. i. traces the downfall and corruption of man. In verse 23 he says the glory (or supernatural demonstration—this is true, compare and study other usages of the word glory) of the incorruptible God was changed into an image made like unto corruptible man Today the power of creation is not said to be in a golden calf but in (for example they say) a bull who seeks a safer form to survive the attacks of his enemies or the hardships of his environment. The evolutionists use the terms “trial and error” and “survival of the fittest”. Such terms imply the creature doing the planning, for surely they do not pin on God this haphazard process.

No.5. Chapter ii. 2 - 14.

pp. 37 - 40

Paul in Rom. i. traces the downfall and corruption of man. In verse 23 he says the glory (or supernatural demonstration—this is true, compare and study other usages of the word glory) of the incorruptible God was changed into an image made like unto corruptible man Today the power of creation is not said to be in a golden calf but in (for example they say) a bull who seeks a safer form to survive the attacks of his enemies or the hardships of his environment. The evolutionists use the terms “trial and error” and “survival of the fittest”. Such terms imply the creature doing the planning, for surely they do not pin on God this haphazard process.

Continuing in Rom. i. we find that although they knew God once, because they changed God’s truth into a lie, he gave them up and what happened? They twisted the ordained plan of man and woman being one flesh for the basis of the perfect family.

What happened to them then (see Rom. i.) is happening today. We quote from an article in *The Daily Telegraph* of 22.6.70:

“Love between two men ‘can achieve a pure and glorious relationship’ the Bishop of Southwark the Rt. Rev. Mervyn Stockwood wrote yesterday in a diocesan newsletter.”

Whatever the Bishop intended to convey, the homosexual camp interprets it as a green light to them. The article continues:

“The Bishop’s comment were greeted enthusiastically by the *Gay Christian Movement*. Its secretary said: We are grateful to the Bishop of Southwark who appears to endorse our views that love should be fully expressed in personal sexual relationships.”

We are only too ready to agree that the news media represent the extremes, but the silence of ecclesiastical authority on what God called repeatedly an “abomination” is significant.

“And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (II Pet. ii. 2 and 3).

We think of the many religious cults of our day and the facile success they have in raising funds and acquiring property and followers. We think of the frequent callers at our doors urging Bible study but denying the deity of our Saviour and thus undermining His qualification to be our redeemer. All these contribute to make for some “the way of truth evil spoken of”.

What other ploys of Satan do we find? Generally we might say formal worship ceremonies and ordinances usurp the rightful place of teaching and exposition of and from the Bible. Paul with final instructions to Timothy says, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and *doctrine*” (II Tim. iv. 2).

Peter turns from warning of the dangers of apostasy to examples of judgment and punishment exacted by God on past generations of men and angels who rebelled and followed not the commands and ordained way of life for their own habitation.

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (ii. 4 and 5).

We have no specific statement of the nature of this sin of the old world. The most certain inference is that Satan introduced his seed into the world, “. . . . the sons of God (angels) saw the daughter of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of which they chose” (Gen. vi. 2). “The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 6). This violation of the divine designed habitat of these angels seemed to have corrupted the old world so that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth”

(Gen. vi. 5), and moreover only Noah was “perfect in his generations” (Gen. vi. 9) that is uncorrupted by Satan’s angels.

“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation (way of living) of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)” (ii. 6-8).

Note the word “their unlawful deeds”. The men of Sodom were not interested in Lot’s two daughters but pressed for the men who had entered the house (angels) (Gen. xix. 8). There were not found ten righteous men in Sodom (Gen. xviii. 32) so contagious and corrupting was the sin of sodomy. Whatever we may think of the act itself the only criterion with which we should be concerned is that it contravened the laws of God then *even as it does today*.

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities” (ii. 9-10).

Here is solemn warning for judgment and punishment to come for all sinners from the beginning of time to the final day. An even more surprising and drastic warning was uttered by our Lord. Christ sent His disciples to herald the coming of the kingdom of heaven to the Jewish nation (Matt. x. 7). Those who neglect to study the words of Christ given to the Apostle Paul for us Gentiles in his epistles should consider:

“Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. *Verily* (great emphasis) I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city” (Matt. x. 14-15).

Think of it. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha (that God destroyed by earthquake and fire) than for those, who, given a proper chance to hear and understand God’s call to them, turned their backs on their Creator’s messengers. God in the O.T. has given us much information of Himself, His attributes, character and intentions which are wise and righteous. In the N.T. He has recorded the work of His Son and interpreted for us its message and application to us, together with our own specific hope in resurrection. It is this record we are warned not to neglect. Praise and worship without knowledge must be empty and unacceptable to Him.

Looking back to verse 10 there is a reference to government. Communal control and discipline are necessary and so are supported and endorsed by God. Psa. lxxxii. 1 indicates He is at the back of earthly judges and magistrates (“gods” in the text). Our Lord said: “Render unto the things that are Caesar’s”. The coin with its inscription was part of the Roman administration. The indictment of verse 10 is against those who have such a proud and foolish opinion of themselves that they despise or have contempt for the restraint of the law. This is another area of departure from God’s recipe for good order and peace, the fruits of such departure are rife in vandalism, abuse of social benefits and tax evasion.

“Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption” (ii. 11 and 12).

Peter and some of the other apostles had revelations of the powers and limitations of the angels which are hidden from us. Of those denounced in verse 12 we cannot therefore give examples. Certain it is that offences like those of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.) were swiftly judged and punished. The present age of grace has no counterpart.

“And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children” (ii. 13 and 14).

**No.6. ii. 15 - iii. 4.
pp. 58 - 60**

For some in those days who were in possession of a gift of the Holy Spirit there may well have been a temptation to hold superiority over others, and this in turn enticed them to exact pecuniary advantage or sway over the opposite sex. Satan knows how to fit the temptation to the character of the one deceived. Verse 15 quotes the example of Balaam (see Numb. xxii.) who, says Peter, “loved the wages of unrighteousness”. The privilege of participation in the Lord’s plans devolves on us great responsibility, but also severe judgment for betrayal of trust. In the mercy of God we are at times kept from sin as Balaam by the voice of his ass. Let us not hesitate to accept the truth of this miracle, for Peter by inspiration makes use of it as a valid example of God’s power and mercy.

“Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet” (ii. 15, 16).

Peter now continues to denounce those who preaching to believers with a great show of spirituality, nevertheless have no virtue in their message and rather are leading their flock into paths that appeal to the flesh.

“These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (ii. 17-20).

Paul had occasion to write to the Galatians on this very failing. In Gal. v. 16-25 the Apostle lists the fruit of walking in the flesh and a nasty list it is. By contrast he lists the fruits of walking in the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (moderation). Faith initially is the conviction that a premise is true and always imposes on such a believer the responsibility to ensure that his future life is in harmony with that discovered aspect of truth. To do otherwise is to live a lie and nothing is more damaging to the character of an individual. Christ in Luke xi. 34 confirms this by saying “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single (free from defect or double vision), thy whole body (daily walk and direction) is full of light (clear discernment); but when thine eye is evil (apart from God), thy body also is full of darkness (confusion)”.

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (ii. 21, 22).

The Apostle Paul runs on a parallel path when he writes to the Hebrews:

“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. x. 26, 27).

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb. vi. 4-6).

Peter closes his teaching of this aspect of apostasy by two examples of nature. We wonder if God implanted in two of His created animals this retrograde character in order to teach us a lesson.

Chapter iii.

Here is, as it were, another appeal to his brethren to keep before them and continually turn over in their minds the Old Testament and his own witness and ministry. Such is our own present urgent need. We need every day the Bread of Life and like all food we need to masticate it well with the saliva of our body in order that it can be so digested and profit every part of our body. The analogy of type and antitype was well chosen by God and we need to mark it well.

“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (iii. 1-4).

Peter warns his compatriots that there were those who sought to sap the faith of the believer by setting forth a false history of the world saying “all things continue as they

were from the beginning of creation”. The same creed finds an echo from the present day school of evolutionists. We quote from *The Genesis Flood* by J. C. Whitcomb, Jr., Th.D. and H. M. Morris, Ph.D.:

“Even evangelical Christians, though still professing belief in the divine validity of Scripture, have often capitulated to uniformitarian scholarship, denying the universality of the Flood and, with the denial, thereby sacrificing its mighty evangelistic witness to a world in rebellion against its Creator. (A footnote to this reads) Uniformitarianism is the belief that existing physical processes, acting essentially as at present, are sufficient to account for all past changes and for the present state of the astronomic, geologic and biologic universe. The principle of uniformity in *present* processes is both scientific and Scriptural (Gen.8:22) but comes into conflict with Biblical revelation when utilized to deny the possibility of *past* or *future* miraculous suspension or alteration of those processes by their Creator” (page 20).

**No.7. iii. 5 - 10.
pp. 79, 80**

The Second Advent of Christ is not preached or made the subject of warning as much as it should be. Neither is its connection with Israel sufficiently emphasized. We need to remember that the word lust has not necessarily an application to sex or fleshly desires. It means a *strong* desire and as such can also have reference to doctrinal quirks and gimmicks that have little to do with the will of God.

“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (iii. 5-7).

Peter by inspiration affirms the fact of a universal flood and uses it as proof of a future judgment on the world by fire. Peter uses the word “reserved”, the Greek for which is often translated “keep”. We have here stated the supreme sovereignty of God in the enactment of His foreordained will. We are given signs, if we have eyes to see, when these future acts of judgment will come but the exact date and moment is hid in God. Even when Christ was on earth He affirmed that *only* His Father knew the day and the hour (Matt. xxiv. 36). Jude (verse 6) refers to the angels that kept not their first estate “reserved unto judgment”. All the progeny of Adam await their respective day of judgment and here in verse 7 even the present heavens and earth are kept for that terrible moment of destruction. The details we shall find in verse 10 well accord with what we have seen and heard described of minor atomic explosions. Russia and the U.S.A. we understand are primed with thousands of missiles capable of destroying a great part of the earth in a moment of time. Our great comfort is in the Word “kept” or “reserved” in verse 7. This holocaust will only happen when God is ready and it will be under His control.

The day of judgment we believe will be a day long prepared and planned by God. His written Word we also believe will be present and play a major part in convictions and condemnation or approval and reward.

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (iii. 8-10).

Verse 8 “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years”. How often have these words been used to twist the 6 days creation into a longer period of time. It should be noted that if you continue the text the reverse is stated. The true conception of time is outside man’s limited understanding. Before God created this world He knew how each of the millions of mankind that would be born would act and respond to the dictates of conscience or divine revelation. Because He possesses such supernatural foreknowledge He could and has planned how He will deal with the world and its inhabitants throughout the ages to come.

The concordance gives 10 occurrence of *katabole* in phrases “before or since the *foundation* of the world” (Matt. xiii. 35; xxv. 24; Luke xi. 50; John xvii. 24; Eph. i. 4; Heb. iv. 3; ix. 26; I Pet. i. 20; Rev. xiii. 8; xvii. 8). The Ephesian reference is “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world”. If you look up the other references you will find they are all important milestones in His eternal purpose. They prove the miraculous ability of God to foreknow how we and all others will behave. Remember we are free, He does not manipulate us to make it come right, although He will, when necessary, overrule events. All His other creatures apart from man in their natural state behave perfectly in their planned and predictable fashion. Only man has a free choice to do otherwise. God desires the worship of man from a free and willing heart. It is for and to this end that the painful probation period for angels and men has to proceed through the ages. The parable of the sower and his seed shows that only a small part of the seed sown will produce the desired harvest and even this will be of varying quality and success. But success there will be, thanks be to God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

No.8. iii. 11 - 18.
pp. 119, 120

In verse 9 Peter writes that God is “not willing” that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The Apostle Paul had the same message in Acts xvii. 30 “The times of ignorance God winked at; but *now* commandeth all men everywhere to repent”. These men spoke by revelation. We dare not write what we *think* God intends. We can only point to the Scriptures. Shall we expound the word “perish” that Peter uses in verse 9? We know that in this world we all die so that perish cannot in this context have reference to life in the flesh. The answer seems to be in Rom. x 6, “The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? etc.”. Christ has died for us and has risen for our justification. This is God’s *positive* answer recorded in His Word. We are not called upon to explore or speculate the possibilities of alternative rebellion.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner (sort of) persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (iii. 11).

The vision of God’s future and final judgment of this earth and its inhabitants together with the revelation of the desire of God that there should be via resurrection a future for those who respond and repent, calls for those addressed in Peter’s letter to consider immediately their future way of life. They are reminded that they are under the continual scrutiny of the Lord for their qualification to have a place in their destined sphere in resurrection. This challenging question calls for just as urgent an answer today as when Peter wrote it all those years ago. Shall we drift on from day to day putting off our spiritual stocktaking and reappraisal of priorities until the question is forgotten? Time does absolutely nothing for us. Peter continues:

“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (iii. 12-14).

Peter gives a second knock on the door of warning concerning the coming dissolution of the world in heat but adds the revelation that God has in store, a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. If righteousness is the key word for this new habitation Peter exhorts his brethren to let their present lives be in harmony with those conditions now. The word diligent implies using haste or speed in adjusting one’s way of life to these requirements of perfection.

“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; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction” (iii. 15, 16).

Needless to say with Paul's second commission after Israel had been set aside, his ministry took a divergent line from a dispensational aspect from Peter's ministry. It was possibly the ministry concerning the Church of the One Body that found Peter at a loss when he says "hard to be understood".

Paul's new ministry where no place for the Jew as a Jew resided, must have met intense opposition. The destiny of that calling "Far above all" would have sparked off much Satanic opposition. Jewish antagonism would also have been rife when it was seen that such a calling had no place for Jewish heritage.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (iii. 17).

Peter in this letter has discharged the task committed to him by His beloved Lord. Peter has exhorted and fed the sheep and the lambs with their ordained pasture, the Word of Life. The need for remembrance, exercise and experience of the things taught has been pressed. He has given warning of those who would twist the Word and entice them back to their old ways. Finally he calls for his brethren to grow in grace and knowledge. Inertia and neglect quickly open the gates to competing interests and the snares of the enemy. Christ in Rev. iii. 15 expressed an abhorrence of being lukewarm. May we too burn with zeal for the riches of God's Word

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (iii. 18).

The Epistle to the ROMANS.

No.9. v. 5 - 12.

pp. 1 - 4

The climax of the blessings that result from justification by faith is found in Rom.v.5:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

In chapters ix. 33 and x. 11 the Apostle quotes the Septuagint of Isa. xxviii. 16, “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed”. A hope that is not realized does lead to shame and embarrassment, but a hope based on God’s promises is certain of fulfillment, and believers have the God-given assurance that His love is poured out in their hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit. That exceeding love (Eph. iii. 19) which did not find its cause in any action on our part:

“But God commendeth (or proves) His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. v. 8).

God gave no less than Himself in the Person of His Son on behalf of sinners. This is the consistent testimony of the New Testament. He died for the ungodly (verse 6) (compare John x. 11; Rom. viii. 32; xiv. 15; I Cor. xv. 3; II Cor. v. 15; Gal. i. 3, 4; Eph. v. 2, 25; I Thess. v. 9, 10; I Tim. ii. 5, 6 <and see i. 15>; Titus ii. 11, 12, 14; Heb. ii. 9, 10, 14; I Pet. ii. 21-24; iii. 18; I John iii. 16). God’s love is not just an emotion. Real love is shown by the constant spending and giving of one’s self for others without any thought of return, and when that giving goes so far as giving of a life for others, that is not a common human experience as verse 7 of Rom. v. testifies.

But God did this very thing in the Person of Christ for *His enemies*, not His friends, for “*While we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us” (verse 8) and the glorious result is:

“Since we have been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him” (verse 9, N.I.V.).

This verse reminds us again, as in Rom. iii. 25 that the shed blood speaks of life laid down on our behalf as a sacrifice for our sin, and it is only in this way that a thrice holy God can justify sinners! (Rom. iii. 23-26) thus exempting them from condemnation and wrath:

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (verse 10).

Colossians i. 21 is parallel to this:

“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.”

It is in man that this hostility and estrangement is found, not in God, for it is He Who takes the initiative in His great love in providing “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement” (verse 10, 11).

A new word, reconciliation, comes in here, which gives us another aspect of Christ’s redeeming work. Reconciliation pre-supposes enmity, that of rebels against God, and this reconciling work cancels this enmity, in the same way as justification deals with sinners who have broken God’s laws and are arraigned before Him as Judge.

It is important to realize that the Authorized Version’s “atonement” in verse 11 means reconciliation, for in 1611 the word stood for “at-one-ment” (to make at one), which meaning it has now lost, and all modern translations correctly render the Greek word used, *reconciliation*. God is always the Reconciler in the N.T. and man the object of His reconciliation. The “life” of Christ in verse 10 is *His resurrection life*. The perfect earthly life of the Lord Jesus by itself is never brought forward as the basis for salvation, but His resurrection life is, as Rom. iv. 25 has already stressed; the resurrection of Christ is therefore an integral part of the gospel, and this is confirmed in chapter x. 9 and I Cor. xv. 3, 4.

It is important to note that the doctrine of reconciliation in its various aspects is confined to the ministry of the Apostle Paul. It is in his ministry alone that we find that God’s reconciliation deals with:

- (1) the alienation from God, in Adam, apart from personal sins (Rom. v. 12).
- (2) the alienation from God, as Gentile nations (Rom. i. 18 and xi. 15).
- (3) the alienation from God, by sins committed (II Cor. v.).
- (4) the alienation perpetuated by the distinction of circumcision and uncircumcision which has been abolished in “the new man” of Eph. ii. 13-16.
- (5) the alienation of the whole body of Christ from its destined sphere of blessing “in the heavenlies, far above principalities and powers” (Col. i.).

The first of these, that sets aside the alienation introduced by Adam, lie immediately before us in the new section of Romans that covers v. 12 - viii. 39 which deals with Adam and Christ. The words of C. H. Welch are to the point here:

“We now enter the great inner section of this epistle we leave behind the question of *sins* for the deeper question of sin, the disobedience to the law of Sinai, for the one transgression of the garden of Eden. Moses and Abraham fade from view, and Adam is revealed as the channel of sin, death and its dominion. Here we are to learn the utter ruin of the creature as something deeper than the failure of the Gentile under the law of conscience, or of the Jew under the law of Moses. Here we shall plumb the depths of the depravity of our nature; here we shall come face to face with the dread fact that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing. This is a more terrible revelation than that of Rom.iii.12. *There* we read that there is none that *doeth* good; here we are to learn that, apart from deeds altogether, there is not any that *are* good, or that have any hope or

possibility, in themselves of pleasing God. The cry of Rom. vii. 24 “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” will startle us, as though we heard the echo of our own heart’s cry beat back to us” (*Just and the Justifier*, p.102).

The argument that the Apostle Paul now begins to develop concerning Adam and the human race shows that he accepted the facts recorded in Gen. i.-iii. as events that really happened:

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sins; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. v. 12).

The ten verses that follow contain the word “one” no less than 12 times. There must be a reason for this emphasis. What we shall discover by careful study in the new section of the epistle before us is that there is something deeper and fuller than *substitution*, and that is *identification*, which is set forth in chapter vi. and shown in such phrases as “baptized into His death”, “planted together in the likeness of His death”, “our old man crucified with Him”, “dead with Christ”. These statements require substantiation by something more intimate than substitution, and that is *identification with Christ*. This is another aspect of truth that is peculiar to the ministry of Paul.

The doctrine of identification must be shown to exist as a fact, and this is demonstrated by the Scriptural doctrine of the organic unity of the human race. The essential oneness of the race with Adam is the consistent note of Rom. v. 11-21. Paul included this in his address to the Athenians, “He hath made of one (blood) all nations of men” (Acts xvii. 26). Adam was more than an historical individual, for his name in Hebrew means “mankind”, and the whole of mankind is viewed as having existed at first in Adam. Not only this, in order for Paul’s argument to be valid there must also be a real and vital union of the Lord Jesus with the human race and this is seen in the fact that He is the Second Man and the Last Adam (I Cor. xv.). Underlying this doctrine is the O.T. conception of the Kinsman-Redeemer. The type is set forth in the law given in Deut.xxv.5-10 and ramifies throughout the book of Ruth in the relationship of Boaz and Ruth. Boaz’s interest in Ruth would have been useless without the *essential element of Kinship*. The margin of Ruth ii. 20 shows that the *goel*, the next of kin, is the “one that has the right to redeem” and no one else could claim this right. Thus it is that it was imperative that the great Antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ, should be made a partaker of “flesh and blood” and become related to us:

“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; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

Christ, to fulfil His great mission, must come as the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, the Seed of David, the Son of man and the Son of God. His genealogy necessitated that He should have a lineage that went back to Adam (Luke iii.). The virgin birth of Christ made it possible for Him to be related to man without partaking of the sin, death and condemnation that came upon the race through fallen Adam. The doctrine of Rom. v. is impossible apart from the organic unity of mankind, the headship of Adam, and the new headship of Christ, and the identification that comes from this relationship.

The seed, true and false.

Not only must we recognize the truth of the Kinsman-Redeemer in order to understand the section of the epistle now before us, but also the Scripture teaching of the two seeds among mankind. When Adam and Eve fell into sin through the deception of the serpent (Satan) God said to the deceiver:

“And I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and *between thy seed and her seed . . .*”
(Gen. iii. 15).

No.10. v. 12 - 21. pp. 21 - 25

The seed, true and false.

Not only must we recognize the truth of the Kinsman-Redeemer in order to understand the section of the epistle now before us, but also the Scripture teaching of the two seeds among mankind. When Adam and Eve fell into sin through the deception of the serpent (Satan) God said to the deceiver:

“And I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and *between thy seed and her seed . . .*”
(Gen. iii. 15).

The first two men to be born illustrate the fact of these two seeds, for the N.T. teaches us that “Cain was of (*ek*) that wicked one” (I John iii. 12). *Ek* here expresses *origin*. The distinction between the two seeds is maintained by Christ in His argument with the Pharisees in John viii. They claimed to be Abraham’s seed (John viii. 33) and this was admitted by the Lord in verse 37: “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed”. He continued:

“I speak that which I have seen with *My Father*: and ye do that which ye have seen with *your father*” (verse 38),

and in order to prevent their misunderstanding Him He said to them in verse 44:

“Ye are of (*ek*) your father the devil.”

Not only this, but in verse 47 He added

“He that is of (*ek*) God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of (*ek*) God.”

In the Lord’s teaching here we have the fact of the false seed stated positively and negatively.

The Pharisees, in spite of their physical descent from Abraham, did not originate (*ek*) from God—but they *did* originate (*ek*) from Satan. We can surely understand why Christ was not popular with the religious leaders of His day! And we may say that this doctrine is not popular today either. Some professing Christians flatly reject it because it does not square with their ideas, but we would remind them that this doctrine comes from One Who said “I am the Truth” (John xiv. 6) and Christians are not at liberty to disagree with Him!

The doctrine of the two seeds is also clearly taught by the Lord in the parable of the tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30), and it was this one out of all the other parables that the disciples asked the Lord to explain (verse 36). It should be noted that the Lord disclaims any connection with the tares. They did not emanate from Him. “An enemy has done this”, He said (Matt. xiii. 27, 28). “The tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil” (verses 38, 39) the Lord declared. One thing is perfectly clear; tares remain tares right to the end of the age, when they are gathered together by angels and destroyed in a “furnace of fire” (verses 40-42). Not a single tare is changed into true wheat, nor does the true wheat ever become tares. They represent two totally different classes, the true wheat, the children of the kingdom, and the tares, the children of Satan introduced by him in his attempt to thwart and overthrow the kingdom purposes of God. Similar teaching is given by the Lord Jesus when He said “Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. xv. 13). Not all those who are in the garden of mankind are planted by God. Satan has introduced his weeds and they will surely be eradicated before God’s kingdom becomes a glorious reality.

One may ask the question, as the true seed of God are born into this world as sinners (as Romans clearly testifies), can they not be regarded as “tares” before they are saved and justified? The answer is definitely “no”. They come under the dominion of sin and death certainly, and need the redeeming work of Christ to remove this condition, but never are they regarded as originating from Satan and being the children of the devil. Nor, as stated before, do we find a single tare in the above parable, changing into true wheat. They remain Satan’s seed right to the end, when they are “rooted up” and destroyed. They are outwardly human, but inwardly the seed of the devil. Such is the sinister picture which the Word of God portrays whether we like it or not. We must therefore take great care that we do not mix or confuse these two companies or our conclusions will be wide off the mark of truth. Physical connection with Abraham does not constitute them the true seed, as the Apostle Paul demonstrates in Rom. ix.:

“They are not *all* Israel, which are *of* Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they *all children* (i.e. of Abraham); but, *In Isaac* shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, *these are not the children of God*; but the children of the promise (i.e. through Isaac) *are counted for the seed*” (Rom. ix. 6-8).

Ishmael and Esau were “children of the flesh”, but that does not constitute them the true seed. The true seed are the children of promise who originate from God. They are “in Isaac” if true Israelites, and “in Christ” in the wider application of the figure.

Once we have grasped this, it will help us considerably to understand the Apostle's argument in Rom. v. which centres round the words "many" and "all". Otherwise these words constitute a real problem which makes verses 15-19 very difficult to interpret. Just as "they are not *all* Israel which are *of* Israel", so, bearing in mind what we have seen regarding the two seeds, we can say "they are not *all* in Adam that are *of* Adam".

As Charles H. Welch says:

"There are men who, though '*of* Adam', are not '*in* Adam'; such was Cain. For all '*in* Adam' Christ became Kinsman-Redeemer, and their names are in the book of life. We shall find in Rom. v. that the interchange in the use of 'all' and 'many' is because at one time the whole of the true seed are in view by themselves, 'all', and at another, the whole of the physical descendants of Adam, when the true seed are differentiated and spoken of as 'the many'. Just as one star differs from another, though both be in glory, so we shall find that, when it is a question of 'receiving' and 'reigning', 'many' is used, but when it is a matter of justification unto life, 'all' is the word employed. When once we see that 'all in Adam' does not include all that are 'of Adam', every text of Scripture can be accepted at its full value. We do not become Universalists and spoil the insistent teaching of Scripture concerning the Kinsman-Redeemer. We have no need to alter the wording of I Cor. xv. 22. All '*in* Adam' and all '*in* Christ' are co-extensive. Only by closing our eyes to the divine principle of Rom. ix. 5-7 can we assert that 'all Israel' of Rom. xi. is as universal as the physical connection" (*Just and the Justifier*, p.107).

We can now approach the section of the epistle covered by verses 12-21:

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the One to come" (verses 12-14, N.I.V.).

The insistence here is upon two opposite words, *death* and *life*. Why do human beings die? What is the cause of death? Did God create men and purpose that they should die? Such a thought makes nonsense of the divine plan. There is no satisfactory explanation of the origin of death except that contained in verse 12. Adam's obedience was put to the test by God. He was given an explicit command and disobeyed it in spite of God's warning. By this act the virus of sin entered into him and it spread to all his descendants with its inevitable end—death. In the light of Scripture death is always seen as something hideous, an enemy right to the last. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. xv. 26). Men may try to glorify death and dress it up in attractive colours, but God regards it as an enemy to His divine plan right to the end, and this enemy with its root cause sin, must be eliminated if ever that tremendous plan is going to reach its glorious fulfillment.

Paul points out that those who lived from Adam to Moses did not have specific statutes as Adam had, or as those later given through Moses. Therefore, they were not like Adam who broke a specific commandment of God. Yet death was there just the same, which proved that sin was present but it was not charged against men at that time by God, for the absence of a code of law, a divinely given norm affects the way God

reckons sin against men. Adam, the Apostle asserts, as a “figure”, or *type* of Christ, and elsewhere he designates Him as ‘the last Adam’ and ‘the Second Man’ (I.Cor.xv.45,47). The typological relation between them was one of contrast, rather than resemblance, for Christ was sinless, which was essential if He was to become the bearer of human sin.

The Apostle proceeds:

“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift by the grace of the One Man Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” (verse 15, N.I.V.).

It is important to note the definite article before the words “many” and “all” which are unfortunately omitted by the A.V. It is “the many” and “the all”, the two phrases representing the “true wheat”, the “true seed”, who are united to Christ in His headship as the Second Man and last Adam. The Apostle uses three words to denote sin. One is *hamartia*, which represents sin in itself (verses 12, 13, 16 verbal form). Another, *parabasis*, means disobedience to a revealed command (verse 14, “transgression”). The third is *paraptoma* with a meaning similar to *parabasis*. It is the act of sin.

Over against this act of sin on Adam’s part stands the great act of grace (*charisma*) performed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and these are not exact equivalents. The Lord’s act of grace in the giving of Himself on Calvary’s cross does not just balance the act of sin; *it overbalances it*. Hence the “much more” in the argument of the verses before us:

“Again, the gift of God is not like the result of one man’s sin. The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one Man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one Man the many will be made righteous” (verses 16-19, N.I.V.).

The Apostle piles up words to emphasize the greatness, the freeness, and the graciousness of the gift of Christ and His righteousness. This not only undoes all that Adam did, but goes far beyond. Adam brought in death; Christ brings in life eternal. Adam brought condemnation; Christ brings in justification of life and acquittal. Adam puts death on the throne, “death reigned” (verse 14); Christ puts His people on the throne with eternal consequences (verse 17). And just as surely as by the disobedience of Adam were all the true seed “constituted sinners”, so by the obedience of Christ they finally are all “constituted righteous”. Where once the believer fell “in Adam” he now stands “in Christ” forever and in grace.

What joy this should bring to everyone who fully trust in the Lord Jesus! The believer should continually rejoice in the Lord as he realize this with its tremendous implications.

The climax comes in verses 20 and 21:

“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (verses 20, 21, N.I.V.).

No.11. vi. 1 - 11.
pp. 41 - 45

It is helpful to note the key-words of these inner chapters of Romans. In chapter v. it is *death*; in chapter vi. *sin*; chapter vii. *law*; and chapter viii. *spirit*. In chap.v. it is a matter of life and death; in chap.vi. of sin and righteousness; in chap.vii. of law and grace; and chap.viii. of flesh and spirit. The matter contained in chap.vi. arises from the doctrine set forth in v. 20, 21 that “where sin increased (or abounded) grace increased all the more”. From this a critic of the Apostle might have said, If this is so, why not go on sinning, so that grace may further increase? The fact is that from time to time people *have* criticized the doctrine of grace set forth in Paul’s epistles. They assert that such teaching leads to laxness in conduct. Surely, they argue, if sin is to be controlled, the best way to do it is to legislate against it. They forget that law merely sets a standard, but gives no wisdom or power to keep it. In other words the law can never turn sinners into saints.

We shall have to consider the Scriptural teaching concerning the law later on. For the moment we would say the main reason for the law in the Bible is to show up sin in its true colours. The Apostle in this section of the epistle deals with four possible objections to his teaching and in each case he strongly repudiates it by saying “God forbid” (A.V.). Other versions render *me genoito* “by no means!”, “certainly not!”, or “of course not!”. Then follows in each case his argument to show the falsity of the objection. The four questions are these:

- (1) “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (vi. 1); the repudiation and answer (vi. 2-14).
- (2) “Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?” (vi. 15); the repudiation and answer (vi. 15 - vii. 6).
- (3) “Is the law sin?” (vii. 7); repudiation and answer (vii. 7-12).
- (4) “Was that which is good made death unto me?” (vii. 13); repudiation and answer (vii. 13-25).

Let us consider the first objection which opens chapter vi.:

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?”
(Rom. vi. 1, N.I.V.)

The Apostle gives a definite reply straight away: “of course not”. Those that asserted that his doctrine could be construed in this way, had a total misconception of it. As Paul expressed it so clearly in a later epistle—“we are not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good

works” (Eph. ii. 8-10). In other words salvation by grace leads to a life of practical conformity to the standards of God. The Apostle continues his answer by saying:

“We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (vi. 2, N.I.V.).

A dead man is beyond the capability of sinning! Let us note that it is not a question as to whether the believer will ever fall into sin or discover some hidden imperfection, but whether he will “continue in” sin, that is, make a practice of it. To reinforce his argument Paul brings in the great doctrine of identification with Christ as set forth by the doctrine of baptism:

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore *buried with Him through baptism into death*, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (vi. 3, 4, N.I.V.).

The point to be settled here is whether Paul is alluding to the baptism of the Holy Spirit which identifies a believer with the risen Christ or does it refer to water baptism? Does it refer to the reality, the work of the Holy Spirit, or the shadow that represents it? Because we are creatures of time and sense, what we see, hear, touch or feel appears to be more real than anything spiritual. But we should remember that all ritual is but an *illustration*, a “shadowing forth”. It can never be the reality which is eternal and spiritual and God asks us to walk by faith in these glorious realities and not by sight, feeling or sense (compare Heb. x. 1 and Col. ii. 16, 17).

Dr. Merrill Unger in *Bibliotheca Sacra* writes:

“In these passages (Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12; Eph. iv. 5) the holy Apostle is not considering ritual baptism at all. The sublimity of thought, the context of the argument, the exalted nature of the spiritual verities taught, support this position. He is speaking of something infinitely higher, not of a mere symbolic ordinance that is powerless to effect intrinsic change, but of a divine operation which places us eternally in Christ, and into His experience of crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection.”

In his book on *Romans* (chapter six), Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones states, in expounding verses 2 and 3:

“The conclusion therefore at which I arrive is that baptism by water is not in the mind of the Apostle at all in these two verses; instead it is the baptism that is wrought by the Spirit Again take the statement which the Apostle makes in Gal.2:20 which is so frequently misquoted: ‘I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me’. Now there you have the identical doctrine (as Rom.6:2,3), but baptism is not mentioned. That is because water baptism does not achieve union, it does not produce it; indeed at that point it does not even represent it. This is a baptism which is carried out by the Holy Spirit when He incorporates us into, engrafts us into the Lord Jesus Christ” (page 36).

It is only fair to say that Dr. Lloyd Jones is not a dispensationalist and accepts that water baptism has its place, but certainly not in Rom. vi., Col. ii. or Eph. iv. This makes his testimony all the more telling. It is this spiritual baptism effected by the Holy Spirit that is the baptism of Rom. vi. In Eph. iv. it is “*one* baptism”. As to “hope”,

“Lord”, “faith”, “God” there is little, if any, difference among true believers. But when we come to baptism, so many forget that the *one baptism* is mentioned in equal terms with the above words. The emphasis in “one” is in opposition to corporate diversity in the Body of Christ.

There are those who suggest water baptism can be blended with the Spirit’s baptism here and yet be looked upon as *one* baptism. We do not understand this kind of mental jugglery, but it cannot be true, not only in view of the above arguments, but also because water baptism did not form a necessary part of the commission Christ gave Paul. “Christ sent me *not* to baptize, *but* to preach the gospel” (I Cor. i. 17) he asserted. Even though he did baptize a few, it should be quite evident from the clear command of the Lord that ritual baptism was not essential to the ministry entrusted to him and therefore it is an intruder in Eph. iv. 5 and Col. ii. as well as being quite foreign to the context. Each member of the Body is “filled full (complete) in Christ” (Col. ii. 10). What can “shadows” add to this glorious fullness? And is it not lack of appreciation of this fullness that causes many to cling to these “shadows”?

We would sum up by saying that the real Spirit baptism identifies and unites a believer with Christ eternally. There are three great unities in Scripture:

- (1) The unity between the members of the Godhead (John xvii.).
- (2) The unity between Christ and the believers (Rom. vi.).
- (3) The unity between believers themselves (Eph. iv.).

No wonder we are not exhorted to *make a unity*, but to *carefully guard one already made by God*.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit does not depend upon or wait for the action of man, that is one man baptizing another in water, it is wholly the “operation or working of God” (Col. ii. 12) and occurs at the moment of salvation. In just the same way being “planted together in the likeness of His death” (Rom. vi. 5) does not depend upon ritual, but solely upon the action of the Holy Spirit, thus effecting complete *identification of the believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection*.

“For if by means of the image of His death we have been joined with His death, then we shall also be joined with His resurrection” (Rom. vi. 5, C. K. Barrett).

The thought here is akin to grafting. *Sumphutos* “planted together” A.V. literally means “grown together with” and explains how complete this wondrous identification is. The work of God does not leave the believer in death; it puts him on resurrection ground, a new outlook, a new life, here and now, although the literal resurrection representing our hope is yet future. Note carefully how Paul puts this hope into the future “We *shall be* also in the likeness of His resurrection” (verse 5) and “we believe that we *shall also live* with Him” (verse 8).

Verse 6 continues:

“For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin” (N.I.V.).

It is important to note that the aorist tense is used here “was crucified” not “is crucified” of the A.V. It is looking backward to the time when it occurred and this must be the same moment when the believer died with Christ. This again cannot be water baptism for the context goes back to the crucifixion of Christ. Those who are united by faith to Christ are reckoned as *having been crucified with Him when He was crucified*. The Apostle describes this in his own experience in Gal. ii. 20:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (N.I.V.).

Paul knew that this was all the work of God, going back to the crucifixion of the Lord and certainly not commencing with his being baptized in water. The “dying with” and “being crucified with”, must refer to the same event and the same time, that is the crucifixion and this rules out any work of man.

In Rom. vi. 6 the A.V. renders *katargeo* “destroyed”. This is too strong; it is neither true to fact nor experience. The N.I.V. “rendered powerless” or “put out of action” (F.F.Bruce) is nearer the mark. The believer carries the sinful old nature to the grave or the moment that his hope is realized in translation or resurrection, but this “crucifixion” by God delivers him from its *domination* here and now. He need never be a slave to it if he does what this context commands, and reckons what God has done for him in identification with Christ to be absolutely true. In this position the believer is “dead” to sin and a dead man is no longer answerable for it, “He that is dead is freed from sin” (verse 7).

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (verses 9, 10).

“Once” here is *ephapax*, “once for all”, a word that is used repeatedly in the epistle to the Hebrews to express the finality and completeness of the sacrifice of Christ.

But death is only one side of the story. It leads to resurrection life and the practical conclusion is:

“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (verse 11, N.I.V.).

The word “count” is the same as is translated “reckon” and “impute” in connection with Abraham in chapter iv. The way that gives deliverance from the power of sin in the believer is for him to count on what God has said about his unity with Christ’s death and resurrection *as being true of himself here and now*. This is God’s way of holiness and the only one that really works. Holiness conferences may bring all sorts of ideas and

resolutions before the believer in Christ but none can improve on God's remedy for the deliverance from the bondage of sin and self.

No.12. vi. 12 - vii. 7.
pp. 61 - 65

When the believer 'reckons' as vi. 11 enjoins, that he himself is dead to sin yet alive to God, the practical result is expressed in the next verse:

"Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires"
(verse 12, N.I.V.).

Without this reckoning, the exhortation would be impossible to carry out. Identification with Christ in His death and burial means the end of slavery to sin. A "newness of life" (verse 4) follows because of identification with His resurrection life and this means glorious freedom. In fact slavery and freedom sum up the section before us. Let us note this:

"Being then *made free from sin*, ye became the servants of righteousness" (vi. 18).
"For when ye were the servants (slaves) of sin, ye were *free* from righteousness" (vi. 20).
"But now being made *free from sin*, and become servants (slaves) to God" (vi. 22).
"If her husband be dead, she is *free from that law*" (vii. 3).
"For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me *free from* the law of sin and death" (viii. 2).
"Because the creature itself also *shall be delivered from* the bondage of corruption into *the glorious liberty* of the children of God" (viii. 21).

And now the references to slavery and bondage; the reader should note that in the A.V. this is veiled by being translated "serve" or "servants":

"That henceforth we should *not be slaves to* (serve) sin" (vi. 6).
"*Slaves* (servants) to obey, his *slaves* (servants) ye are" (vi. 16).
"Ye were the *slaves* (servants) of sin" (vi. 17).
"Ye became *slaves* (servants) of righteousness" (vi. 18).
"*Slaves* (servants) to uncleanness *slaves* (servants) to righteousness unto holiness" (vi. 19).
"When ye were the *slaves* of sin" (vi. 20).
"Now having become *slaves* (servants) to God" (vi. 22).
"Ye have not received the spirit of *bondage*" (viii. 15).
"Shall be delivered from the *bondage* of corruption" (viii. 21).

The two conditions are absolute opposites. One speaks of slavery, darkness and misery; the other of glorious freedom, peace, joy and contentment—freedom now to serve the Lord faithfully and carry out His will. It may be summed up in a threefold way. The believer in Christ is in:

- (1) *A new sphere*—"newness of life".
- (2) *A condition*—union, crucified with, dead with, buried with, raised with Christ.
- (3) *A state*—freedom to serve Him faithfully.

Keeping this facts in mind we can now look at the Apostle's argument more closely and we quote from The New International Version:

“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (vi. 13-14, N.I.V.).

Because God has broken the domination of sin, the believer can now hand over himself to Him rather than yield to slavery. He is not like a “dead man brought to life” as C. K. Barrett expresses it. A master has no further authority over a dead slave: he is freed by death. In the same way the believer is freed from the mastery of sin because he has died (in Christ) to it and now has “newness of life” in which to live with all its blessedness. He is now “under grace” (verse 14) and it is the grace of God which strengthens him and so enables him, now a free man, to become faithful and fruitful servant of God.

Paul now comes back to the antinomian argument of verse 1:

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (vi. 15-18, N.I.V.).

From what we have seen, the argument of the Apostle is surely clear to the objector who thinks that a practice of sin and a state of grace can be combined. As F. F. Bruce comments, “to make being ‘under grace’ an excuse for sinning is a sign that one is not really ‘under grace’ at all”. Those who are “in Christ” and united to Him, will be concerned to render glad obedience to His will and this will characterize their lives. They now will wholeheartedly obey Him Who is not only their Saviour but their Lord (vi. 17).

The illustration that Paul has given concerning slavery is a human one, he informs us, in order to help the Roman Christians to understand the vital doctrine of identification with the risen Christ and its practical outcome (verse 19). Again he contrasts their lives as unsaved pagans with the new one in Christ:

“The point of the matter is this: just as in the past you offered your members to uncleanness and iniquity as their slaves (with the result of producing iniquity), so now offer your members to righteousness as its slaves (the result of this will be sanctification). These are mutually exclusive attitudes; for when you were slaves of sin you were free men in respect of righteousness (and what fruit did you reap of that?—things of which you now are ashamed, for their end is death). But now you have been freed from sin, and have become slaves to God. Accordingly your fruit proves to be sanctification, and the ultimate result will be eternal life. For the wages paid by sin is death: but the gift freely given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vi. 19-23, C. K. Barrett).

It is noteworthy that the stress on slavery does not cease when the new life in Christ begins. Paul talks about being a “slave to righteousness” and a “slave to God”. Strictly speaking the believer does not change his condition as a slave—*he changes his master*—once a slave to Satan, sin, and self, now a slave of Christ, “whose service is perfect freedom”. What an exchange! What a transformation! And Paul the one who stresses freedom more than any other N.T. writer, specially when he says:

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Gal. v. 1, N.I.V.).

Yet he delighted to constantly describe himself as the “slave of Christ”! (translated servant in the A.V.). This is a seeming paradox, and yet not so to the one who rejoices in the truth of the section now before us, namely vi. 1-23 with its mighty deliverance brought about by the God-made union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Chapter vii. begins another section still dealing with this great doctrine of identification with Christ. In vi. 14 Paul had stated that the believer was not under the reign of law, but under the reign of grace. The Apostle is now going to amplify this:

“Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man” (vii. 1-3, N.I.V.).

The Apostle is concerned to show that legal obligation is discharged only by death. Sometimes Paul uses the definite article with ‘law’, and sometimes omits it. Generally speaking, law with the article refers to the law of Moses, without it, law in general, that is Roman law as well as Jewish. Here at the beginning of chapter vii., Paul asserts that death breaks man’s relation to the law and to illustrate this he brings forward an analogy from marriage. It is important to bear in mind that the Apostle in no way belittles the law. It was “holy, just and good” (vii. 12), but as a means of acquiring merit before God, law-keeping was impossible and therefore, completely deceptive. Death is the answer to the dominion of sin (chapter vi.) and likewise it is the answer to the dominion of law (chapter vii.). Applying the analogy to the believer, Paul reminds him again of his identification with Christ in His physical death, “So, my brother, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God” (verse 4, N.I.V.). This ‘fruit’ is the life that is dominated by the risen Christ and brings glory to Him. It is the “fruit of the spirit”, the new nature, described in Gal. v. 22, 23.

However, looking back to the days of unregeneracy, sinful passions aroused by the law produced the very opposite “fruit unto death” (verse 5). God’s mighty deliverance through the union with Christ means that the believer is released from the slavery of law so that now he can become the slave of God and serve Him freely “in the new way of the Spirit and not the old way of the written code”. In place of legalism that seeks to enforce statutes there is the spirit of willing service through dedication and love.

Paul now comes to his third question and asks, “is the law sin?” (verse 7). If the believer has been delivered from the law as a task master, is there something wrong with it? The answer is “certainly not”. The wrong is in the sinner, not in the law of God. And yet there is a connection between law and sin in at least two ways:

- (1) Sin would never be seen in its true colours unless there was a perfect standard by which all conduct could be measured.
- (2) The law stirs up the latent rebellion that lies dormant in every heart. We all know our reaction when someone tries to force us to act in a particular way.

As regards (1) the Apostle says:

“Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, Do not covet” (vii. 7, N.I.V.).

The word ‘covet’ means desire. God’s law goes deeper than the external act. Paul as a Pharisee had been concerned largely with the external conformity to the law, but when it dawned upon him that the law also had to do with ‘desires’ before they had become manifest as ‘deeds’ the shock was intense. He might be able to control his action, but what about his thoughts? The command at last ‘came’, as never before and the Apostle says: “sin revived, or sprang to life, and I died” (verse 9). All his boasted righteousness vanished. The commandment which, if obeyed, would have led to life, he now found to be too searching and deep—it led to death. Sin had deceived him, as it had done to Adam and Eve and like them, it ‘slew him’.

Covetousness is a state of mind—it is idolatry (Col. iii. 5). It may be desire for right or wrong but if such self-regarding is of such intensity, it can usurp the place God ought to have, that is place No.1.

No.13. vii. 8 - viii. 1.
pp. 81 - 85

From this point onwards Paul personifies sin as a powerful enemy ready to pounce upon him and lead him to do the very things that he abhorred:

“For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment put me to death”
(vii.11, N.I.V.).

Yet, in spite of all this he declares that the law is “holy, righteous and good” (vii. 12). The fault is not in God’s law, but in the sinner. It was weak only “because of the flesh” (viii. 3), the inability of sinful human nature to rise to its standards. This leads the Apostle to his fourth question:

“Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! but in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in men through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful” (vii. 13, N.I.V.).

The answer again is “no”, his real enemy was not the law but SIN which forced him against his better judgment, to do things the law had shown him to be wrong. In the section that follows Paul continues to speak of himself. He leaves the past tense and uses the present. There is no doubt that he is giving his own experience. It is a self-portrait, an autobiography, yet this passage is one of the most controversial in the N.T. Volumes have been written on it. One may ask, is it the experience of the believer? Is it the experience of the unsaved wrestling with their consciences? Is it limited to the Jew under the law of Moses? We do not hesitate to say it refers to the believer for 4 reasons:

- (1) The person here described “hates sin” (verse 15). This is not a characteristic of the unsaved.
- (2) He “delights” in the law of God (verse 22). This is a characteristic of the children of God as Psa. i. 2 clearly testifies.
- (3) He looks for deliverance to Christ alone through grace (verses 24 and 25).
- (4) There is a passage in Galatians that covers the experience of Rom. vii. & viii., and the persons addressed are believers, not unbelievers:

“So I say, live by the spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature, for the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in contrast with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Gal. v. 16-17, N.I.V.).

C. H. Welch’s comments are to the point here:

“While therefore Paul’s experience may primarily set forth the vain endeavour of a Jew to perform the law which has ‘enlightened his eyes, and converted his soul’ (Psa.xix.7-9), and so show to all mankind that the law can neither save, justify, nor sanctify, the passage also sets forth in clear characters the warfare that must ever go on between flesh and spirit, until the day of complete deliverance and the redemption of the body” (*Just and the Justifier*, p.191).

Not only this, but the truth of the passage now before us has been the experience of countless Christians all down this age. It is significant that where the Apostle describes his life before his conversion there is no trace of spiritual conflict or of a divided self. Gal. i. & Phil. iii. depict a Jew who is practicing his religious beliefs more successfully than his contemporaries and blameless in his observance of the law of Moses.

After salvation the situation has completely altered. Why? Because God has introduced something that is entirely opposite to the human mind which has come under the influence of sin. It is nothing less than a portion of His own divine and sinless nature. Peter, in his second epistle, describes this:

“His (God’s) divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him Who has called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promise, *so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires*” (II Pet. i. 3, 4, N.I.V.).

The Holy Spirit effects this divine implantation in the sinner at the moment of believing in Christ. Consequently it can be expressed as ‘spirit’ with a small ‘s’ and placed in opposition to the ‘flesh’. While the words ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ are used in more than one sense in the N.T. and by Paul himself, when they occur in the same context they generally represent this divine nature in absolute contrast to the sinful nature inherited from fallen Adam. As the Apostle writes in Galatians:

“For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. v. 17).

The word ‘spirit’ in the A.V. could have been spelled with a small ‘s’ and then the conflict between these two natures, the new and the old, is clearly set out. It is this conflict in himself that Paul is describing in Rom. vii. 14-25:

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin” (Rom. vii. 14, 25, N.I.V.).

These words graphically describe the conflict between the two natures. Sin is personified as a mighty enemy that resides in human nature and tyrannically controls the person. As long as he struggles against it in his own strength he is constantly defeated. It is not until he realizes that the Lord alone has the answer, that he wins the victory. Who can rescue me from this terrible dilemma he cries? but then he turns to the Lord Jesus

Christ, realizing what He had done in becoming the Victor over the consequences of sin and death and in the glorious fact that he is now united to Him in death and resurrection. Then, and not till then, the chains drop off and he is free—a slave no longer, except to Him Who has bought him with a price!

As we have stated before, all sorts of remedies are offered by the Christian world—for deliverance from indwelling sin. All are of no avail, unless they conform to the teaching of this section of the Roman epistle concerning identification with the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection and the believer reckoning this to be true in his own experience (Rom. vi. 6-11). This is God's way and His way is always the best and cannot be improved.

Dr. E. W. Bullinger sums it up in his *Church Epistles* pp.64-66:

“Thus does the Holy Spirit lay bare to our view His own explanation of the origin and nature of the experience possessed by every soul which is the subject of the grace of God, and which has the gift of the new nature as the result and sign of God's justifying Those who fail to learn this lesson as to the conflict of the law, first with the old nature (vii. 7-12), and afterwards (21-25) with the new nature, will not only be in constant perplexity themselves, but will fall into that error of doctrine which is corrected in the epistle to the Galatians, chapter iii. 3. Having begun with the truth as to the new nature (called 'spirit') they will, if they depart from it, seek to improve the old nature. This is the error which Gal. iii. 3 corrects, “Are ye so senseless? having begun in the spirit (in the new nature) are ye now being perfected in the flesh (i.e. in the old nature)? This is what thousands are doing everywhere around us. They are seeking to perfect, or, at least improve, the old nature. Not seeing the truth or reality of the two natures, they are seeking to improve the only one which they are acquainted with. This is ever the work of all who are ignorant of what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Be they Buddhists, Romanists, Perfectionists, they are all alike endeavouring to convert the 'flesh' into 'spirit', to subdue the 'flesh', and by all kinds of arts and artifices, and rules and regulations, pledges, and badges, to improve the old nature. All alike formulate 'rules for holy living', ignorant of the fact which lies before us in this Scripture that the old nature knows no rules, and that the new nature needs no rules. Instead of reckoning the old nature to have died with Christ, they are ever seeking *to put it to death!* Instead of reckoning that it was crucified with Christ upon the cross, they are exhorting us to crucify it for ourselves. When God crucified it with Christ, He did it once and for all. But those who know nothing of this, tell us to crucify it. They do not tell us how we are to do it; but knowing how futile is the effort, they tell us we must do it every day. But, no! once would be enough if it could be done at all. And, thank God, it has been done. HE has done it Himself on Calvary; and now, we, in spite of all our conflict, in spite of the flesh (the old nature) lusting against the spirit (the new nature) and spirit against the flesh; in spite of the fact that these are contrary the one to the other, so that we do the evil which th flesh would have us do, and we cannot do the good that the spirit would have us do; in spite of this conflict, we find 'peace with God' and rest in the truth—that the child of God has his old nature, which can produce no good thing—and he has a new nature, which 'doth not commit sin' (I John iii. 9), 'sinneth not' (I John v. 18). And, further, that God reckons the old nature as having died with Christ, and as having therefore no dominion over us, though the conflict in actual experience is ever present with us. Those who learn this lesson have learned that the old nature is so bad that nothing can ever improve it, and that the new nature *is so perfect* that it needs no improvement. It is 'spirit', and its life cannot be 'deepened'. It is 'newness of life', and cannot be made 'higher'.”

We make no apology for this lengthy quotation from the witness of that doughty warrior, Dr. Bullinger, and only wish that there were more today to testify to the reality of the two natures in the child of God.

When we come to chapter viii. it is like coming out of a dark tunnel into the sunlight for we pass from the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We should remember that Rom. viii. 1 really follows the teaching of Rom. v. 16-18 with its statement as to how condemnation came, namely through the sin of one man, Adam, condemnation came upon all men. In Rom. viii. 1 we have the great reversal through the redemptive work of Christ:

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (N.I.V.).

The reader will note that the concluding words of the verse “who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit” are omitted for they do not occur in the principal Greek texts, but are evidently an interpolation from verse 4 which is their rightful place. Those who insist on their retention fail to realize that they are making freedom from condemnation a result of the believers’ walk and not the all-sufficient work of Christ and this completely nullifies the basic teaching of this great epistle. Being free from condemnation *does not depend on the works or walk of the believer. It is entirely conditional upon the work of the Son of God.* It is *justification* that is set over against *condemnation* in Rom. v. 16-18 and viii. 1-14, not *sanctification*. We must keep truth in its Scriptural place, otherwise we shall not be “unashamed workmen” (II Tim. ii. 15).

The glorious teaching of the previous chapters is that a person who is declared to be righteous or just by God is one who is innocent of wrong doing. God’s verdict is ‘not guilty’ and as such he cannot come under condemnation. This has been made absolutely clear in chapter iii. where it is asserted that God’s righteousness comes upon all who believe *by faith of Jesus Christ* and not through any works of merit of the believer. Thus it is through abounding grace on God’s part. Grace and works never blend together as Rom. xi. 6 testifies. It is only in this way that He can be just and at the same time be the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus (Rom. iii. 26). He is then the God Who justifies the ungodly.

The Lord in His earthly ministry dealt with the question of condemnation. He said:

“*He that believeth is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (John iii. 18).

Of course there are those who say that this teaching is dangerous and will result in laxness of walk. In fact much of Paul’s teaching was considered dangerous in his day and has been many times since, but there is no need for us to put out the hand to stay the ark of God. The all wise God and Father knows how to deal with His children in discipline if they walk after the flesh, but He will never deny Himself or His truth in doing this.

No.14. viii. 2 - 11.
pp. 109 - 113

The glorious fact of “no condemnation” does not await the day of glory, it is true of the believer here and now—“there is therefore *now* no condemnation” are the words of Rom. viii. 1 and this results from the work of the “spirit of life”:

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death” (viii. 2).

In II Cor. iii. 17 we are reminded that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” and we have been called to liberty (Gal. v. 13). This freedom is from the domination of “the law of sin” which is in our members (Rom. vii. 23). It is good to realize what we have NOW through the redemptive work of Christ, “*Now* the righteousness of God without the law is manifested” (Rom. iii. 21). “Being *now* justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath” (Rom. v. 9). “By Whom we have *now* received the reconciliation” (Rom. v. 11). “But *now* being made free from sin ye have your fruit unto holiness” (Rom. vi. 22). These present assurances are for the believer to enjoy *now* through faith. We are acquitted *now*; we are free from condemnation *now*. Nothing we can do of ourselves can ever set us free from condemnation. It has all been done by our Saviour and Lord and because we are for ever united with Him, condemnation has gone for ever. This does not mean we are free to please ourselves, but rather we are free to please and serve Him faithfully. In other words it leads to experimental sanctification. But let us not confuse sanctification and justification. It is our acquittal (justification) which ensures our freedom from condemnation and Rom. viii. 3 goes on to teach us that this is wholly dependent upon the work of Christ and not on the walk of the believer.

“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering” (N.I.V.).

This epistle has made it abundantly clear that sinful man cannot rise to the standard of God’s law and that law was therefore powerless to produce a life of holiness. However what the law could not do, has been done by God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Who came in the “*likeness* of sinful flesh”, giving His life as a sin-offering on behalf of His people. The words are carefully chosen here. Christ did not come in sinful flesh for had He done so He would have had the taint of sin, and so would have needed a Saviour himself; He could never have been the Saviour of others. The Apostle Paul and the N.T. generally, absolutely insists on the sinlessness of Christ, the One Who “knew no sin” (II Cor. v. 21).

“He was made to be sin (or a sin-offering) for us Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. v. 21).

“No condemnation” is true of believers, because “condemnation” was true of Him. The righteous sentence of the law has been fulfilled in the redeemed in the Person of their Saviour. The sphere of emancipation is the “spirit”, and unites us with Christ, risen and ascended. We can now “walk in newness of life” and serve the Lord in “newness of spirit”.

The section now before us is verses 5-16 which revolve around ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’. These words are used in various ways in the N.T. and need care in interpretation:

F L E S H

- (1) This word is used in the sense of *bodily flesh* (cp. Gen. xvii. 11).
- (2) It is used of *human descent*. Christ is a descendant of David as concerning the flesh (Rom. ix. 5).
- (3) *Human nature*. Christ came “in the flesh” (I John iv. 2) and was “manifested in the flesh” (I Tim. iii. 16).
- (4) *Mankind*. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (Rom. iii. 20).
- (5) *The sinful old nature* in the believer. This is inherited from fallen Adam and extends to all mankind. It is the sense frequently used by the Apostle Paul.

We must be careful not to look on the human body as sinful in itself. It is rather the sphere in which the principle of sin operates, hence the “body of sin” (Rom. vi. 6) and the law of sin in my members (Rom. vii. 23). The physical body can be presented to God as a “living sacrifice” (Rom. xii. 1) so that His will may be done and the body can be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. vi. 19; Rom. viii. 11). The N.T. has no place for the contempt of the body shown by the Greek philosophers or their regard for it as a prison house of the soul. For the believer it awaits to be redeemed (Rom. viii. 23) and to be conformed to the Lord’s resurrection body of glory (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

S P I R I T

This important word is used in various ways in the Scripture:

- (1) God. (John iv. 24; I Cor. iii. 16).
- (2) Christ. (I Cor. vi. 17; xv. 45; II Cor. iii. 17, 18).
- (3) The Holy Spirit. This is generally with the article but not necessarily so.
- (4) The operations of the Holy Spirit—spiritual gifts (I Cor. xiv. 32).
- (5) The new nature in the believer. This is specially the Pauline usage; spirit as opposed to the sinful old nature.
- (6) Man (psychologically). Spirit as imparted to man, making him “a living soul” (Gen. ii. 7).
- (7) Character. This as being in itself invisible and manifested only in one’s actions (II Tim. i. 7; Rom. viii. 15).
- (8) Other invisible characteristics such as *feelings* and *desires* (Matt. xxvi. 41).
- (9) The whole person, the part being put for the whole (Luke i. 47).
- (10) Angels, or spirit-beings (Heb. i. 7, 14).
- (11) Demons, or evil spirit beings (Mark i. 23).
- (12) The Resurrection body (I Cor. xv. 45).

It will be seen that this word has a wide range of meaning; but in Romans it is in antithesis to the “flesh”, denoting the sinful old nature inherited from fallen Adam. Thus we have the doctrine of the two natures in the believer which are for ever opposed. They are “contrary the one to the other” (Gal. v. 17), and the Scriptural doctrine relating to these natures is a subject of immense importance to the believer. Wrong conceptions of holiness and spiritual progress arise from not understanding what the Scripture teaches in relation to the two natures in the child of God.

One great difficulty in deciding whether to translate the word ‘spirit’ with a capital or small ‘s’ is seen when different translations are compared. If translated with a capital ‘S’ it refers to the Holy Spirit; if a small ‘s’ the new nature which He imparts to the believer. Comparing different translations one can quickly see that the translators had varying ideas on this point. But one thing should be made clear if spirit is rendered with a small ‘s’, referring to the gift of the divine nature, the Holy Spirit is not eliminated for one cannot have a divine gift without a divine Giver. In fact both these meanings may be true of the context and then there is no question of it being “either or”.

For ourselves, we feel that in the context of the Romans that we are studying, there is no direct reference to the Holy Spirit by Himself until we reach viii. 16. “For the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God”. Until then it is the activities of the two natures that are being dealt with. These two opposing principles are set out by the Apostle in verses 5-7:

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires but those who live in accordance with the spirit, have their minds set on what the spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the spirit is life and peace, because the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by their sinful nature cannot please God” (N.I.V.).

We render this quotation as ‘spirit’ with a small ‘s’ making it refer to the new nature, but behind it is of course God Himself, the Holy Spirit. The context is not so much contrasting the Holy Spirit with the flesh but rather His gift, the perfect divine nature, over against the old sinful one inherited from fallen Adam. Redemption means that the believer’s mind is now free and can be allied either with the flesh or the spirit and it is made perfectly clear what happens in both cases. One expresses “enmity against God” and leads finally to death; the other to “life and peace”. Gal. v. takes this further and reveals plainly the two entirely opposite ‘fruits’ resulting from flesh and spirit:

“The acts of the sinful nature (flesh) are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. v. 19-23, N.I.V.).

There could not be a greater contrast, and the believer must decide whether his mind is going to be directed by the one or the other. He can be free from the slavery of the flesh by realizing his unity with Christ in death and resurrection and counting on this as Romans viii. 11 commands him to do. Or he can allow the old nature to put the chains

of bondage on him again and thus he ceases to “please God”. “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. viii. 8).

“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the spirit, if the spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He Who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His spirit, Who lives in you” (viii. 9-11, N.I.V.).

Again a small ‘s’ could have been used in these verses in the A.V. It may be best to read it both ways and interpret the statements both of the Holy Spirit and His divine nature as a gift. It is important to note that the saved, although still having an old nature called ‘flesh’ are not considered as being “*in* the flesh” but rather “*in* the spirit”, for the spirit (God the Spirit and His gift) indwells him.

The thought of indwelling is emphasized in Rom. vii. & viii. Sin indwells in vii. 17, 18, 20—“sin dwelleth in me” and the spirit of God and of Christ in viii. 9, 11. The believer has two “indwellers”, but he has been completely freed from the bondage of the one in order to come under the control of the other. What does the Apostle mean by “the body is dead because of sin”? The N.E.B. rendering is helpful here:

“But if Christ is dwelling within you, then although the body is a dead thing because you sinned, yet the spirit is life itself because you have been justified” (viii. 10).

“The body is dead” in the sense that it is subject to death resulting from sin. The believer now has the spirit of the risen Christ indwelling in him and that is itself a foretaste of the sure and certain hope that will be realized when in actual resurrection he will have a body “fashioned like the body of His glory” (Phil. iii. 20, 21) when he will be clothed with the permanent “house from heaven” (II Cor. v. 1-4). *Then* he will experience the “redemption of the body” of Rom. viii. 23.

**No.15. viii. 12 - 27.
pp. 130 - 135**

The Apostle concludes his argument concerning the two natures in the child of God by saying:

“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom. viii. 12-14, N.I.V.).

“Mortify” or “put to death” is the equivalent of Rom. vi. 11 where the believer is urged to reckon as “dead” and as “alive to God” and Col. iii. 5 is teaching the same thing. He is not asked to work his crucifixion out in his own strength, but to count

on what God has already done to the old nature. When this is obeyed he can have the joy of divine leading in his daily life, because “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God”.

What constitutes divine leading? Volumes have been written on this, some of which is unscriptural and therefore misleading. Many think that it has to do with a special feeling or emotion. They say “I *felt* led to do this or that”; but the leading of God does not depend on anything so frail as our impressions or feelings.

If we look back to the typical people, Israel, we shall see that God’s leading was a part of their redemption, “He led them forth by the right way” (Psa. cvii. 7). In fact, divine leading was Israel’s experience right through the forty years in the wilderness (Deut. xxix. 5). The O.T. has a good deal to say about divine leading as a concordance will quickly show, and the sincere Bible student is recommended to study this carefully. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night gave God’s earthly people sure and certain guidance (Exod. xiii. 21, 22). All they had to do was to watch them and not alter their position until these began to move. In this way they were infallibly guided by God Himself.

But it may be objected that in the N.T. we have nothing like this. This is true, but we may ask whether the Apostle Paul gives us any clue on this most important matter? When we read the divine account of his journeying, his witness and service during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles we find that the Lord guided him by *shut doors* and *open doors*. God is sovereign in this. He is the One Who says that He “opened, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Rev. iii. 7). In I.Cor.xvi.9 Paul says “a great door and effectual is opened unto me” and in II Cor. ii. 12, “a door was opened unto me of the Lord”, and he asks for prayer in Col. iv. 3 that “God would open unto us a door of utterance”. The opposite is seen in Acts xvi. 7, “When they (Paul and his companion) came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (N.I.V.). In other words God closed the door to Bithynia, thus guiding them infallibly to Europe. God still guides His children, for this is not reserved for special Christians. What is absolutely essential is an open mind that is ready to accept an open or shut door according to the Lord’s will. Too often we come to the Lord with our minds already made up on a line of action and then we pray “Lord, guide me”. Needless to say this is not the way to know the Lord’s will or His leading. We can with certainty ask Him for shut doors or open doors according to His wisdom and purpose and this is much safer than depending on our feelings. We have seen tragedies result from the latter. But some may still object and say that in times of urgency we may need instantaneous guidance. If this is really true, we can still depend on the Lord, for with Him “all things are possible”.

Paul goes on to say “for you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship” (Rom. viii. 15, N.I.V.). “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. i. 7). Adoption (Authorized Version) *huiothesia* means our placing as sons. We must not read our Western ideas of adoption into the N.T. Adoption was a legal term at that time,

appointing the inheritance which could be to a person outside the family if the parent chose. Sir William Ramsay writes as follows:

“Adoption was a kind of embryo will; the adopted son became the owner of the property and the property could pass to a person that was outside the family only through his being adopted this ancient form of will was *irrevocable* and *public*. The terms ‘son’ and heir are interchangeable it is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth, yet it is so.”

(*A Historical Commentary on St. Paul’s epistle to the Galatians*).*

[* - Those who wish to go into more detail should consult
Just and the Justifier by Charles H. Welch, pages 208-213.]

It is essential to understand this, specially when dealing with Gal. iv. 1-7 and iii. 15. With our Western ideas an adopted child can never be in such a close relationship as a child by birth; not so in century one. We should therefore realize that believers are not outsiders who cannot have a claim on God as Father, but they are really “sons of God” (I.John.iii.1,2) by redemption and as such have a glorious inheritance in view. “If children, then heirs” (Rom. viii. 17). The idea of the universal fatherhood of God is a popular misconception. God is not the Father of every human being but has a relationship as Creator. Only those who receive Christ by faith are brought into God’s family.

“Yet to all who received Him (Christ) He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John i. 12, 13, N.I.V.).

Only such, according to Rom. viii. 15, can come to God and call Him Father (*Abba*). This word is Aramaic and was the familiar term that children used to address their father. Such is the warm close relationship that redemption confers on the believer. It was used by the Lord Jesus in Mark xiv. 36 and it occurs in Gal. iv. 6. All the wealth of meaning that is covered by the word “father” is inherent in the Lord and in this, as in all other respects, He can never fail His children. In the passage we are considering the Apostle uses *huioi*, sons, and *tekna*, children interchangeably and we must be careful not to make too sharp a distinction between them. As Bishop Westcott says, the two words are complimentary, one expressing the privilege of inheritance and the other tender relationship. In Gal. iii. 23 - iv. 7 a contrast is made between infancy (under the law) and the status as sons (*huioi*) but here the word *nepioi* (infants) is used not *tekna* (children). We are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him” (Rom. viii. 17). Many take these two statements as being identical in meaning, but one is conditional and the other is not. Scripture distinguishes between Hope and Prize. One is a gift by grace, the other depends upon faithfulness and service which may involve suffering.

Did not the Lord Jesus make a distinction between coming *to* Him and coming *after* Him (Matt. xvi.)? The latter involves the denying of self and taking up the cross (suffering) and it would be quite wrong to say that this is automatically true of all those who believe in Christ.

Suffering can largely be avoided by our hiding our light under a bushel. It was “to him that *overcometh*” (and this included suffering) that the promise was made that “he should sit with Me in My throne” (Rev. iii. 21). If we died with Christ we shall *live* with Him, but if we suffer (endure) we shall *reign* with Him (II Tim. ii. 12). The latter is conditional and we have no right to ignore the condition laid down by God. “Joint-heirs with Christ” is parallel to being on the throne (reigning) with Him in glory, but faithfulness and suffering is the necessary prelude. There is future glory that will be true of all the redeemed and this the Apostle now proceeds to expound; but there is also the added glory of the overcomer for “one star differeth from another in glory” (I.Cor.xv.41).

He goes on to say:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (viii. 18, N.I.V.).

A few years previously Paul had written to the Corinthian church “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. iv. 17). The suffering and the future glory are beyond comparison, but in our experience this is only true “while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Cor. iv. 18). If we look at the trials and suffering we may well be overwhelmed, but if we “look unto Jesus” (Heb. xii. 2) the present with all its testing fades away into insignificance; it is not worthy to be compared with the future glory in resurrection.

Not only does this glorious hope affect the believer; it extends to the whole creation:

“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the One Who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (viii. 19-21, N.I.V.).

The whole universe has become affected by sin and failing. First of all with the fall of Satan and the angels that fell with him; then with Adam’s failure and its effect upon the whole of mankind. Not only this but the earth itself was cursed for man’s sake and still bears evidences of that curse as everyone knows who works with the soil. No wonder the Preacher declared that all was subjected to vanity (Eccles. i. 2), and the book of Ecclesiastes is a divine commentary on this. Emptiness, frustration, bondage now reigns over the earth. But the glorious redemptive work of the last Adam, reaches out to the whole universe and will at last break and banish this bondage so that it may realize the goal for which it was brought into being.

Now it groans and travails, yet with eager expectation looking for its release which will take place when the sons of God are manifested and this manifestation is bound up with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory. Then the “desert shall blossom as the rose” and the beauty of the primal creation be restored, finding its

culmination in the new heavens and earth. Its longing is bound up with the believer's longing and hope.

“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (viii.23-25, N.I.V.).

The “firstfruits of the Spirit” can mean the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or His gift of the new nature. This is a present experience for the believer and is, as it were, a pledge or the first installment of the coming glory in resurrection. *Now* is the groaning and travail. II Cor. v. 2 concurs with Romans, “for in this tabernacle (i.e. body) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven (i.e. the resurrection body)”; *then* will be the glorious release.

In order to sustain us at the present time we have the help and strengthening of the Holy Spirit specially in regard to our prayers:

“We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He Who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will” (viii. 26, 27, N.I.V.).

What Christian has not felt the inadequacy of his prayer life? And what a comfort to know that our deepest longings which often we cannot express in words, the indwelling Holy Spirit interprets and intercedes for us to the Father. After all it is our attitude of mind which is of first importance and this is what God is continually looking at “for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (I Sam. xvi. 7).

No.16. viii. 28 - 39.
pp. 170 - 174

After dealing with the strengthening of the interceding Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul continues:

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Rom. viii. 28, N.I.V.).

We should realize that “all things” include the dark and difficult experiences of life which God can overrule and turn to our good and this should encourage us when we go through such experiences. All is under His control and nothing can happen to us that is outside of His will. Even when we suffer through our own foolishness there are lessons that can be learned to our profit. Behind everything is a plan and purpose of God and this is where election and predestination come in. There are links in the divine chain embodying this plan and these the Apostle now enumerates:

“For those God foreknew He also predestinated to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified” (viii. 29, 30, N.I.V.).

Many regard the Bible merely as a book for devotional exercise but it is much more than this. It is a record of the plan God had in mind when He created the heaven and earth. We are too limited to have a full understanding of this, but the divine outline is clear for those who are willing and keen enough to search the Word of God* (* - such may be interested in the author's *The Kingdom of God in heaven and on earth* where this subject is dealt with). In order that this plan can never miscarry we have God working along the lines of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification. We may be sure that any plan left to created beings to carry out would finally founder and God cannot and will not allow this for then all His plan would be in vain. The first link is foreknowledge and we should note that it is put before predestination. We find that similarly foreknowledge is put before election in I Pet. i. 2. It is absolutely essential that this order be kept otherwise we shall land ourselves in all sorts of difficulties. If only Bible students had kept to God's order and gone no further than what is revealed in Scripture much profitless argument and dissension would have been avoided.

God knows everything, past, present and future; He is omniscient.

“. . . . I am God, there is none else; I am God and there is none like Me, *declaring the end from the beginning* and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure*” (Isa. xlv. 9, 10).

God's purpose (counsel) will stand and be fulfilled because *He knows the end from the beginning* and can prepare in advance. If this was not so *there could be no certainty of fulfillment*. Something could happen in the future concerning which God had no knowledge and thus could overthrow His purpose. Those who do not accept the omniscience of God are throwing away the ground for complete assurance.

It is important that we do not read into foreknowledge what is not there. The word means just to know beforehand without exercising any control over future events. This is inherent in other words as we shall see, but God in past eternity was able to devise a wonderful plan because He has all-knowledge of the future, and therefore cannot be taken by surprise and He has all power and so can carry it out in every detail. C. H. Welch writes:

“We shall be wise, therefore, to leave the word foreknowledge to mean just what it says and no more. The infinite knowledge of God makes it impossible that He shall not know who will preach and who will teach; where they will go, and when they will go; who shall hear, who reject, who accept, and who be left without a word of the gospel. The one great demand upon all who hear the gospel is that they believe the testimony of God concerning His Son. Whoever so believes passes into all the blessings purchased by the blood of Christ. Whoever does not believe makes God a liar (I John v. 10). If there were any idea of preordination in this, refusal to believe would be as much a part of God's predeterminate decree as is election to glory, and it would not be possible to make God a liar by so refusing His testimony We therefore understand the passage

before us to declare that God, Who is not under the limitations of time and space as we are, and needs no external evidence to attain to this knowledge, knows all things, past, present and future: knows them perfectly and completely, and can, therefore, act with complete certainty where, to us, all would appear in a contingent light” (*Just and the Justifier*, pp. 234, 235).

Some imagine foreknowledge to be equivalent to predestination, in which case Paul has written “Whom he did predestinate, he also did predestinate”, which makes nonsense. *Proorizo* means literally to mark off beforehand for some specific purpose. Surely the Creator has a right to do this. If a man invents something, has he not the right to use this for the purpose he had in mind? What we have here in Romans is not a hard determinist philosophy, but the loving plan of One Who purposes to bless human beings beyond their dreams or comprehension.

These foreknown ones are to be “conformed to the likeness of His Son” (verse 29). He Himself is the image of God Who as Spirit is invisible (Col. i. 15), and these are conformed to that image, so in one sense they are replicas of God. But one very important fact is stressed here. The Lord Jesus is *first* among them all, for this is the meaning of the Greek word rendered “firstborn”. It is fatal to base doctrine on the English word. Col. i. 15, 16 insists that Christ is the firstborn of all creation, not because He was the first creature born but because “by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth” (Col. i. 16). In other words as Creator He is and must be first with the object stated in verse 18, “*that in all things He might have the first place*” (pre-eminence). Professor F. F. Bruce and Dr. W. J. Martin state:

“The word firstborn had long since ceased to be used exclusively in its literal sense, just as prime (from Latin *primus*—first) with us. The Prime Minister is not the first minister we have had; he is the most pre-eminent. A man in the ‘prime’ of his life has long since left the first part of his life behind. Similarly, firstborn came to denote not priority in time but pre-eminence in rank” (*The Deity of Christ*).

In the chain of God’s purpose, predestination is followed by “calling” and to this calling those concerned respond by faith in Christ and this leads to justification or acquittal as Romans makes perfectly clear. Eternal life and future glory are impossible apart from the righteousness conferred by justification for God plans a universe where sin, death and all its consequences are entirely absent and therefore no sinner as such can have a part in it.

The final link in the chain of God’s plan is glorification, “those He justified He also glorified” (verse 30) and here is the wonderful climax. So great is Paul’s confidence in the Lord that he can describe a future event in a past tense as though it had already happened, and thus the great purpose comes to completion. Dr. C. K. Barrett’s comments here are worth repeating:

“Predestination is the most comfortable of all Christian doctrines, if men will accept it in its Biblical form, and not attempt to pry into it with questions which it does not set out to answer. It is not a ‘quantitative limitation of God’s action, but its qualitative definition’, the final statement of the truth that justification, and in the end, salvation also, are by grace alone and through faith alone” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 170, 171).

Here then we have the purpose of God's predestinating grace—the creation of a new race displaying the Creator's glory. The Apostle Paul now concludes this portion of the epistle and deals with the final triumph of the believer.

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He Who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us al--how will He not also . . . graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God Who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered’. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verses 31-39, N.I.V.).

In verse 31 the point to note is not are we on God's side, but is He on ours and assuredly He is, and so the only conclusion is if God is on our side who, or what, can be against us? The answer is nothing. The cost to God for our justification, salvation and final glorification is beyond our comprehension—“He that spared not His own Son”. There is surely here an allusion to Gen. xxii. 12 where Abraham does not spare the promised son, Isaac, and it is significant that the LXX here uses Paul's word ‘spared’ in verse 12. There now follows rhetorical questions. The answer to each can either be a statement of fact or a question as the RSV text and margin show. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? Will God (the Judge of all) who justifies us? Who can condemn us? Will Christ Who died for us and is now risen and at the right hand of God? Will the One Who suffered for us, bore our sins and endured the shameful death of the cross, will He condemn us? The answer is decidedly “NO” or all He has done is in vain. He too is interceding for us as the Holy Spirit is (verses 27 and 34). What a strong position we are in then! These two Persons of the Godhead constantly praying for us!

The Apostle now lists those who are our enemies and asks “Can these separate us from Christ?” The answer again is “Certainly not”. He refers to persecution and possibly this had already fallen on the Roman church. It was already dangerous to profess Christianity and he quotes Psa. xlv. 22, “we are counted as sheep for the slaughter”. Paul's reference to “principalities and powers” are evidently the evil spirits forces under the control of Satan mentioned in Eph. vi. with which our warfare is now concerned. Height and depth were technical terms in astrology and later appeared in Gnosticism. These spirit forces were believed to control the movements of the planets and the destinies of men. “In all these things we are more than conquerors” (literally super-conquerors). The Apostle concludes by saying that nothing in the realm of the whole universe can sever the children of God from him.

The chapter starts with “no condemnation” and ends with “no separation”. What a triumph for the believer! And all because of the great plan of God and redeeming grace! If only we could constantly remember these glorious truths even when pain and problems

are pressing down upon us, how much easier would be the pathway that leads to eternal glory!

No.17. ix. 1 - 12.
pp. 181 - 185

The closing words of Rom. viii. end the inner section of this epistle, which dealt with man in general, whether Jew or Gentile, in relation to Adam. Abraham and Israel as a nation were passed by. But that does not mean that the position of Israel with its close covenant ties with God had to ceased to count. This favoured nation had been in the forefront of God's purposes for His Kingdom on earth since the time of Abraham and that relationship had not yet been altered. The Apostle's answer to the question as to whether Israel had been cast off by God is perfectly clear. "God hath *not* cast away His people which He foreknew" (Rom. xi. 2), and any system of theology that demands that He had done so at this point must be completely wrong.

Not only this, but Paul's love for his brethren and his longing that they should be saved is evident from this new section of the epistle:

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel" (ix. 2-4, N.I.V.).

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved" (x. 1, N.I.V.).

Israel's attitude to the gospel, their place in God's scheme, God's elective purpose and the position of the believing remnant must be considered. The key thought of justification is not forgotten for the word righteousness occurs 12 times in chaps. ix.-xi. (ix. 30; xi. 31, 32). One might think that with the glorious conclusion to chapter viii., the theme of the epistle had been brought to an end. In fact there are some expositions of Romans that end with chapter viii.! But not so; the problem of Israel's unbelief and their attitude to the gospel is now dealt with. This new section of Romans is a divine commentary on what was happening in the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Those who do not seriously consider its testimony and receive it as truth, are bound to be defective in their knowledge of God's purposes.

Chapter ix. begins with sorrow, but the section ending with chapter xi. ends with song (xi. 33-36). The Apostle was racked with pain as he considered Israel's unbelief and rejection of the gospel and was willing to sacrifice himself for their good, as Moses of old was—"Yet, now if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exod. xxxii. 32).

"I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own

race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, Who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen” (Rom. ix. 1-5, N.I.V.).

Paul’s sorrow is expressed first of all, not in their fall, but in their heights of privilege bestowed on them by God and this made that fall all the more terrible. There were many nations before Israel existed, but the Lord passed them by and chose Israel as His firstborn and this, as we have seen, was linked with an inheritance and this was secured by eternal promises relating to the *seed* and to the *land*. “Israel is My Son, even My firstborn” (Exod. iv. 22) and as such was “above all the nations that are upon the earth” (Deut. xiv. 2). To them therefore pertained the promises first made by God to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

To Israel pertained the external evidence of God’s presence among them, the shekinah glory in the Tabernacle (Exod. xl. 34) and in the Temple (I Kings viii. 10-11). Not only these but all the covenants of Scripture with one exception belonged to Israel, the exception being the covenant with Noah and mankind. There is evidence for the singular here, the covenant referring to the law of Moses, but the plural is to be preferred for Ephesians ii. 12 uses the plural in defining Israel’s covenant privileges.

The Law with God’s standard of righteousness eclipsing any other human code of conduct was their possession and not only this but the service and worship of God and the divine ceremonial that prophetically looked forward to the Person and the work of Christ was expressed in their Temple at Jerusalem.

Theirs also were the promises, specially the Messianic promises, “the sure mercies of David” (Isa. lv. 3; Acts xiii. 23, 32-34) and the climax is reached in the Apostle’s last statement “of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came” (verse 5).

In Eph. ii. Paul again summarized the divine privileges of Israel by noting in contrast the position of the unsaved Gentile “that at that time ye 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. ii. 12).

With this wealth of blessing and privilege no wonder the Psalmist wrote concerning Israel:

“He (God) hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they (the nations) have not known them. Praise ye the Lord” (Psa. cxlvii. 20).

Something must be said about the words following the statement “as concerning the flesh Christ came”. The A.V. concludes the statement by saying “Christ Who is over all, God blessed for ever”, or the N.I.V. “Who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen”. However, some versions put a full stop after God and then finish with a doxology, “as concerning the flesh Christ came. God be blessed for ever!” Erasmus was one of the first to suggest this. What has to be decided is (1) is this latter translation

possible from the Greek and (2) does it fit the context? If this second rendering is admitted then the verse does not directly affirm the deity of Christ.

Charles Hodge states here:

(1) The relative 'who' must agree with the nearest antecedent. There is no other subject in the context sufficiently prominent to make a departure from this ordinary rule, in this case, even plausible. "Of Whom Christ came Who is", etc. Who is? Certainly Christ, for He alone is spoken of.

(2) The context requires this interpretation because, as Paul was speaking of Christ, it would be very unnatural thus suddenly to change the subject, and break out into a doxology to God it was the very object of the Apostle to set forth the great honour to the Jews of having Christ born among them and this of course would lead to his presenting the dignity of the Redeemer in the strongest light The uniform expression (for a doxology) is "blessed be God" and never "God be blessed". The word "blessed" always stands first and the word "God" after it with the article. Often as such cases occur in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, there is, it is believed, no case of contrary arrangement. (*Romans*, pp. 300, 301).

Professor F. F. Bruce writes:

"The former construction (i.e. of the A.V. and N.I.V.) is more in keeping with the general structure of the sentence (cp. 1:25) where the words 'Who is blessed for ever, Amen' are not an independent ascription of praise, but form the integral peroration of the sentence. It is further supported by the consideration that something is required to balance the phrase 'as concerning the flesh'. The Messiah, 'as concerning the flesh', that is with regard to His human descent—came of a long line of Israel ancestors but as regards His eternal being, 'He is God over all, blessed for ever'. A formal parallel to this antithesis appears in 1:3 where Christ is said to have been born a descendant of David 'according to the flesh', but installed as the Son of God with power by the dispensation of the Spirit."

Professor Bruce goes on to say that while Paul is not in the habit of calling Christ God in this direct way, yet for him Christ is the One *in Whom, through Whom and unto Whom* all things were created (Col. i. 16); in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii. 9). The title Lord is given to Christ by Paul as the equivalent of the Hebrew Yahweh (Jehovah); the way in which he applies Isa. xlv. 23 in Phil. ii. 10 indicates that, to him, the confession "Jesus Christ is Lord" means "Jesus Christ is Jehovah".

Moreover Paul does not hesitate to describe Christ as "our great God and our Saviour" in Titus ii. 13 and he was well aware that the writer of Hebrews in quoting Psa. xlv. applies the words "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" to Christ (Heb. i. 8).*

[* - Readers are referred to the author's booklet *The Lord Jesus Christ, God or only Man?*]

Coming back to Rom. ix. 5 there can be no doubt that these lines are not a doxology to God for that does not fit the train of thought. Rather they show how exalted Christ is, which fits the train of thought perfectly. Those who wish to take this further should consult *The Epistle to the Romans* by Sanday and Headlam, pp. 232-238.

Paul now proceeds to deal with the failure of Israel and he brings in the truth of election, not to decide who would be saved or who would be lost, but to show what individuals and nations God has chosen to work out His purpose for a kingdom on this earth. And who is there that can criticize or judge Him for so doing? The marvel is that He uses sinful and failing human beings at all. Only a God of infinite grace would do this.

First of all the word “Israel” must be correctly understood. Who constitute Israel? Some may answer “The physical descendants of Abraham”, but they would be wrong.

“It is not as though God’s Word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned’. In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring” (verses 6-8, N.I.V.).

Abraham had eight sons by Hagar, Keturah and Sarah. If physical descent constituted a claim then seven other nations might have disputed Israel’s rights, but the deciding factor was decided by the Sovereignty of God. Even sons born to Isaac do not share equal privileges. Esau and Jacob were both children of the same mother yet Esau is rejected and Jacob chosen.

“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand*, not of works but of Him that calleth; it was said unto her, ‘The elder shall serve the younger’.” (Rom. ix. 11, 12).

Not only this but from time to time outsiders have joined the Jews and accepted Judaism. In 800A.D. the ruler and many of the ruling classes of the Khazars, a people living near the Caspian Sea, joined Judaism. Even in Romans itself we have the distinction between the natural and spiritual seed brought forward:

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. ii. 28, 29).

The condition of the Jewish nation today is like the parable of the tares and true wheat. They are so similar that only an inerrant God can separate them without making any mistake. He surely will do this before His earthly kingdom becomes a reality. This means that while it is true that the false seed is among Israel, the true seed are there too, all known to the Lord and this makes anti-semitism a dangerous thing, remembering what God said to Abraham. “I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee” (Gen. xii. 3), for it is through the true seed coming through Isaac that constitutes the real Israel in God’s sight and it is through this channel, finally redeemed and saved, that His elective purpose works to bring in His earthly kingdom; election and the power of God guarantee that this finally will not fail.

No.18. ix. 13 - x. 11.
pp. 201 - 205

Election then dominates the context of Romans we are considering and again we stress that it is brought in here to guarantee the fulfillment of the great plan of God. The Lord conceives the plan and chooses what human agents He will use for carrying it out to completion. No one is in a position to say this is unreasonable or unjust. It is in this context that the example of Pharaoh is brought in. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart has always been a problem, but so many try to judge God without considering all the facts given in the O.T. and thus they make their own problems and denigrate God.

God Himself states the purpose of His dealings with Pharaoh, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you and that My Name might be proclaimed in all the earth" (Rom. ix. 17). See Exod.xv.14; Josh. ii. 10; ix. 9; and I Sam. iv. 8 for the effect on the nations of the plagues and the Exodus. That power was displayed in rescuing the people of God from the iron grip and cruel bondage of a vicious tyrant. But some will say, it was not just for God to punish Pharaoh seeing that He hardened Pharaoh's heart. How could Pharaoh respond and be obedient if God dealt with him in this way? But let us take account of the facts. Three words are used for 'hardening'.

Chazaq to brace up (13 occurrences).

Qashah make hard (2 occurrences).

Kabed become heavy (6 occurrences).

Three times the Lord threatened to do this: (Exod. iv. 21; vii. 3; xiv. 4), but held back till Pharaoh's actions made his attitude of rebellion quite clear. Four times Pharaoh hardened his own heart before the Lord's hardening (Exod. viii. 15, 19, 32; ix. 34, 35). The consequence was that the Lord in His sovereignty did not alter Pharaoh's resolve to oppose Him. He allowed the hardness to continue (x. 1; xi. 10; xiv. 8). Even the plagues had an element of mercy behind them, for every one was sent by God to shake and change this man's obstinacy and contempt (v. 2). Man of himself *deserves* nothing. If God deals with him it must be on the lines of mercy and grace and he is in no position to put God into the dock and judge Him for His actions.

"One of you will say of me, 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists His will?' But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath—prepared for destruction?" (Rom.ix.19-22, N.I.V.).

The Apostle will not allow any questioning of God's right to do what He wills with His own. Who fits any to destruction? Not God; they fitted themselves by their rebellious attitude of mind and actions that follow. It is absolutely wrong to imagine or

teach that God “endured with much longsuffering” vessels that in His own sovereign will He had Himself “fitted to destruction”. What God has done is with the object of showing His mercy towards those whom He calls whether Jews or Gentiles. The fact that, at the end of the Acts period God laid aside Israel in unbelief, was no more against His promises than the rejection of the ten tribes who were carried away into captivity by the Assyrians; for, although thousands were deported, yet a remnant returned to perpetuate the race, and it is this doctrine of the remnant that is so important to understand. If any reproached God for the smallness of the remnant, Paul says that such should be glad to think that a remnant had been spared at all, for, as Isaiah had said, the people had become like Sodom and Gomorrah and the Lord, but for His mercy, might have left them all to perish (verse 29).

The conclusion of this section of Romans is clear. No one is in a position to criticize God or His actions, denying the fact that He has a right to do what He wills with His own, for the whole world has been brought guilty before God (iii. 19) and so has no claim upon a holy God Who is Judge of all the earth. He is a God of mercy and grace and no sinner can be entitled to this.

Paul goes on to sum up:

“What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it, Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone’. As it is written, See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame” (Rom. ix. 30-33, N.I.V.).

The attitude to righteousness of these two classes, Gentiles and Jews, is made clear. The former accepted God’s verdict on them as being guilty sinners and then accepted His gracious provision of righteousness through Christ’s sacrificial work. The Jews on the other hand imagined that they could keep the law of Moses by their own efforts and attain to a standard of righteousness that God would accept. This might have been regarded as being blameless in the sight of men, but not before God. Even Paul could regard his pre-Christian life as being blameless (Phil. iii. 6), but he soon learned that his own righteousness was worthless.

The Apostle quotes from Isaiah and combines two verses. Isa. viii. 14 and xxviii. 16 whose common term is a stone laid by God. Isaiah foretells that the future Assyrian invasion will sweep over the land of Israel like the waters of a flood. The only safe place will be God Himself likened to a rock upon which they can stand safely. But those who do not trust the Lord will be swept by the flood against this rock and come to disaster. To them it will become “a stone of stumbling” and a “rock of offence”. Peter quotes the same references in I Pet. ii. 8 and also combines another, Psa. cxvii. 22. These two opposite effects have always followed the preaching concerning Christ and His redemptive work. Some believe and build on Him as a secure foundation for eternity; others reject, to them He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, as I.Cor.i.18,23,24 declares. Just as the sun both melts wax and hardens clay, so this twofold effect goes on wherever Christ and the gospel are faithfully preached. It was true

in the Acts period and explains Israel's tragic failure, because they sought to justify themselves by their own efforts and not by the way of faith in Christ. It seems unbelievable that a people chosen by the Lord and instructed by Him through the O.T. centuries by type and shadow, pointing forward to their Messiah, King and Saviour, should end in this way. They thus brought spiritual blindness, deafness, and hardness of heart upon themselves from which they as a nation are still suffering today. How wonderful to know that this is not the end of the story, for this very section of Romans looks to the future when at last they will believe and be saved and thus become the channel of God's blessing to the whole earth. But this will be by the way of faith, not works, which they refused when the preaching of the gospel of grace was carried out in the Acts period.

Chapter x. opens with the Apostle Paul's concern for his nation which he has expressed before:

“Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. x. 1-4, N.I.V.).

Many people today are like Israel described here, keen and active, but this is not the same as being ruled by the truth of God. How often we hear about a certain Christian, “but he is so zealous and sincere”, forgetting that it is possible to be zealous in the wrong thing.

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. xiv. 12).

Neither zeal or sincerity is enough in God's sight. This is where Israel stumbled and fell so badly. They had never learned the lesson that Paul the Pharisee had, namely, that Christ put an end to the law as a means of acquiring favour with God. “Christ is the *end* of the law” (verse 4). *Telos*, ‘end’ can mean either goal or termination. The Lord Jesus provides the very righteousness which God demands, making all human attempts to produce it superfluous and useless. The two ways of law and faith are illustrated by two quotations from the Pentateuch. The first one is from Lev. xviii. 5 “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them”. But it must be said straight away that these words do not teach that a man could obtain eternal life by his efforts to keep the law. The blessing on those who kept God's commandments resulted in prolong life and enjoyment in the land of promise. They would live long in the land “which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Exod. xx. 12).

The way of faith is illustrated by a quotation from Moses' farewell to Israel recorded in Deut. xxx. 11-14:

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to

heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”

So the Apostle Paul quotes these two references thus:

“Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: ‘The man who does these things will live by them’. But the righteousness that is by faith says: Do not say in your heart ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming. That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, ‘He that believes in Him will not be disappointed’.” (Romans x. 5-11, N.I.V.).

There is no need for Israel or any one else to reach heaven and bring Christ down. The Incarnation had already accomplished that. Nor was there any need to bring Christ from the dead, for His resurrection and ascension was an accomplished fact. The word of faith was so near that it was in their minds. They had only to exercise it and believe God’s testimony concerning Christ, confessing, proclaiming Him to be the One Lord, then this would result in their salvation. Note how the resurrection is an essential part of the gospel of grace (I Cor. xv. 3, 4). Too often it is forgotten by preachers who limit their gospel to Calvary. “If Christ be not risen from the dead your faith is also vain” (I.Cor.xv. 14). We do not proclaim a dead Christ but a risen Saviour, Who is the One Lord of the Bible, Old Testament and New, that is, Jehovah, the great almighty God. The Lord Jesus is assuredly “our great God and Saviour” (Titus ii. 13, R.S.V.), and all who put their trust in Him will never be confounded, that is, disappointed or “let down”.

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The Apostle Paul goes on to state that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile:

“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’.” (Rom. x. 12-13, N.I.V.).

All without distinction have sinned and all without distinction have the same Lord who will hear their call and pour out His rich blessing on them. The Apostle quotes exactly the LXX version of Joel ii. 32 and then, by constructing a chain of connecting links, shows why Israel failed to do this very thing. At the same time he emphasizes the limits of human responsibility. A righteous God does not expect the impossible.

“How then can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of Whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’.” (x. 14-15, N.I.V.).

These queries are really self-evident. Men will only call for salvation upon one whom they believe or trust. And to do this, someone must make Christ known to them and these come not of their own choice or authority, but because they have been sent by the Lord, so the whole process begins and ends with Him. Paul now shows from the Word of God that He did not fail to send out His preachers.

“It is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news”,

and here he quotes from Isa. lii. 7. How was it then that Israel did not believe, for they had the message first, before the Gentiles? This was not unforeseen for this very context deals with the small response from those who heard—“who has believed our message?” (Isa. liii. 1).

To a large extent the gracious message to Israel went unheeded and the opposite of faith reigned, namely, unbelief. How does faith originate? Many have asked this question again and again. There is only one answer:

“. . . . faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (x. 17).

Many seem to imagine that faith can be produced by will-power or by holy living. *It can only come by constantly listening to the word of Him Who is the Truth* (John xiv. 6). Then it becomes the most reasonable thing to believe Him Who cannot lie or mislead. Christians who keep their Bibles closed are never likely to have big faith!

In Paul’s day some may have imagined that the people of Israel did not all *hear* the message.

“But I ask, did they not hear? Of course they did. Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Again I ask, did not Israel understand? First, Moses says, ‘I will make you envious by those who are not a nation. I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding’. And Isaiah boldly says, ‘I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for Me’. But concerning Israel he says, ‘All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people’.” (x. 18-21, N.I.V.).

Yes, Israel had heard. Wherever there was a company of Israelites the gospel had been preached. Here Paul quotes Psa. xix. which deals with the witness of God’s creation to the world. The point here is that wherever there were Jews, there the good news had been proclaimed. Nor could it be said that Israel did not understand. Their root trouble was they would not obey. They showed envy and jealousy when the Gentiles accepted the message but they would not believe it themselves. This fulfilled the word of the prophets and here the Song of Moses is quoted (Deut. xxxii.) where the ingratitude of Israel is described, and then God says:

“I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation” (Deut. xxxii. 21).

So we see that unbelieving and disobedient Israel will be put to shame by believing Gentiles who had nothing like the privileges of Israel. All through the Acts period, the record shows that God’s hands were extended in blessing and forgiveness to Israel who had just committed their climax sin in murdering their King, Saviour and Messiah. The most important statement of Peter (Acts iii. 19-26) should be carefully considered here. In spite of this, Israel still refused to respond. They were indeed a disobedient and contradicting people (verse 21).

Chapter xi. continues with God’s purpose for Israel in spite of their failure and unfaithfulness. We shall see that, although this failure is written all over Israel’s history, yet it was not *total failure*, for there was always a number, sometimes few, who responded to the call of God. God always saw to it that there was a faithful remnant in Israel, so that He was never without a witness in the nation.

On the surface one might think that with all Israel’s unbelief and unreliability, God would cast the nation aside and find other means of carrying out His earthly kingdom purposes. But no, for chapter xi. commences:

“I ask then, did God reject His people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew” (Rom. xi. 1, 2, N.I.V.).

In fact in His foreknowledge He knew that this would happen and so He had provided for this very thing. God is never taken by surprise. He had not cast away His earthly people at this point any more than in earlier days when they failed Him. Yet there are a number who believe that Israel was cast off by God at the cross. In fact this view is very popular among evangelical expositors. How wrong they are! Such ideas cloud the mind and the purpose revealed in the Acts of the Apostles and is quite contrary to this definite statement in Rom. xi.

The Apostle Paul’s answer to the question is settled first of all by referring to himself. “I am”, he says, “a true Israelite”, and “God has not cast me off”, nor for that matter was this true of numbers of Jews who had responded to the Gospel after the resurrection and ascension. Later on in the chapter he is going to give the important statement concerning God and His dealings with men. In verse 29 we read “God’s gifts and His call are irrevocable”. That is to say, what He gives in grace in His plan, He never withdraws or changes His mind, and upon this rock of truth there must be real future of Israel (Psa.lxxxix.28-37), and in this context we shall be instructed how this is so.

In the days of Elijah, a time of deep national apostasy, there was a faithful remnant of 7,000 who refused to worship Baal. In the A.V. of Rom. xi. 2 “Wot ye not”, the word ‘wot’ is the archaic present tense of the verb ‘to wit’.

“Don’t you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your

altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me'. and what was God's answer to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal' (I Kings xix. 18). So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; If it were, grace would no longer be grace" (verses 2-6, N.I.V.).

God sees to it that He always has a witness and this is an act of sheer grace on His part. As for the rest of the unbelieving nation, they came under God's judicial penalty for their disobedience and in connection with this three O.T. scriptures are quoted:

"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day. And David says, 'May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and their backs be bent for ever'." (verses 8-10, N.I.V.).

The quotations are from Isa. xxix. 10, Deut. xxix. 4, and Psa. lxxix. 22 (LXX). When Israel made it perfectly clear that they were not going to believe and obey God's Word they then were disciplined by God and left in their darkened state. But one thing is perfectly clear. Israel did not fall so as to rise no more:

"Again I ask, did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgressions, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!" (verses 11 and 12, N.I.V.).

These verses give the Apostle's interpretation of the words from the Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii. 21) already quoted in x. 19. When Israel began to see that God's blessing was resting upon the despised Gentile and the nation's unique position was slipping away, it might have the effect of stirring them up to belief and response. It is important to note that this is the divine reason given for the admission of the far-off Gentile for blessing. It was not to form the church revealed in Ephesians and Colossians, but to wake up slumbering Israel to realize what they were losing. Paul's argument is that if through the failure of the chosen people of Israel great blessing has resulted for the Gentiles, how much more blessing will come when they are converted and at God's disposal again! It will be like resurrection life to a dead world! The Apostle uses the word *pleroma*, translated fullness. It means "full strength" or "complement".

He continues:

"If part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches" (Rom. x. 16, N.I.V.).

Paul uses two figures here. The former is an allusion to Numb. xv. 20. He regards the faithful Jewish remnant as a pledge of the final salvation of all Israel. The second is likened to a tree where the condition of the root vitally affects the branches and this leads Paul to develop his parable of the olive tree which has given such difficulty to expositors. One thing should be evident; it must be interpreted strictly with the context in view and any attempt to avoid this or go over its bound must be resisted, otherwise we shall only be misled.