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Victory Through Faith

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4, KJV is used unless otherwise stated).

As we begin our lesson, we should note that the definition of faith is given to us in Hebrews 11:1 "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This shows us that it takes faith to believe in God, and that he is pleased with those who exercise it. This is faith in the simplest form. But true Christian faith goes beyond this to a much deeper faith. We are to have faith in the rightness of the Divine plan as it pertains to ourselves individually, and to his people collectively. We must then progress to the certainty of absolute faith in God, and in his integrity, justice, love, wisdom, and power. This will lead us to becoming a mature Christian, and one with unwavering faith.

Reading Romans 1:17 from Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott, "For the righteousness of God by faith is revealed therein in order to faith." We see from this that he reveals his righteousness to us so that we will have faith in Him. So then, those justified by faith must continue to live by faith in the sure promises of God (Hebrews 10:38). We are to then walk not as the world does — only by sight — but by our "most holy faith" (Jude 20).

The Facets of Our Faith

There are certain facets of our faith that we would like to discuss in our lesson, these are: Assurance, Perseverance, Endurance, Gratitude, and Mutual Love. Gemstones commonly have facets cut into them in order to improve their appearance by allowing them to reflect light. "Let your light so shine amongst men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). 1 John 1:5 tells us that "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness." Light stands for truth, and for righteousness. Since in God there is no darkness at all, he has promised to guide us continually by his Spirit through his Word. To the child of God, there is expressed, "But ye are a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). It is their desire to show forth a faith and a trust in Him. Since he has "called us with a holy calling" (2 Timothy 1:9), we are the LORD's gemstones, and if faithful will develop a complete and perfect character likeness to him.

Faith is Assurance

Let us go back to the verse that was quoted earlier in our discussion as taken from Hebrews 11:1, concerning faith. Faith is a real substance, a mental substance so to speak, that stimulates and clarifies the mind. The essence of faith consists of receiving what God has revealed unto us and evolves as that trust in the God of the Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ whom he has sent deepens. It compels us to obedience and good works (John 1:12, James 2:14-26). Faith is also personal trust, apart from the good works in the Lord Jesus Christ, "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:5,23-25).

Faith is evidenced in prayer, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." Faith acts as

IN THIS ISSUE

Victory Through Faith	1
"To Us There is One God"	5
John Sigismund Zápolya	7
Courage for the Task Ahead	8
Water of Life	10
Jehovah	11
Free Book Offers	12

a working principle in life, and the uses of faith are illustrated in Paul's words in Hebrews. A wonderful key point to our salvation is shown in the words, "For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). We have much to be thankful for as shown in the words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Also, "If God be for us who can be against us" (Romans 8:31).

To help guard our faith, the Lord has given us "exceeding great and precious promises" in his word. (2 Peter 1:4) One of the most precious of these is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Another wonderful promise of our salvation is shown in the words, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard ... To whom God would make known what is the riches of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:23,27).

The members of the true Church are presently being selected, chiseled, and polished without the sound of a hammer-unknown to the world (1 Kings 6:7). Peter says, "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). This implies willing service and obedience, praise, and whatever is done to the glory of God. Therefore, with the substance and evidence of God's word let us walk in the "full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22).

Faith Calls for Perseverance

As we advance as Christians, we should recall life's experiences, including its joys and sorrows. We should then become stronger in the Lord, and in the power of his might by communion with our Lord Jesus, desiring to serve and "worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Paul wrote in Hebrews 10:23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: (for he is faithful that promised)." He was energized by the message of God's word, and by a relationship to God through Christ. We have the same favors of God, the same promises of God, and the same inspiring hopes that Jesus and the apostles had. Paul's inward man had the assurance of the LORD that the glories of the future would be proportionate to the trials faithfully endured. We should then hold "our confidence (in him) stedfast to the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

Our desire should be to serve him with our whole heart, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walketh about ... Whom resist stedfast in the faith. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:7-10). Those in the school of Christ can appreciate that the trials that are and will be upon them, are manifestations of divine favor. For this

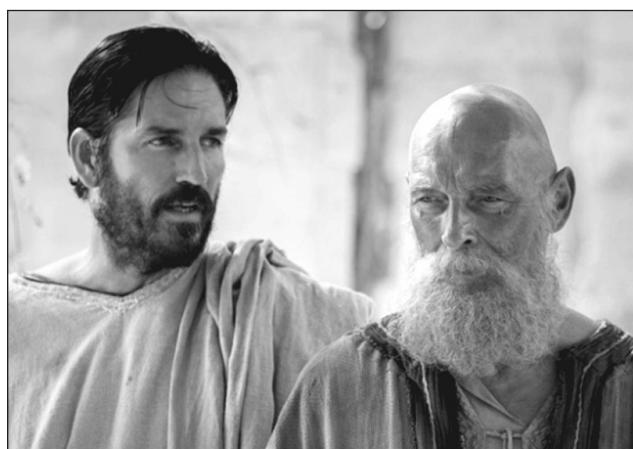
reason, the things of this world and its temptations are not for those who strive to walk in the Lord's footsteps (1 Corinthians 1:27,28, Luke 16:13). We should then be thankful that he has preserved us each day and has kept us from falling so far. "For without me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). We should continue to trust in the promises made to the "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37).

An important part of our perseverance has to do with having a proper attitude as we see expressed in, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14). This has to do with the realization that we must focus our energy upon the things that would draw us closer to God. This includes striving to keep our hearts and minds full of the precious gems found in God's holy word. "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8,9).

Any consideration of the importance of perseverance would not be complete without mentioning the role of the wonderful privilege of prayer. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

Faith is Endurance

The Apostle Paul exhorts us to look at the experiences of the "Heroes of Faith," as recorded for us in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, verses 4-29. We are to consider what they endured and how faithful and loyal they were to God. Even so we are told that "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40). However, we should through faith be inspired by their example to go on to the greatest amount of faithfulness in running our race. "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace



Paul the Apostle, who emphasized faith (together with Luke)

might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For our light affliction, which is for a moment, worketh for us a far more and exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:14-15,17). We are also to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1,2).

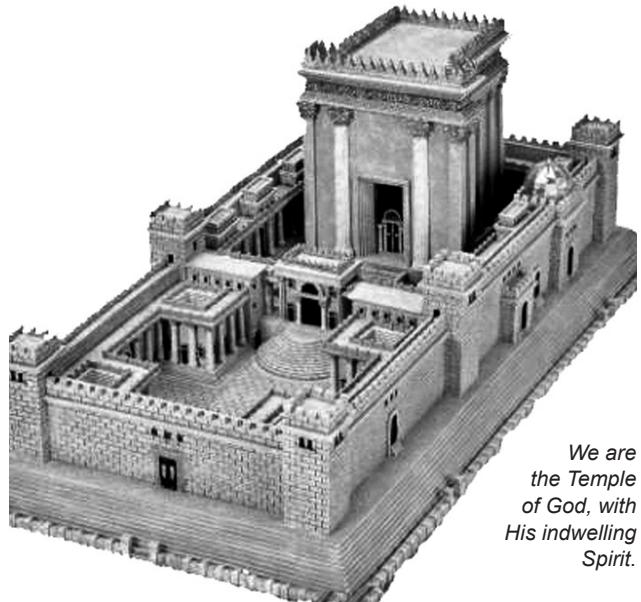
As the church will be the temple of my God, perfect on the heavenly plane, so each member be-gotten of the Holy Spirit as a new creature must realize that God is dwelling with them. He has promised, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God" (Revelation 3:12). Let us have the Holy Spirit ruling in our mortal bodies, and we will then also have "the peace of God" ruling there (Philippians 4:7). We are told of the importance of patiently enduring all the experiences in life that come our way (Hebrews 6:15, James 1:2-4).

We should always remember the example of our Lord Jesus, "For consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself unless ye become faint and weary in your minds" (Hebrews 12:3). Our mind can be a special battleground for each of us, due to the resistance of our flesh to sacrifice, and the old man that is in conflict with the new man or new mind. We should rejoice that our Lord Jesus has invited us to walk in his footsteps, and to endure the same experiences. To symbolically drink whatever the Father shall pour for us in our cup. When you have persecutions and hard experiences remember the words, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you ... Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11,12).

Faith Inspires Gratitude

We should be ever thankful to our Heavenly Father for we owe our all to him through his only begotten son (1 Corinthians 8:6). Remember the words, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought and paid for with a price, therefore glorify your God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). Our understanding of this shows us that our time, talent, influence, money, and all that we would consider precious, or in any degree valuable property belongs to the Lord, even our life itself.

Our Father cares for us, and he loves us dearly. Remember that the pure, lovely, and true things originated from the Father and came to us through the Lord Jesus. Our faith and trust in him should cause us to be ever mindful that we have our Lord there for help and encouragement, for comfort, consolation, guidance, and rest. "Come unto me all ye that labour



*We are
the Temple
of God, with
His indwelling
Spirit.*

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Jesus is our heavenly friend, and our comforter. His character was so well represented to us in the Bible that he is referred to as "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). What we know of our Lord has been revealed to us through our faith in him and through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Our depth of faith compels us as it did the Apostle Paul, "Be ye followers (imitators) of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Our gratitude to God should also show each day that we know we are privileged, as shown in the words as expressed in Psalm 116:12-14, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all of his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people."

As faithful children of God, the true Church is ever thankful to their father for his providential care and overruling in all aspects of their lives. They also realize through their eyes of faith that he has everything under control in full accord with his wonderful plan. We are reminded in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This should inspire each of us to strive to fulfill the vow that we have made concerning faithfulness unto death (Luke 9:23), seeing that we are to receive glory, honour and immortality after having faithfully trusted in him through his grace, we can then truly say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Faith Requires Mutual Love

Continuing our lesson, we note that faith progresses from its starting point to higher and higher levels. We have this expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "And now abideth faith hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." We are reminded of

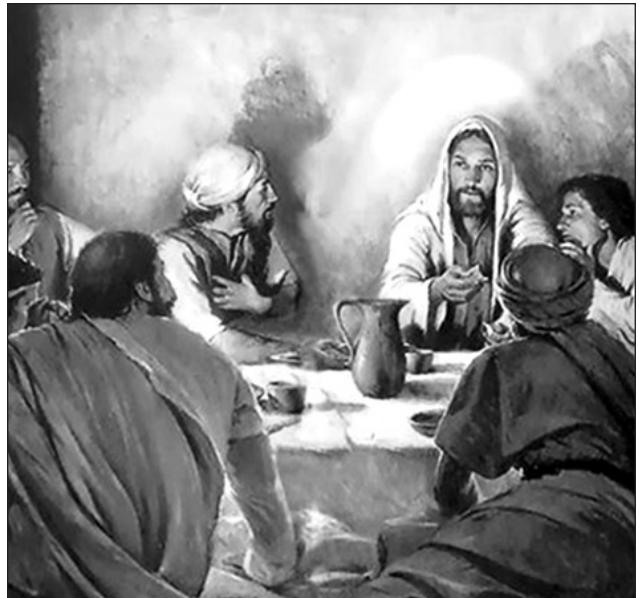
the scripture in which the Apostle Paul put forth a beautiful discourse on the subject of love. “Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity (love) envieth not; charity (love) vaunteth not itself (doing things for others and not for self), is not puffed up” (1 Corinthians 13:4). He further pointed out to us that love “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things. Charity (love) never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:6-8).

How important is charity/love? We are told in Romans 10:13, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Also, in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” This shows to us what our disposition should be like each day, and how careful we should be by “Bringing into captivity every thought” (2 Corinthians 2:10). We should strive as much as possible to keep our hearts full of love, and if we do this there will be no room for evil thinking toward others. Paul tells us that heart loyalty to God requires effort, “Be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men” (Titus 3:8). So we see that love is our first duty, and continual duty, and that it will be the culmination of our duty. We must then in our hearts and minds come to the realization to “Let brotherly love continue” (Hebrews 13:1).

If we have faith in God, we will want to conform to his desire and his will for us that our hearts may become rich in hope, faith, and love. When we are enriched in these things it leads us to the realization that we should be loving, kind, and considerate towards all, especially to those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). Knowing that “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). “I have loved thee with everlasting love: and therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee (or I have extended my loving kindness unto you)” (Jeremiah 31:3). It is the love of God, and the love of Christ which will then bind us together with his word of truth, and with each other. We should then desire to put into practice Proverbs 17:17, “A friend loveth at all times.”

We recall the words from Ephesians 4:5, There is one body, one hope, one faith, and one baptism.” Our verse from 1 Corinthians 13:13 also follows this order, beginning with faith and ending with charity or love. This shows us that every aspect of being pleasing to God must involve love.

This development of a loving heart based upon our faith in God, and in his dear son, is shown in the words of our Lord and Master, Jesus: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37-39). “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34,35).



Jesus exhorting his disciples to “love one another”

Obtaining the Prize

In 1 Corinthians 3:24 we are told “So run that you may obtain (the prize).” Brethren remember that this is made possible by the conquering power of God. It involves a faith that in all conditions can look up to the Lord with absolute confidence in his goodness and faithfulness, and to realize that eventually “all things will work together for good” to us. (Romans 8:28) We can then through faith, declare, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

We then need to continue to be submissive to the Master and strive to faithfully continue to put our faith and trust in him. “Gather my saints together unto me” (Psalm 50:5), (my covenant keeping sacrificers who endured, and as diamonds when tried they have been found to be firm). Through patient endurance they have developed the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit, the qualities (facets) of faith and character necessary to be set in gold as the true Israel, the saints of God (Ephesians 5:9,10). Who having faithfully passed the tests, gain the prize of glory, honour, and immortality, having reached the mark of perfect love (Mark 12:30).

Only those who suffer with the Lord (do all things) sacrificially as members of his body will be granted a share with him in glory as his “joint-heirs” as members of the great prophet, priest, king, mediator, and judge of the world (Romans 8:17). The members of his body will all soon be raised up and become sharers in his resurrection following their advocate who; when he ascended on high, appeared for the church the household of faith as their high priest. The Lord brings them to himself to become partakers in his glories, having been faithful unto death they will be heirs to the heavenly inheritance, having been more than overcomers (Revelation 3:21), and will help to fulfill the petition of our Lord’s prayer. “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

“To Us There is One God”

“For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him”

(1 Corinthians 8:5-6 RVIC).

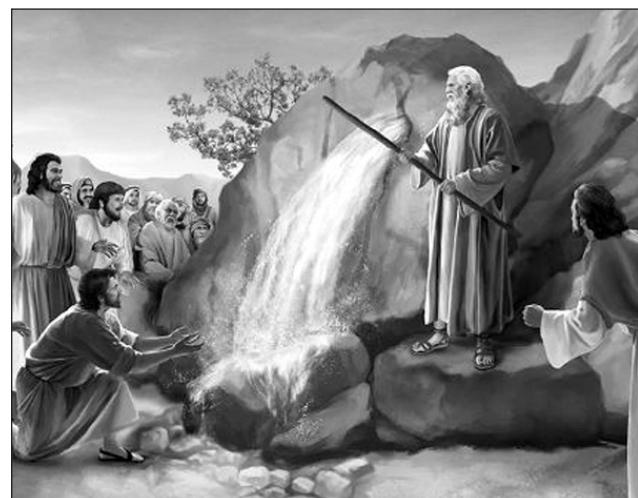
How clearly the Apostle Paul sets out the position of Jehovah as the “**one God, the Father, of whom are all things.**” Throughout history there have been many who proclaimed, or were proclaimed as gods, but the Heavenly Father was the mighty one over all other mighty ones, the one God over all. None others are mighty or great, save as they receive their greatness, as well as their existence, from Him.

In the Prayer of Moses, the man of God brings out the position of Jehovah. “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalms 90:1-2 NASB). Moses was instructed to tell the Israelites to fear (reverence) Jehovah. “Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ASV).

The name for God is first introduced in the bible in Genesis. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1 ASV). The word translated God is the Hebrew word elohiyim meaning “gods” in the ordinary sense but also of the supreme “God.” It often highlights God as the creator throughout the first three chapters of Genesis.

Yahweh (Ye’HOVAH)

The second name that is used for God in the scripture is the word Yahweh/Ye’HOVAH (Jehovah in English) and is found 6521 times in the Bible. It has the meaning of “the existing One” and is the proper name of the one true God. It is first recorded



Moses, Leader of Israel

in Genesis 2:4, “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven” (ASV). In Genesis alone it is recorded 165 times in 143 verses. The phrase “Jehovah God” is used 532 times in the Old Testament so as to distinguish it from the other gods or mighty men.

Almighty

It is interesting that the first time the word Almighty (Hebrew shadday) is used by Jehovah was when speaking to Abram when he was ninety years old. He instructs Abram to walk with Him and to be perfect and he would make a covenant with him. “As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee” (Genesis 17:4-7 ASV).

The next time that Almighty is used to describe God was when Isaac, after instructing Jacob not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan gave him the following message “And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a company of peoples; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham” (Genesis 28:3-4 ASV). Again Jehovah used this term when he blessed Jacob and changed his name to Israel.

There is an interesting verse in Exodus chapter six “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them” (Exodus 6:2-3 ASV). This seems a strange statement as Abraham certainly knew the name Jehovah and he used it often. There are more than twenty times the word is used just in the 24th Chapter. The thought here seems to be that He would now reveal Himself as Jehovah in a new and powerful way. The Israelites had been in Egypt for over 400 years. The ways of the Egyptians had influenced their religious thoughts, they had been slaves and treated badly. Many no doubt thought that Jehovah had abandoned them.

We are given a clue to the state of their understanding back in chapter three. “And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exodus 3:13-15 ASV). Jehovah was now going to demonstrate His power to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt He had made a covenant and was about to fulfil it by freeing the Israelites from Egypt and bringing them into the Promised Land.

In Exodus chapter six Jehovah uses the personal pronoun “I” twenty-five times to explain to Moses who He is, what He has done and what He will accomplish. “I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments” (Exodus 6:5-6 ASV). The Israelites were going to see first-hand the awesome power of Jehovah as He proved that He was the God Almighty and that Pharaoh and all of his priests could not prevail.

Jehovah had Moses and Aaron lead the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, a journey that would take forty years. During the journey they would not only see the awesome power of Jehovah, but Moses would give them the law from Jehovah, the were to build the Tabernacle as the centre piece to their worship and to learn more about Jehovah that their patriarchs had worshipped. Their food and water were miraculously provided along with the fact that their clothes did not wear out and yet on reaching the promised land all but two of the spies slandered the land resulting in all the men save Joshua and Caleb dying while wandering the desert before they were allowed to enter the promised land.

Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets and writers gave glimpses into the character and purpose of Jehovah, but it was not until the coming of Christ that His nature and plans were revealed through His only begotten Son. Previously the Jews had seen Him through many miracles that He had shown them through the centuries, but in many ways, He was still a mystery to them. However, they were influenced by the nations around them who had idols so that they had something that they could touch and see. On many occasions Jehovah had demonstrated that these inanimate objects had no actual power. One



Elijah at the cave in Horeb, after confronting the priests of Baal

example is with Baal, “Then they took the ox which was given them, and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, “O Baal, answer us.” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.” So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them” They could not get Baal to respond, Elijah then asked them to totally wet the altar that he had made to Jehovah “Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God” (1 Kings 18:26-28, 38-39 ASV).

With the coming of Christ, the believers were able to get a much greater understanding of the Jehovah that they worshipped. They were being shown a Heavenly Father that had such an intimate knowledge of each of the human family that “the very hairs on your head are numbered” (Matt 10:29 NASB). Christ spoke of the relationship that he had with the Father “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matthew 11:27 NASB). Christ taught His disciples to pray “Our Father hallowed be your name.” Apostle Paul in both Romans and Galatians shows that those who accept Christ as their redeemer are no longer under the bondage of fear but have been adopted as children, giving them the privilege of calling Jehovah “Abba Father.”

Christ also demonstrated the attributes of his Heavenly Father through his actions and words. Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I

been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:8-9 NASB). The beginning of the book to the Hebrews makes the following statement "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

And he is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature and upholds all things by the word of his power. When he had made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1-3 NASB),

What a privilege we have of not only knowing God's name, "Jehovah," but because of Christ's sacrifice becoming adopted by God and allowed to address Him as "Abba Father." *(Please see "Jehovah," bottom, page 11)*

John Sigismund Zápolya

History's only Anti-Trinitarian King, 1540-1571

JOHN SIGISMUND was the King of Hungary from 1556-1570. He always seemed to have a deep interest in God and instigated many theological debates during his early reign, due to the emerging reformation. Because of what he was learning he converted to Lutheranism in 1562, leaving behind the Catholic Church.

In 1564 he embraced Calvinism; however, about 5 years later he accepted the Arian views of his court Physician, Giorgio Biandrata, and became the only monarch to deny the false doctrine of the Trinity.

It was during these Theological debates on the Trinity between the Lutherans and Calvinists that he denied the Trinity. Some of the credit also goes to a preacher called Francis David who taught in Transylvania, his oratory against the Trinity at one of these debates organised by King John Sigismund influenced him to issue the Edict of Torda. According to this edict, any religious congregation in his domain "shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve. Therefore none of the superintendents or others shall abuse the preachers, no one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone." The King also went on to proclaim religious freedom in his realm, saying that "faith is the gift of God and this comes from hearing, which hearing is by the word of God."

This policy ensured that Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinists, eastern Orthodox, Armenian, Jewish, and Muslims could practice their faith openly and freely.

This King was way before his time, this edict (policy) was the first example in modern times of an explicit Government policy of religious Toleration. When you think of what was happening to other countries under the control of the Catholic Church!

However, as you can imagine, the Catholic church would not have been very happy with this freedom. Unfortunately John Sigismund died at the very early age of 31 (1571), he died without any heirs. His successor was

Stephen Ba'thory (a Roman Catholic), under his rule the realm soon descended into religious strife and the persecution of dissenters against the Catholic Church started again.

But the rule of John Sigismund was not in vain, it opened in the very near future (Late 1600s) the "Age of Reason." Yes, the attitude towards religious tolerance, stemming from his rule, spread beyond Hungary and Transylvania into Poland and beyond. It also came to the attention of many members of the educated class of Britain who were uncomfortable with strict religious creeds. Many prominent Britons adopted this anti-creedal attitude (including Isaac Newton), but they had to keep these views to themselves since Britain officially adhered to a creedal faith system.

These ideas passed over to the American colonies in the 1700s and played a major role in the refusal of the American founding fathers to adopt any official religious creed for the New American Nation. This in turn led to the new Truths (Light getting brighter) movement of the 1800s, preparing the way for the Seventh Messenger to the Churches as described in the book of Revelation.



John Sigismund Zápolya

Courage for the Task Ahead

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9 NASB).

Joshua had a mammoth task ahead, he had to lead the Jews into the promised land. In Numbers 26:51 it is recorded, “These are those who were numbered of the sons of Israel, 601,730” (NASB). Numbers 1:46 and Numbers 2:32 show that this number refers to the men only, meaning that there would have been approximately two and half million people counting women and children.

The report from the spies may have still been in the minds of some of the people, even after 40 years in the wilderness. “We went into the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak (men of great size) there” (Numbers 13:27-28 NASB). It is not hard to imagine that those who were about to enter the promised land would have experienced fear or anxiety for the task ahead, while others would have had courage to face the task at hand.

Fear is the response to a danger that is currently detected in the immediate, present moment of time.

Anxiety refers to the anticipation of some potential threat that may, or may not, happen in the future.

Courage is the mental or moral strength to venture, to persevere, to withstand danger, fear or difficulties.

Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote “Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.”

Joshua was appointed by Jehovah to become Moses' right-hand man and through his mentoring to become the leader of Israel at his death. The appointment is recorded in Numbers “So the LORD said to Moses,

‘Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him’ (Numbers 27:18-20 NASB). The thought of replacing Moses and taking responsibility for this rebellious and unbelieving people must have at times filled him with trepidation.

Joshua was one of the two spies that came back with a good report of the promised land along with Caleb, he still knew that the enemy territory was full of well-fortified cities with well-armed soldiers and chariots, while he had a nation that had no battle experience and no chariots.

Joshua knew there was only one way that they could succeed and that was by following through with their statement at the time of their return “The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. ‘If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us--a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them’ (Numbers 14:6-9 NASB).

Although these obstacles seemed insurmountable, Joshua remembered how, when it appeared that Pharaoh's army had them trapped and with nowhere to go, God fought for His people by parting the water for them to cross on dry land, while burying the Egyptians and their chariots in the depths of the sea.

The Source of Courage

The source of Joshua's courage was his faith in Jehovah's promises “No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you” (Joshua 1:5 NASB). But with the promise also come responsibilities on Joshua's part. “Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go” (Joshua 1:7 NASB).

It is interesting that Jehovah did not give Joshua instructions of how this victory over the enemies that were entrenched in the promised land would be achieved. Success depended on Joshua's continual trust in the LORD and by following the commandments in His word. There was no way that Joshua could rely



Joshua, successor to Moses

in his own strength to win the battle, only his reliance on and obedience to Jehovah.

Joshua is Warned

Jehovah forcefully spelt out what Joshua must do to successfully bring the Israelites into the land that so long ago had been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Joshua 1:8 NASB). This required Joshua to not only become familiar with the law, but also to understand the law. He then had to carry out both the moral and the sacrificial requirement of the laws, only then would he be successful.

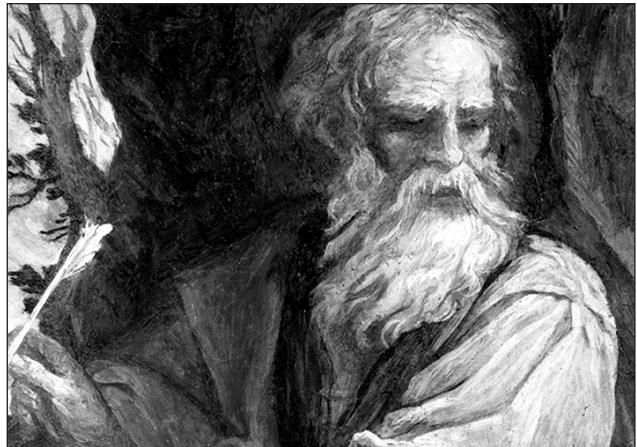
Strange Instructions

Many of the conquests would have seemed to be straight forward. They had already seen the hand of Jehovah in the battle with Pharaoh and their victory against overwhelming odds. However, the battle to overcome the well-fortified city of Jericho, the first city they had to subdue in the promised land, must have seemed quite perplexing to both Joshua and the Israelites. The instructions were “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also, seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead” (Joshua 6:2-5 NASB).

To be successful Joshua and the Israelites had to follow precisely Jehovah’s instructions. Success was theirs “So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword” (Joshua 6:20-21 NASB).

Lessons for Today

The account of Joshua’s courage under very difficult circumstance should inspire the followers of Christ. Paul writing to Timothy states “For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7 ASV). Our Heavenly Father has not given us a spirit of fear but one of power and that of a sound mind. The Apostle John reminds us



John the Apostle

“There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18 ASV).

Believers have the same outline for victory that Joshua received. They must read the words of life, come to an understanding of what their Heavenly Father’s plan is and then make the decision to carry it out to His glory. It is essential that they meditate on God’s word daily. There are five steps required to gain the knowledge to have courage and faith in Jehovah’s word.

(1) Reading the words that can bring life through Christ

(2) Believing the words that come through the faith; that they are the inspired words of Jehovah

(3) Coming to an understanding of what the words are telling us, this can only be achieved through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This includes proving the words of the teachers that the risen Christ has provided to feed his sheep.

(4) From this understanding; the words should provide direction in our lives to bring us closer to Christ and our Heavenly Father

(5) Obedience, not perfect obedience as we are still in the flesh, but of our new creature, our spiritual life should constantly be aiming for improvement in our obedience to Jehovah’s commandments.

Paul, writing to the Romans, states: “we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28 NASB). What a wonderful promise that God causes all things to work together for good. There is the requirement that we meditate on His words, acknowledging that we need His help to direct our lives in accordance with his will.

In Conclusion

The words of Isaiah should encourage each of Christ’s followers on the Narrow Way. “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10 NASB).

Water of Life

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Revelation 21:6 ASV).

The term “water of life” is used in the Bible to describe the Word of God. It is a very good description, because everywhere we can see how much pure water is appreciated. We have only to look around us today to see how mankind depends on water for progress and life. Here in Australia, as well as in all other countries, the problem of supplying pure water is becoming more difficult. Wherever man lives he must have water. While life is capable of being sustained without food for some considerable time, it is not possible without water. A few days at the most without water and death will result.

Water, then becomes a symbol of life. Thirst is another symbol indicating a desire — a craving. Physical thirst is said to be very painful; it continues and intensifies hourly until the very last breath. Water satisfies the demand of nature, and there is also a soul that thirsts, and the water of life alone can quench it, satisfy it.

Every ambition and desire is a thirst. In our everyday language we would say that an ambitious person thirsts after knowledge. Those who are drawn to Jesus by the Heavenly Father thirst after knowledge also, but it is a knowledge that will lead to everlasting life. All knowledge of this world's arrangements that one can store up in their mind will not lead to everlasting life. However, a greater understanding of and obedience to the Word of God and His will for His people during this present time will bring everlasting life.

The Truths in the Word of God

It seems that the water of life of which Jesus spoke was the truths mentioned in the Word of God. By the Word of God, however, we are not to understand the paper and ink with which the Bible is printed, but the thoughts and purposes of God conveyed to our minds by these means. The printed page may perish, but God's thoughts will never perish, nor will His purposes fail.

At first the Gospel was preached by word of mouth only, but it was none the less the power of God unto salvation to all who believed it. It was then the water of life to thirsty souls, just as much the Word of God when later it came to be expressed in printed form. When we speak of the Word of God and remember that our Lord described it as the “water of life,” we have in mind the Gospel of Christ wherein is revealed God's purposes and plans not only for our salvation now, but also for all mankind in due time.

This message of salvation is based on the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus, and it is the partak-

ing or embracing of this message that gives one the desire for greater understanding of the Plan of God.

How wonderful the words of our Lord must have appeared to the woman at the well. Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14 NASB). How wonderful also these words appear to us, especially after we have learned their real meaning. We are continually learning more and more from this water of life, appreciating it more each day we live, finding still greater refreshment in it as we continue to partake of it.

Consecration and Eternal Life

Those who have truly found Jesus and have made a full consecration of their hearts to God have found the happiness which the world is seeking in vain that pulls in other directions. They have found a heart satisfaction which is able to offset trials, sorrows, difficulties and disappointments, and are able to glory in the realization that their experiences are working to their advantage, proving them and preparing them for still greater riches by and by.

To gain eternal life, one must embrace in this life the teachings of God's Word respecting His plans and purposes: “This is eternal life, that they may know



Jesus with the Woman at the Well

You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3 NASB). Other Scriptures also refer to the value of the Word of God, such as John 6:67-69, "So Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God' " (NASB). Again in 1 Peter 1:23-25, the Apostle Peter speaks of believers, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER. And this is the word which was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:23-25 NASB). This passage indicates the great power behind the Word of God — so great that it is like the water of life — it can and does lead one to the position where he becomes begotten of the Spirit.

In Philippians 2:15,16 the statement of "holding forth the word of life" is spoken of those who have partaken of the water of life, the truths revealed in the Word of God, and have consecrated their lives to God. The noticeable thing about these words is the exhortation to pass this good news of the Word of God on to others, by "holding forth the word of life."

The water of life is always refreshing to the Lord's people. No matter how often we turn to the Word of God, it is always the same — it does not lose its refreshing taste. For instance, Psalms 23:2 is appropriate, "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters" (Psalms 23:2 NASB). And again, "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105). We can always turn to appropriate Scriptures to suit the occasion of our needs, for the Word of God is indeed the water of life to the Christian today, as in the past.

A River in the Kingdom Also

At the beginning of the Gospel Age our Lord gave out enough truth to satisfy the needs of His followers at that time. He told them that He had many things to



In the Kingdom, a River of Life will flow to the whole world.

tell them, but they could not bear them then. Now, at the end of the age, God's Word has been revealed to us, giving us a knowledge of His plans and purposes, not only for the Church during the present time, but also for the world of mankind in the Millennial Age.

It is interesting to note that in the Millennial Age God's Word is also spoken of as the water of life. "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1 ESV). "Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1-2 NASB). What a privilege it is for those who make their election sure, as shown later the same chapter, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Revelation 22:17 NASB).

So, whether it is now or in the age to come, salvation can come only through partaking of the water of life, of which Jehovah Himself is the fountain.

Jehovah

Sadly, most of the translations of the Bible do not use the word Jehovah, the proper name, the distinctive personal name of the Almighty. In the Old Testament the translators have used LORD instead of the proper name Jehovah. This has led to confusion amongst readers of the Bible and more especially to those hearing the words who cannot distinguish between LORD and lord. This confusion is best demonstrated by the verse in Psalms 110, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (KJV). If God's proper name is used, its meaning becomes much clearer: "Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (ASV).

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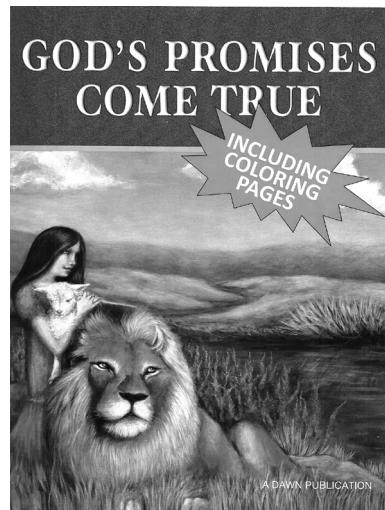
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On the Covenants, Mediator, Ransom, Sin
Offering and Atonement.

This book was published by the Berean Bible Institute during the 1970's and set out the teachings from the Bible on topics which so eluded many in the Christian world. The insert in this edition of the Peoples Paper covers the next part of this 274-page book. For Brethren who would like to read more of the content it is available through the Berean Bible Institute's official webpage.

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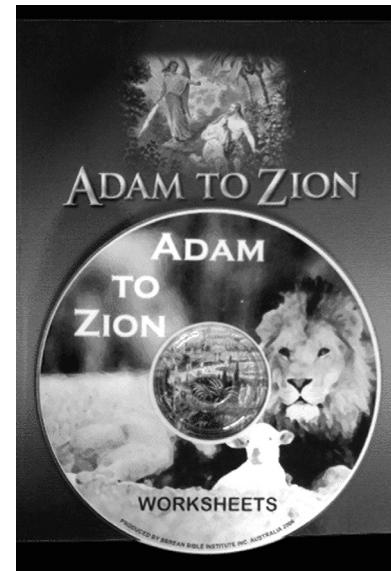
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Report of Memorial Services 2019

Our Lord's death was remembered by brethren throughout Australia on 18th April 2019. Brethren came together in Nambour, Brisbane, Morrisett, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. For those brethren that were unable to attend in person, provision was made for them to join online from across Australia as well as from the Philippines.

Several isolated brethren, both in Australia and overseas, took advantage of the free offer of the book "The Lord's Supper" and the Memorial DVD giving them a choice of 12 different services which they could use in their own homes.

The date for the Memorial in 2020 will be after 6:00 pm on Tuesday, the 7th April (14th Nisan).

The Bible Teachings (Part Four)

On the Covenants — Mediator — Ransom — Sin Offering — Atonement
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Scriptures Which Mention New Covenant

Let us now briefly refer to all the Scriptures which mention the New Covenant that we may note their full harmony with the foregoing.¹ We have already examined the one statement connected with our text and see that it applies to the closing of this age — a shaking of the nations and everything out of harmony with God, preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom, as the foundation of the New Covenant blessings to the world during the Millennium. There are just eight other texts in the New Testament which refer to the New Covenant:

Mediator of a Better Covenant

(1) “For this cause he is made Mediator of a better Covenant (not better than the Grace or Sarah Covenant, but better than the law Covenant), which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). Our lord Jesus had already begun the work necessary to His fulfilling this office of Mediator of the New Covenant. He had laid the foundation, but He had not yet accepted to Himself all the members the Father intended and foreknew and predestinated. We notice from the context that the contrast still is between the law Covenant and its Mediator Moses, and the New Covenant, superior because of its better Mediator, the Messiah. Moses could offer imperfect sacrifices, but Christ, by antitypical sacrifices of the bullock and goat (Himself and His Body), makes satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and prepares to mediate the New Covenant, which God has promised shall be His channel for blessing Israel and the world.

New Covenant with Natural Israel Only

(2) In the succeeding verse (8) the Apostle supports his argument by a quotation from the Old Testament promise to Israel of a New Covenant, saying, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” Clearly this does not refer to Spiritual Israel.

New Covenant Not for Spiritual Israel

(3) Neither does the next reference to the New Covenant, which is a part of the same quotation from Jeremiah 31:31, refer to Spiritual Israel — “Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers ... For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds and write them in

their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Hebrews 8:8-10).

New Covenant Operative Later

The days referred to in the above are “after” the days of this Gospel Age. The Apostle goes on to say, “And they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest, and I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” This is a description of what will take place during the Millennium, and not a description of what we see about us today. God has not yet put His laws into the hearts of the house of Israel, and they are not His people, as He states they will be at the proper time in the end of this age when the New Covenant becomes operative. Compare Acts 15:15.

Paul Taught Law Covenant Would Perish

(4) “In that he saith, a New Covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” Notice that the Apostle is not saying one word about the New Covenant being for the Church of Christ. His readers understood very well that they came in under the Sarah Covenant. But certain Judaizing teachers insisted that they must be under the Hagar Covenant, as well as under the Sarah Covenant. And this is what the Apostle is disputing; he is making clear that the (Hagar) law Covenant would not continue, but perish, and that, in God’s due time, He would provide a New Covenant to take its place with Israel.

Jews Must Be Redeemed from Dead Works of Old Law Covenant

(5) It was necessary that Jews be redeemed from the “dead works” of the Old Law Covenant and that a New one be made for them by Christ — Head and members. The Old one was sealed by the blood of bulls and goats, but the New one by “better sacrifices.” Antitypically the blood of the bullock has been offered, and soon that of the goat will be presented (Hebrews 9:14-25).

Better Sacrifices Require No Repetition

(6) “This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:16-18). The Apostle is arguing along

(1) Refer to “The Bible Teachings” Part 3.

general lines. He would have his hearers understand that when an acceptable sacrifice has been offered to God for sins, the transaction, is a closed one, and the sacrifice needs no repetition. He shows that this will be so in the future for the world. When the “better sacrifices,” sealing the New Covenant, shall have been offered to God by our Redeemer, and accepted by Him, it will mean the cancellation of all condemnation. On the strength of this work for the future the Apostle urges that we, the Body of Christ, whose sins have been atoned for by our Lord, the first sacrifice of the Day of Atonement (in the type the bullock), may count that our sins are completely cancelled, and will be remembered against us no more. “For by one offering he (Christ) hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”: all justified by faith, who proceed to full consecration and sanctification. If numbered amongst the sanctified, we may know that our sins are completely obliterated from the Divine record, so far as justice is concerned, and that we have entered upon a new record as New Creatures and will be held accountable only for trespasses against our covenant to the Lord, our vow — by which we became members of the Christ, the Seed of Abraham, and heirs of the great (Sarah) Covenant of Grace.

Paul Applies New Covenant to Israel

(7) “For this is my Covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the Gospel they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the elect, they are beloved for the fathers’ sake.” (Romans 11:27, 28). There is no room to doubt that the Apostle here is referring to Israel’s Covenant, the New Covenant, which God will make with them after this Gospel Day. The Apostle says the Covenant will be made when, or at the time that the Lord will “take away their sins.” That time has not yet come. Israel is still under divine condemnation, though we are now privileged to speak: comfortably unto them, and to assure them that the time for their deliverance is nigh, the time when the Mediator of the New Covenant will have taken on the last members of the spirit Body, the Gospel Church, “changed” by the power of the First Resurrection; the time when He will mediate that New Covenant, satisfy the demands of Divine justice on behalf of the world, as He already satisfied it on behalf of the Church.

Then He will become, as previously intended and declared, the great Mediator of the New Covenant between God and mankind in general — the Church being the exception, under the Covenant of Grace. Then will He begin His Millennial Kingdom: “For he must reign until he shall have put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Then all who drank of His “cup” the blood (sacrifice) of the New Covenant, as members of the Spiritual Seed, will reign with Him (Galatians 3:29).

Church Approaching Mount Zion

(8) “But ye are approached unto Mt. Zion ... to the New Jerusalem — and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant and to the blood of sprinkling” (Hebrews 12:24). Here spiritual Israel is pictured as

an army marching and the things at the farther end are seen and to be reached. Jesus reached the end of the way long ago, but the Church of Firstborns is not there yet. Jesus is the Mediator, but He has accepted the Church as His Bride, His Body, and awaits for her arrival. The picture shows that the New Law Covenant will be established as the old Law Covenant was, only on a higher plane and through a greater Mediator and by better sacrifices (Acts 3:23).

Work of Gospel Age Higher than New Covenant

Not one of these references to the New Covenant makes the slightest suggestion that it is applicable to the Church. A reference to the original prophecy from which the Apostle quotes, shows that it could not apply to the Church, for we there read that the Lord “will take away their stony hearts out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh.” This is exactly the Restitution Work which will begin with Israel and extend to all the families of the earth, but it is not at all the work of this Gospel Age, which is far higher. The Lord does not give the “little flock” hearts of flesh, but, justified by faith, allows them to sacrifice the flesh and begets them to a new nature, the glorious Seed of Abraham, through which all the families of the earth shall be blessed, by the inauguration of the New Covenant, sealed, made operative by the merit of the blood of Christ. (Z. 1909-27.)

ABRAHAM’S THREE WIVES

A correspondent objects to our suggestion that Keturah, Abraham’s third wife, represented the New Covenant, as his secondary wife, Hagar, represented the Law Covenant, and his primary wife, Sarah, represented the Covenant of Grace, “the New Jerusalem, the mother of us all,” the mother of the promised seed, Isaac, typical of Christ Jesus the Head and the Church His Body, as the Apostle declares in Galatians 3:29, 4:28.

Keturah a Wife of Abraham

The objection is that Keturah was not a wife, but a concubine or secondary wife, and that Abraham had several of these, according to Genesis 25:5,6, where we read, “Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines.” The claim further is that Abraham was already old at the time of Isaac’s birth, and that the probabilities are that he had several concubines while Sarah was still living.

Keturah Typical, Though Paul Does Not Mention Her

The Scripture record is clear to the effect that Abraham’s companion, fully recognised as his wife and joint-heir, was Sarah and that her son was specially recognised as Abraham’s heir. As for Hagar and Keturah, the record is similarly explicit — that they bore children to Abraham — the former with Sarah’s consent and as her special representative, the latter after Sarah’s death. Whether these two women be termed secondary wives or concubines matters nothing and we need not quibble over a point of no consequence. Evidently concubine is the name which preferably describes the relationship of these two

women to Abraham. And this was eminently proper, since it was evidently the Divine intention, as declared by the Apostle, that Abraham should be a type of the Almighty, Sarah a type of the Abrahamic Covenant, and her son Isaac a type of The Christ, the Messiah, the Prophet, Priest, Mediator, King, Judge, through whom the blessing of the Almighty should ultimately proceed to all the families of the earth. The Apostle carries out this figure by showing that Hagar, the bondwoman or concubine, represented the Law Covenant, and that her child Ishmael represented the Jewish people, born under that Law Covenant. The Apostle shows that they could not be both children of the bondwoman and children of the free woman. He shows that the Jews, in order to become united to Christ and members of the spiritual Isaac, the heir of all, must become dead to the Law Covenant and be married to Christ, begotten of the holy spirit; otherwise they could have neither part nor lot in the spiritual Seed of Abraham. The Apostle does not carry the figure on and declare that Keturah typified the New (Law) Covenant. We believe that this omission was of Divine intention, because the time for this particular feature of the Divine program to be clearly understood was not yet due.

Isaac and Church Do Not Have Two Mothers

One thing, however, can be clearly seen by all who have the eyes of their understanding open and their spiritual minds exercised, and that is that Isaac did not have two mothers. It was the same Sarah who from the first was recognised by Abraham as his mate and only full and proper wife, who for so long was barren, but who finally bore Isaac, the seed of promise. Similarly, the Sarah Covenant, which was barren for centuries, at our Lord's First Advent bore Him as the Antitypical Seed of Abraham.

Then also the Hagar or Law Covenant and her child, the Jewish nation, were "cast out." In the Apostle's figure of Gal.4:28 he represents the spirit-begotten, faithful overcomers of the Church, as newborn of the Antitypical Isaac, the Spiritual Seed of the Sarah Covenant. "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." In the picture he gives us in Gal.3:29 the Apostle presents the Church as the Bride of Isaac and his joint-heir — now betrothed and in the end of the age to be married to him, and to enter into his mother's tent — to enter into all the blessings and privileges that belong specially to this great Covenant which God made with Abraham and which He confirmed with an oath.

Hagar and Keturah, Like Old and New Covenants, Were Additions

The record in Gen.24:67 and 25:1 shows that after Sarah's death Abraham took Keturah as his wife — not, however, as taking the full place of Sarah as his joint-heir, as the word wife in olden times evidently signified. She was accepted as his companion in a secondary sense without disparagement to the first wife Sarah and her son Isaac, to whom Abraham "gave all that he had." We submit that Keturah to a very proper figure of the New (law) Covenant, as Hagar was of the old Law Covenant.

It is not the Oath-bound Covenant, which relates to the Spiritual Seed, which becomes heir of all. As the Law Covenant was no part of the original one, but merely an addition to it — so likewise the New Covenant In an addition to the Oath-bound Sarah Covenant. As the children of Keturah did not inherit the original promise, so neither will those who inherit the New Covenant be fellow heirs with those who inherit as members of Isaac or as his bride and joint-heir.

New Law Covenant Supersedes Old Law Covenant, Not Abrahamic

We therefore deny that it is possible for anybody to be logically, truthfully or Scripturally a child of two Covenants or two mothers at the same time. And on the other hand, we urge the reasonableness of the proposition that if the Law Covenant was represented as a mother and a concubine wife the New (Law) Covenant, to take its place, should also logically appear as a concubine wife. We also urge upon the attention of all that the word "New" implies, as the Apostle suggests, that another had become old and ready to vanish away. It was not the original Oath-bound Covenant which vanished away, but the Law Covenant. Hence the Law Covenant did not take the place of the original or Sarah Covenant, but is to take the place of the Old Law Covenant as a New (Law) Covenant under a new Mediator, superior to Moses (Acts 3:22, 23).

Jesus re Two Covenants or Mothers

The query is raised, was not our Lord the child or seed of two Covenants or two mothers, since we read that He was "born under the Law (Hagar) Covenant" and the Apostle teaches that He was the Seed of the original or Sarah Covenant?

We answer, No! If our Lord Jesus had kept the Law Covenant merely and had not consecrated His life, had not sacrificed it, He might thus have had eternal life as an earthly being. Then truly He might have claimed to be Abraham's seed and heir of all earthly things. But, then, He could not have been the promised seed; for the promised seed was to "bless all the families of the earth" — implying the resurrection of the dead. This blessing ability could be our Lord's not by keeping the law and becoming Hagar's wonderful son, but by sacrificing all of the earthly blessings proffered by the Hagar Covenant, accepting instead the spiritual privileges of the Sarah Covenant. Let us get clearly in mind that it was not the "man Jesus," but the "new creature" Jesus who became Heir of all and who liveth to bless Israel and all nations. Similarly, only such believers as have become New Creatures, begotten of the holy spirit, are members of the great Prophet, Priest, King, Mediator and Judge which God is now raising up as the Seed of Abraham to bless the world (Z. 1909-222).

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM AND ITS WORK

Faith in Divine Foreknowledge an Important Lesson

Divine foreknowledge is one of the great lessons which God will impress. God would have us know that every feature of His plan was premeditated, fore

arranged from before the foundation of the world. He would have us recognise the fact that He is working all things according to the counsel of His own will, according to fixed rules, and principles which are unchangeable. This lesson is one of the principal objects served by a Divine revelation; a secondary object is the blessing of a certain class in sympathetic accord with God by giving them in advance such information respecting Divine purposes as would enable them to rejoice therein and to co-operate therewith.

The Scroll in the Divine Hand

A beautiful word-picture of this Divine foreknowledge and prearrangement is given us in the fifth chapter of Revelation. There Jehovah, the Emperor of the Universe, is pictured upon the throne, and in His hand a written scroll, sealed with seven seals. That sealed scroll represents the Divine plan which God purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world, but which He had revealed to no one, no, not to the angels, neither to the Son (Matthew 24:36). In a word, all that has occurred since creation — the permission of sin, the fall, the Covenant with Abraham, the law Covenant with Israel, the coming of Jesus, the Pentecostal blessing, the gathering of members of the Church — all these things were foreknown to the Father and provided for. Additionally, that scroll contains a record of all that is happening now, and all that will occur throughout the Millennial Age, down to its very close — down to the time when every creature in heaven and in earth and under the earth shall ascribe, praise, honour, glory and dominion to Him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever (Revelation 5:13).

Lion of Judah the Worthy One

In the picture John notes a proclamation made throughout heaven and earth, inquiring for anyone worthy of the great honour of having this scroll of the Divine purpose committed to his care — to be opened, to be executed in harmony with the Divine purpose. He looked to see who the worthy one might be, but none was found worthy. Then he wept. It seemed to John too bad that God should have some great, wonderful purposes which might come to naught because no one was worthy to be the Divine executor in respect of the plan. But his tears were checked by the angel, who said, "Weep not: Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loosen the seven seals thereof." And John said, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne ... stood a Lamb, as it had been slain." And to the Lamb was given the scroll. Then all the angels of God worshipped the Lamb, saying, Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and dominion, and might, and power, etc.

JESUS REVEALS THE FATHER'S PLANS IN DUE SEASON

Applying the picture, we see the signification. Until our Lord was slain, until He had given His life as Man's

redemption price, there was no being in all the universe worthy to be the executor of the Divine purposes. By our Lord's loving obedience to the Father's will — even unto death, even the death of the cross — He proved Himself loyal to the last degree. Him the Father raised from the dead, and when He had ascended up on high the proclamation went forth, Let all the angels of God worship Him. He is the Lamb of God who was slain, and by His death redeemed a condemned world of mankind and merited the Father's confidence that to Him might be entrusted every feature of the Divine program. "He is worthy."

From that time on every feature of the program would be under His supervision and He would open the seals and see to the execution of every feature of God's gracious purposes. He had promised His Church that whatsoever thing the Father would reveal to Him, He, in turn, through the holy spirit and by His providences, would reveal to his faithful ones, to those walking in His footsteps of fall consecration

The Gospel Beforehand

St. Paul speaks of the Gospel's having been preached beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Here was a vague statement of the Divine purpose, relating to the blessing itself as an acorn would be related to an oak tree. Similarly, seed thoughts respecting coming blessings had previously been given, though with much less definiteness. Directly after the fall God had declared that the Seed of the woman should yet bruise the Serpent's head. In other words, He foretold that evil should not always triumph. Again, through the Prophet Enoch a seed-thought had been given in his prophecy, "Behold, the Lord cometh with His holy myriads, to execute judgment." But to Abraham the message was so much *more explicit as to make it worthy to be termed a part of the Gospel*, a part of the good tidings now more fully made known unto us who are in Christ Jesus.

God Reaffirms Promise

Abraham no doubt expected that Isaac, the son of promise, would be "the Seed," or the offspring, through whom the blessings would come; but when Isaac was grown and nothing wonderful was accomplished through him, God confirmed to him and subsequently to Jacob, his son, the same Abrahamic promise, assuring them that "the Seed" was still future, and implied that the promise meant a nation instead of an individual — a nation of Abraham's Seed, Abraham's children. And this feature of the Divine arrangement was made manifest at Jacob's death, when the blessing was passed on from him, not to only one of his children, but to all of them collectively. There He pronounced them a nation of twelve tribes and indicated that to them as a whole descended this Abrahamic promise — that they, as the Seed of Abraham, inherited the promise, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."