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The Riches of His Grace

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7 NASB).

Paul's letter to the Ephesians sets out many spiritual lessons. Chapter one contains the words "the riches of His grace."

Paul sets out the fact that every spiritual blessing comes from above. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him" (Ephesians 1:3-10 NASB).

Weymouth's translation states "It is in Him, and through the shedding of His blood, that we have our deliverance — the forgiveness of our offences — so abundant was God's grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Grace is that which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight, or causes favourable regard. Strong's dictionary for grace is of manner or act, especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life, including gratitude. Additional meanings of acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, gracious, joy liberality, pleasure, and thanks worthy are provided by scholars.

The Blessings

The blessings of redemption and forgiveness in him reach us and have influenced each of our hearts. Ephesians 1:8 says, "which he lavished on us." To think

that our Heavenly Father chose us in him before the foundation of the world, is something very precious indeed. To be in him, is to be in Christ and the letter to the Ephesians emphasizes this many times.

In verse 13 the pledge of the Holy Spirit is given. "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14 NASB). The Holy Spirit is a foretaste and is given in advance as security for the rest.

There is indeed a blessedness to be revealed in God's Plan of Salvation. As in his appointed time the first fruits will be followed by after fruits all under Christ, a summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. What rejoicing there will be in the Kingdom when complete in heaven and on earth.

Jeremiah Rankin wrote the hymn "God Be With You" in 1880 so that his church choir had something to sing as a parting hymn. This hymn is a favorite amongst brethren to close conventions and at bed-sides of the infirmed or departed loved ones.

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Some have had loss, some trials, some tests and some loneliness or distress, but we have God's arms unfailing around us. We have his counsel and word of truth daily and we have our brethren assisting in these times. God has been with us since we last met, and God will be with us till we meet again.

Current Conditions

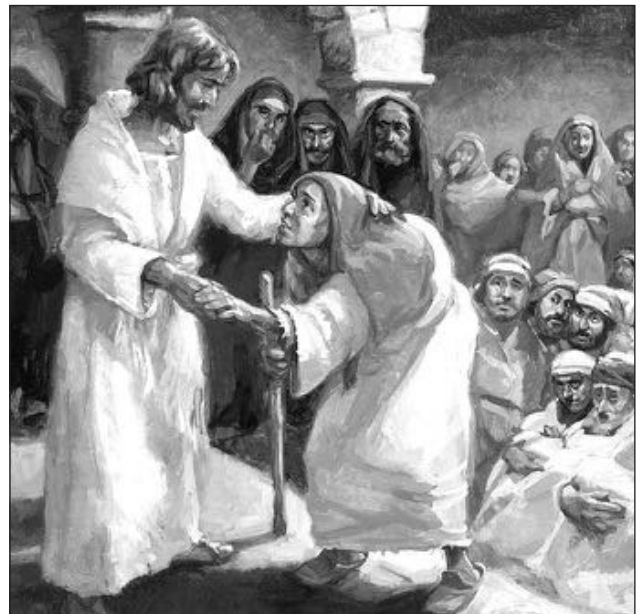
As we look out into the current world conditions, the effects of separation, people looking for strength and not finding it, we see fear and darkness. Yet, we who are in Christ can be people for God. The nation of Israel is an example of God's dealing with his people. "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts and said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. '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 41:8-10 NASB).

God instructed Moses to remind the people "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:4-6 NASB).

To be God's own possession is really a special gift. In the plan of God, the gospel age with the advent of Christ, the coming of the Messiah brought an opportunity for not just the Jew, but the Gentile to come into Christ, to become children of God. Peter, after speaking of the Jews who had rejected Christ brings out a wonderful promise.

"But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY" (1 Peter 2:9-10 NASB). We are a people for God's own possession. We are purchased with a price and that price was Christ's own blood.

Peter speaks of how a newborn yearns for their mother's milk, once they have tasted it and likens that to once "you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Peter 2:3). We certainly have tasted the kindness of the Lord and continue to partake of it. Our Heavenly Father is faithful and true. Every trial overcome by the people of God will be to His glory. Kindness and graciousness are attributes of our Lord Jesus which we receive from the Heavenly Father through Him in that we can be called, chosen and faithful.



Christ, our source of grace

In the New Testament many of the writers used the words "grace of God" as a greeting or a farewell. Three examples are:

- "Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. Grace be with you all" (Hebrews 13:24-25 NASB).
- "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen" (1 Corinthians 16:23-24 NASB).
- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5 NASB),

Christ as a Source of Grace

The Apostle John speaks of grace coming through Christ, but that it is ultimately part of God's redemptive plan. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14 NASB).

The Lord Jesus bestows bountiful blessing, instructions and demonstrates a perfect standard. Although Christians at this time do not have the pleasure of walking with Christ like those who were present during his first advent the Apostle Paul states, "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8 NASB).

The Apostle Peter when speaking of the call of the Heavenly Father writes "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each

one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Peter 1:17-22 NASB).

Fervent Love

Fellowship, favour, and growth in love is the work to which the Christian is called. "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7 NASB). Can we fit more of the grace of Christ in our lives? Are unnecessary distractions in our lives holding us back? The Apostle James gives advice through practical examples. "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (James 4:6-10 NASB).

Greater Grace

The passage mentions "He gives a greater grace" This will require a greater Spirit of Holiness, turning away from the spirit of the world. How can this be achieved? Paul wrote in Corinthians "Now He who

establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NASB). Without this gift of the Spirit we would not have the wisdom to develop the Christ like character we require. The start of the Christian walk is often the easy part, as the journey progresses the difficulties come. King David started his journey as a shepherd boy, anointed as King. The start in many ways was easy as Saul was still king, and David could still tend to his father's sheep. Once he was King the difficulties and temptations started. He wrote "O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise" (Psalms 51:15-17 NASB).

A Contrite Heart

The meaning of having a contrite heart can be described as to collapse, physically or mentally, the break as in a sore. There is a beautiful promise to those that have a contrite heart. "For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15 NASB). This brings about a wonderful healing, comfort and pardon which leads to peace, a new heart condition. In the letter to the Hebrews there is a wonderful promise "draw near with confidence." Paul explains why this is possible. "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16 NASB).

We receive grace and blessings through Christ and grow in the graces of God's Spirit to help us in our time of need. We are to develop compassion and sympathy when we see our brethren in times of need. We are also touched by the world's sufferings and their time of need. As this time is short and we long for the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. The only answer to the world's dilemma is divine intervention.

The World's Perspective

During a recent report marking 75 years since the end of World War 2, it was stated that the news of the war ending had brought much celebration, dancing in the streets and relief it was finally over. Yet when one woman was asked why she had not responded to the good news that the war was over she replied, "The war is never over, my two sons are not coming back!"



Jesus speaking with the woman of Samaria



The Beauty of God's Word

In this statement we see the hopelessness of the world, yet we may find grace to help in time of need.

The beauty of the truth of God's word, the Divine plan of the ages — the hope of the resurrection, restitution, and the Kingdom are all spiritual blessings. The natural blessings in our life are also gifts through which we may praise our Creator. The words of King Solomon tell of God making everything beautiful in its time. "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labour — it is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him" (Ecclesiastes 3:11-14 NASB).

The Blessings of Life

The blessings of life are remarkable, man's home on earth, so acutely designed through creation. The glories of the plant and animal kingdoms, higher and lower forms of life as well as the heavenly and earthly form separate and distinct. Paul states "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children'" (Acts 17:24-28 NASB).

Christian's Confidence

We can have confidence in the Lord to keep us in His love and His remarkable promises for the future.

It is the power of our Heavenly Father that sustains us. Timothy was told of God's power "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (2 Timothy 1:9 NASB). The Psalmist also says of the protection from God "For the LORD¹ God is a sun and shield; The LORD¹ gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalms 84:11 NASB).

This confidence should never be taken for granted. The opportunity for service, or to witness, to study, to meet with brethren, to develop Christian character and to bear fruitage is our responsibility. The Apostle Paul gives the following advice:

- "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB).

- "And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain — for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION" — giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited" (2 Corinthians 6:1-3 NASB).

The present Gospel age is for the selection of the Bride for Christ, the Divine plan will be wisdom to the believer as they grow into 'the deep things of God'. The scriptures outline that we will reap what we sow. Our Heavenly Father gives just the right experiences to his people. Paul speaking of his experience reminds the reader what he was told "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NASB).

(1) Strong's number H3068, *yeh-ho-vaw*. From H1961; (the) self-existent or external; Jehovah.

Who Were the Anabaptists?

“God resisteth the proud but giveth grace [undeserved kindness] to the humble” (James 4:6).

The scriptures clearly teach that the majority of mankind who are searching for the truth come from the humbler classes of society. So, it is no surprise that the Anabaptist Movement found most of its supporters from this class of people. This movement had its beginnings during the 15th Century in Western Europe around the same time as the Reformation. These people were tired of the false teachings from the Roman Catholic Church and thought that the Protestant reformation was not going fully in the right direction. They could be classed as the Radicals of the Protestant Reformation! For this they became the most persecuted religious group, both by the Protestants and Catholics. Just in Holland and Friesland (part of the Netherlands) alone, by the year 1546, at least 30,000 had been put to death!

What Caused all this Persecution?

The major cause was that the Anabaptists realized that the baptism of infants was not scriptural, and that all who had been baptized as infants should be re-baptized when they reached adulthood. They believed that only when a candidate was old enough to freely confess their faith in Christ they could request to be baptized. So, they held the belief that infant baptism was not valid, as infants are unable to make a conscious decision to be baptized.

Other Important Differences

They did not believe in returning evil or bearing arms, or holding civil office, resorting to law courts, or the taking of oaths, and their movement was largely a lay movement. They also believed in the separation of Church and State. A few of them also did not believe in the trinity, so it seems that they were the earliest pioneers of Unitarianism in Europe.

Johannes Campanus

He was considered to be one of the greatest scholars of his day. Besides rejecting the Trinity, he also objected to the doctrine of Transubstantiation. He believed that the bread and wine always remained as bread and wine, but they symbolically represent the flesh and blood of Christ. His beliefs upset many Protestant reformers, especially Luther, who called Johannes Campanus a blasphemer and an adversary. Others called for his execution. Campanus also believed that Jesus and his Father are two distinct persons and are one only in the same way as a husband and wife at marriage become one flesh. He also taught that the Father has authority over the Son.

What Did He Believe About the Holy Spirit?

He taught that it was the power of God, in which He (Jehovah) prepares and carries out all things through his active force — the Holy Spirit. He hoped that the false Church would reinstate true Christian teachings — he was mistaken! The Catholic Church Authorities arrested him and he spent the next 20 years in prison, passing away in the year 1575 (approximately). While others in the reformation were showing hatred to one another, even engaging in armed conflict, Anabaptists did not engage in this, but tried to show Christian love to all.

Dirk Willems

An Anabaptist called Dirk Willems was born in the Netherlands in the 1500s. He was re-baptized as a young man in Rotterdam, thus rejecting the false teaching of infant baptism practiced both by Catholic and Protestant churches (which many continue to this day). Remarkable events surround this young man. For this so-called crime, he was arrested in 1569. During his imprisonment he was able to escape across the frozen moat outside his prison. He was chased by a prison guard onto the thin ice of a frozen pond. Due to his light weight (as a result of his prison rations) he was able to cross safely. The guard following was not so lucky, falling through the ice. He called for help in the icy water. Because of his faith, Willems turned around and came back to save the



Dirk Willems, saving the guard

life of his pursuer. This act of *Agape* love (love based on principle) led to his recapture and ultimate death. “This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you. No one has love greater than this, that someone should surrender his life for his friends” (or enemies. John 15:12-13).

Willems did just this. He was convicted by seven Judges and ordered to be burned at the stake on May 16, 1569. However, not all Anabaptists were exemplary in their conduct. Some in the name of

religion committed crimes, and some of them ran into gross immorality. However, diligent study of the Bible enabled many of the Anabaptists, such as Campanus and others, to distinguish truth from error. Even though not all the conclusions reached by these truth seekers were in full harmony with the scriptures, these men humbly searched the scriptures and treasured the truths that they did learn.

1 Thessalonians 5:21, “but prove all things; hold fast that which is good [fine].”

To Not Be In Want

*“Psalms 23:1, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
(2) He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters” (NASB).*

Most Bible versions use the word “LORD” in capitals, but the word is Strong’s 3068, meaning Jehovah. Is not our Lord Jesus Christ our shepherd? For many Scriptures show that Jesus is our Good Shepherd (John 10:11). But there is no conflict of thought, for Jehovah is the Chief Shepherd, as we read: “Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young” (Isaiah 40:10,11 ASV).

In the great and notable Day of the Lord Jehovah, His right arm Jesus, shall come and rule for Him and Jesus has the rewards to give. In the above verses, when he comes it is not that his work has culminated, but that his work is before him.

We are his flock. “To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (John 19:3,4).



David as shepherd

I Shall Not Be In Want

The Lord’s true sheep can say from the heart, “I shall not be in want,” only if they heed the voice of the Chief Shepherd. When they do hearken to him, how bountifully all of their needs are supplied! No good thing will the Shepherd withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalms 34:11). “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” he has promised. (Hebrews 13:5). “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness,” is another blessed assurance of the Chief Shepherd which gives even the weakest of the sheep the comfort and encouragement they need for every difficulty of the way (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We experience “not to be in want” because Jehovah provides our needs, but what are these needs? He supplies the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, water, and security. He also provides rest from anxiety, fear, and want, because “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34). From a natural standpoint, sometimes only the bare necessities of life are provided. But certainly from a spiritual standpoint, we are supplied with abundance.

David was a shepherd caring for his father Jesse’s sheep. He well knew the responsibilities of a shepherd, as the sheep were their assets, their wealth, providing income for the family. In Australia, USA, etc., the pastures for sheep are broad and stretch for hundreds of acres or hectares where sheep are largely nurtured for their wool and meat. However, the conditions and setting of the Middle East in David’s time match the wording and illustrations used in this Psalm.

So, it is important to keep this in mind when considering the beauty of the Psalmist’s reference to green pastures. The pastures of the east are often barren wastelands, or deserts, which are rarely refreshed by rain. But an oasis can be found here and there, produced by a spring of water, or a little stream draining a ravine or a mountain side. There



He leads us by still waters.

the grass is green, luscious, delicate, toothsome, and so nourishing.

The trained shepherd knows where in the desert lands such green pastures can be found, and the sheep which follow the leadings of the shepherds are always assured of an abundance of food. It does not matter to them how vast and barren is the wilderness with which they are surrounded. For the shepherd always knows their needs and leads them to where these are bountifully supplied.

What meaningful and important lessons are in this for the “sheep” of the Lord’s pastures! We are all surrounded by a wilderness of sin and selfishness, barren of spiritual nourishment which is so vital to new creatures in Christ Jesus. Certain forms of life can survive in the desert, so the worldly-minded find the weeds of worldly pleasure that give them some degree of satisfaction. But the gold and treasure, the pomp and beauty, as well as all the various social amenities of the world, are a barren wilderness to the Lord’s sheep. For in them they find no soul-satisfying portion. Jesus said to these, “I have chosen you out of the world,” and in following this call they are led to green pastures of spiritual nourishment and joy which satisfies their longings as nothing else would do (John 15:19).

He Maketh Me to Lie Down

“He maketh me to lie down” is a beautiful suggestion of rest in the Lord. It does not imply indifference or inactivity, but contentment based upon the assurance that in following the Good Shepherd we have nothing to fear, that all our needs are supplied abundantly according to the riches of his grace. It is a symbol of that rest of faith into which it is the privilege of all consecrated to enter and there in abide.

The expression, “As sheep having no shepherd,” was first used by Moses concerning Israel when he asked God to appoint someone to take his place as leader (Numbers 27:17). Joshua was appointed to be

Moses’ successor, and Jesus, the antitypical Joshua, then came to be the true shepherd of Israel.

The Apostle Paul explains that the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua failed to enter into the rest that could have been theirs had they believed (Hebrews 4:6,8). The Israelites lacked the necessary faith in God and in their appointed leader, Joshua. Lacking faith, they could not be content and really at rest. They feared their enemies, were fearful of their food supply, and on occasions feared one another. Because of their lack of faith in God’s arrangements, they did not conform to them. This exposed them to many evils. That which they feared often came upon them because of their unbelief.

This should serve as a valuable object lesson to us. Jesus the antitypical Joshua has been appointed as our “Good Shepherd,” our Leader, and if our faith can lay hold firmly upon all the assurances of divine grace given to us in His word, we should be well and will truly have rest of both heart and mind. But all the reassuring promises of God, the Chief Good Shepherd, are conditional upon our following the voice of Jesus our Good Shepherd.

“To lie down” in green pastures also implies the thought of being satisfied. How well satisfied should all the Lord’s people be today! Surely, he has provided so abundantly for our spiritual nourishment. The truth is our food, the green pastures to which our returned Lord as the Good Shepherd has led us in these closing days of the Gospel Age. How wonderfully satisfying we have found that truth to be.

Sheep are ruminating animals, they chew a second time what they swallow, i.e. they chew the cud. Sheep ruminating in a field is like meditating or pondering and taking in of the harvest message. We digest it, but it stays in our hearts and minds, and we meditate on the Divine Plan when we go to bed at night (Psalms 119:87).

Why The Truth Satisfies

There is no danger of the truth failing to satisfy our hungering after righteousness if we continue to consider it in comparison with the weeds and thistles of human tradition upon which so many try to feed. For it is indeed like a green pasture in the midst of a barren desert. Sheep should never be dissatisfied with the luscious grazing to which the shepherds lead them.

What a wilderness some of us were in before we were led to the truth! Having so many questions for which we had no answers — like a true faith in God, in His Word, in His plan, and our place in that very plan. These very questions are still asked by wanderers in the wilderness.

But the time came when we heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, the voice of the truth. We followed it and it led us to green pastures of satisfaction. All our questions were answered, and we could feed

constantly upon all the gracious promises of God that are centered in Jesus Christ, that nourish and strengthen us according to our daily needs. Surely, we should be satisfied!

There may be a tendency at times to forget the barrenness of the wilderness from which we were delivered. Satisfied with answers to all the vital questions which troubled us, we may after a while wander out to the edge of the green pastures and cast our eyes around for some other food. Or we may imagine that the truly rich and soul-satisfying food consists of speculation and hair-splitting. But brethren, we cannot live and prosper spiritually on speculation, guesses, and unproved theories. Such things can be entertained for a while, but inevitably leave the Lord's sheep with an aching void in their hearts. Nothing but the plan of God, and all the rich promises associated with that plan, can continue to satisfy. In no other pastures can the Lord's sheep "lie down" in contentment, conscious that they have been well fed with the spiritual food best suited to their needs.

Green Pastures

The sheep are so dependent upon the goodness and wisdom of the shepherd in leading them to good pasture. There is significance in the fact that the pastures to which the Lord Jesus leads his sheep are "green." Green grass often turns brown and dry, but not so with the pastures the Lord provides. They are always fresh and green, luscious, delicate, and toothsome. So it is with the truth to those who learn to know and appreciate its value. It is as new every morning and fresh every night. This is because it is God's truth and, like Him, it abides forever.

Some may say, "Well, I learned that 25 years ago," and with that thought, that it is about time we had something new. Possibly their spiritual appetites have been impaired, probably by mixing food from other sources with that which the Lord provides in the green pastures of His Word and plan. With natural man, when one's stomach becomes upset by poisons or wrong combinations of food, then even pure wholesome food loses its appeal. So it is with new creatures. There is a danger in feeding upon food other than the pure doctrines of the Divine Plan, as we may become poisoned to the extent that the simple truths of the Gospel will no longer appeal to us. For a time we may imagine we have found something better than the Lord provided, but sooner or later we will discover our mistake for our souls will become spiritually impoverished.

What wonderful food has been provided in the green pastures to which the Good Shepherd has led us! Natural man eats to live, so the "food" of the new creature is that which provides life. Jesus said that unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood we will have no life in us (John 6:53). Here, then, is the very essence of all our spiritual food. We partake of Christ,



Jesus is the bread of life.

not by eating his literal flesh, but by accepting the great fact of his redemptive work on our behalf and conforming our lives fully to the doing of his will.

Jesus said, "The flesh profiteth nothing" — that is, it will do you no good to eat my flesh (John 6:63). Then he added, "the words which I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life." The teachings of Jesus were the reiteration of God's plan as it is centered in him. By accepting and obeying these teachings, we receive the life provided for us in the Redeemer. It is thus that we feed upon him and thereby receive life.

Jesus said to the Adversary, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). The truth, then, is the Word of God — it is the entire plan of God. It is likened to bread, and to refreshing water, because both of these are necessary to life. The thought is the same when we think of the truth as the green nourishing grass to which our Good Shepherd leads us.

How soul satisfying is the pasture of present truth into which the Good Shepherd has led his people in the end of this Gospel Age. We should appreciate the nourishing food he has so abundantly provided for us! It is fitting that we should appreciate and use all of this food, not just wander around nibbling a blade of grass here and there.

In thinking of the Word of God, we are reminded that "every" word that comes from God is essential to life. How great is our loss if we only feed upon certain portions of the Word of God! However, human weakness and limitations often cause a tendency along this line. To be particularly interested in prophecy, and every time we go to the Bible we search out only those portions which foretell events of our times or of the immediate future. Feeding our minds merely upon such prophecies, in our fellowship with the brethren, this subject will always be uppermost in our minds. In the meantime we will be getting lean spiritually.

God has given us the prophecies to stimulate our faith and to enlighten us as to the times in which we

are living so that we may know our part in his plan, but as new creatures we cannot thrive spiritually on an exclusive diet of prophecy. We need a balance, as there is other food to be found in the green pastures to which our Good Shepherd has led us and we need that too.

“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). Justification is one of those basic doctrines of the Scriptures. By it we are assured of our acceptableness with our Heavenly Father, in that He deals with us favourably as his children. This knowledge is indeed strengthening to our faith and encourages us to go boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and to find help in every time of need. But we should not attempt to live on justification alone. The doctrine of justification is to assure us of our standing with God.

How rich is the spiritual food provided in the book of Revelation, but the Good Shepherd does not want us to remain in the Revelations corner of the pasture all the time! To concentrate only on the one thing, and neglect everything else, leads to an unhealthy spiritual condition which will sooner or later manifest itself in our lives as new creatures.

Equally erroneous is the viewpoint that a Christian should feed exclusively on the devotional truths in Bible study and meditate merely upon faith, hope, love, and prayer. Indeed, all the Lord’s sheep should endeavour to keep close to the Good Shepherd, but to do this we must also follow his voice, which is the voice of truth. The plan of God for us and for the world is outlined in the doctrines and is essential that we know that plan in order to take our proper place in it. Our hearts may be filled with love for God, but if we are not doing what he wants us to, we are not living close to him, as it is by the doctrines that his will is revealed.

Still Waters

This Psalm mentions sheep beside a stream that is not deep, but one that gives a certain sound, and is very restful. A gentle rippling sound of a brook can give a delightful feeling of peace and rest as it has such a calming effect. The Hebrew has a more personal thought of “he laid me down besides the waters of restfulness.” Moffatt has, “He leads me to refreshing streams, he revives life in me.”

Water was not plentiful in that desert country where David tended his father’s sheep. Therefore, it was paramount for the shepherd to know where to find water and to lead the sheep to these places of refreshment, or they would perish. It was, as the Psalmist expressed it, “A dry and thirsty land” (Psalms 63:1) — or, as the margin states, a “weary land without water.” This was true then of most of the literal land of Israel and it is symbolically true of conditions throughout the world and in worldly churches, Babylon. God’s sheep, his true people, find no refreshing truth anywhere in the world. They must

be led by the Good Shepherd to the fountains of “still waters.”

But first, like David, they must realize their need. They must discover the dryness of the “land,” and become truly thirsty for the living waters. Jesus said, “Blessed are they which ... thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Once we realize the arid conditions of the world by which we are surrounded, we will listen carefully for the voice of the Shepherd in order that we might be led to the refreshing waters.

Grazing Together

Following our Good Shepherd into green pastures provided by his love means giving attention to the matter in which our spiritual food is provided by him. Sheep keep together in a flock when they graze. The shepherd does not provide an insulated patch of grass for each individual sheep, or for little groups who may prefer to remain separate from others. This is an important lesson for all to remember. If we have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd — the voice of present truth — and have followed that voice into the green pastures of spiritual food now so abundantly available for his flock, we will find ourselves in association with other sheep who have heard the same voice. If we have the right viewpoint, this association should be both a blessed and a happy one.

At all times we should keep close to the Good Shepherd and remember the sound of his voice. To the extent that all sheep do this, they will remain together in a flock. It is possible for one to be led away from the flock through too much sympathy for the straying sheep, or through sympathy manifested in a wrong way. We should not permit ourselves to be carried away by our emotions in matters of this kind.

The voice of truth comprehends not only doctrines, but God’s arrangements for his sheep, his instructions concerning under-shepherds, their qualifications, the manner of their appointment, etc. The voice of the Good Shepherd warns us against novices and those not qualified as under shepherds. If we do not heed



He leads us to green pastures.

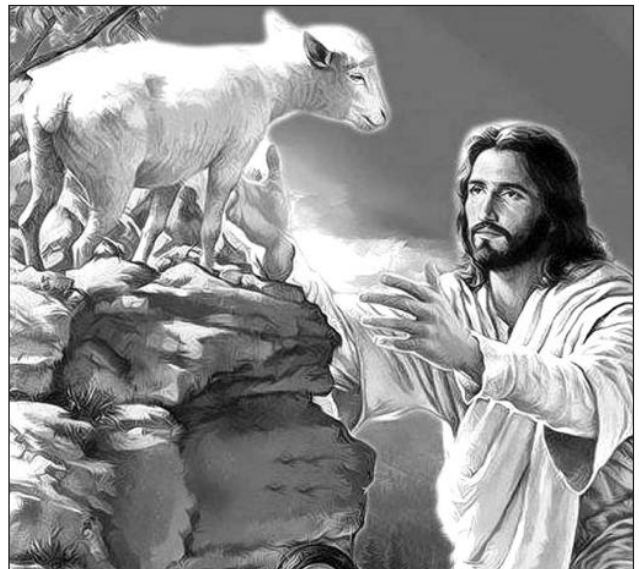
these warnings and instructions we are sure to suffer spiritual loss and find ourselves separated from the flock, at least in spirit, and possibly making a nuisance of ourselves among other sheep.

The Good Shepherd keeps his sheep together and does not separate them. Any who are truly serving him as under shepherds will use their influence to keep the sheep together. This is one of the surest ways of detecting the voice of a Good Shepherd in the service of others.

There will be divisions among the sheep, but woe to those who are responsible. The Good Shepherd wants his sheep to be together. Those who have the spirit of the Good Shepherd will exert their influence towards that end. To do otherwise is to lend support to a spirit which is not of God.

We can clearly and surely say that we are well fed today! The Good Shepherd acting under the direction of the Chief Shepherd Jehovah, has in these last days led us into pastures of present truth, and how refreshing and bountiful is the food. The poisonous weeds of error have been removed and we are rejoicing in the pure doctrines of the divine plan. There is nothing lacking in the pasture. Not only do we have the truth itself — from the start of creation to restoration — but we have the Good Shepherd's arrangements.

In the *Studies in The Scriptures* we have the truth, properly balanced, and we have set forth God's ecclesia arrangements for the proper cooperation of his



Jesus is our shepherd.

people that they build one another up in the most holy faith. The Good Shepherd is caring for our needs. He is withholding no good thing from us, and we can readily “lie down” in contentment and in peace, putting our complete trust in him, knowing that no evil will befall us as long as we follow his voice and remain together in the pasture which he has provided.

Psalms 84:11, “For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield: Jehovah will give grace and glory; No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (RVIC 2020).

Choosing the Will of the Father

*“The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient, nor did I turn back”
(Isaiah 50:5 NASB).*

Before we can choose to follow the will of the Father, we need to come to an understanding of what His will requires. The Psalmist writes about the desires of the Heavenly Father, “Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart” (Psalms 40:6,8 NASB).

Christ is our example in following the will of the Father. Just before his death he told the disciples “That the world may know that I love the Father” Why, because “I do exactly as the Father commanded me”. Paul writing to the Hebrews states “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:8-9 NASB).

Luke records that when Christ was troubled, He would go to the mountains to pray often spending the

whole night communing with his Heavenly Father. The reason for this is explained in John's Gospel “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19 NASB).

His whole life was in complete obedience to the Father. The word obedient and obedience in Philipians 2:8 and Hebrews 8:5 come from the same root word, Strong's #5219, “attentively listening, by implication submissive.” “... he humbled himself by **becoming obedient** to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philipians 2:8).

The mindset of obedience — **attentive hearkening to the Father** is one that as followers of Christ we must not only to learn but put into practice. James reminds us “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22 NASB).

The Choice to Rejoice

*"My inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right"
(Proverbs 23:16 NASB).*

Habakkuk's prayer is recorded in chapter three, of the prophet himself nothing is recorded. He reveals the spiritual character of Jehovah, being more concerned that His holiness should be vindicated rather than Israel should escape punishment because of their idolatry.

It had been revealed to him the troubles that were to come on Israel. He records his reaction, "I heard, and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us" (Habakkuk 3:16 NASB).

Habakkuk goes on to describe a time of trouble and famine that was to come upon his people. "Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls" (Habakkuk 3:17 NASB).

Israel was about to be taken captive into Babylon, they had relied on their own strength, they had sought an alliance with Egypt. "Woe to the rebellious children," declared Jehovah, "Who execute a plan, but not Mine, and make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, in order to add sin to sin; who proceed down to Egypt without consulting Me, to take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!" (Isaiah 30:1-2 NASB). They hoped that their alliance with Egypt would give them chariots for defense, forgetting that the geography of Israel made it unsuitable for chariots. If only they had put their faith in the Almighty, they would have been saved.

To many, the reaction of Habakkuk in the next two verses may seem strange. "Yet I will exult in Jehovah, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places" (Habakkuk 3:18-19 NASB). Habakkuk realized that even if he lost all earthly things, he would not lose God. God was his salvation, and somehow Israel would eventually be returned to their land.

He felt strengthened, that he would be able to run as a deer, that he would be lifted above earth's drudgery. It is interesting that this is similar to Moses' final

blessing on Israel, "Blessed are you, O Israel, who is like you, a people saved by Jehovah, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread upon their high places" (Deuteronomy 33:29 NASB). How sad to think of the number of times they failed to keep the law and had to be disciplined by God.

There is a lesson here for us today. When we look around at the world we see such distress, hunger, famine, wars, and death. We are not to rejoice in their suffering, Apostle Paul states, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people" (Galatians 6:10). We are to rejoice in the fact that we know that the end for this troubled world is close and that all will have an opportunity to hear the voice of the Lord and come forth from the graves.

Finally, when it comes to our trials and difficulties, may we remember the Apostle Peter's words, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (1 Peter 4:12-13 NASB).



The prophet Habakkuk

"Yet Will I Rejoice in the Lord"

THOUGH the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Though the olive's labor fail,
Though a murrain, sore and grievous,

Smite the herd on hill and dale —
Yet my soul shall bless and praise Him,
And my faith shall still prevail!

Reaching the Heart

“Whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Some years ago, at a drawing room function, one of England’s leading actors was asked to recite for the pleasure of his fellow guests. He consented and asked if there was anything special that his audience would like to hear. After a moment’s pause an old clergyman present said, “Could you, sir, recite to us the Twenty-third Psalm?”

A strange look passed over the actor’s face; he paused for a moment, and then said, “I can, and I will, upon one condition; after I have recited it, you, my friend, will do the same.” “I?” said the clergyman, in surprise. “But I am not an elocutionist. However, if you wish it, I will do so.” Impressively, the great actor began the Psalm. His voice and his intonation were perfect. He held his audience spellbound; and as he finished, a great burst of applause broke from the guests.

Then, as it died away, the old clergyman arose and began the Psalm. His voice was not remarkable; his intonation was not faultless. When he had finished, no sound of applause broke the silence, but there was not a dry eye in the room, and many heads were bowed.

Then the actor rose to his feet again. His voice shook as he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the old clergyman and said: “I reached your eyes and ears, my friends; he reached your hearts. The difference is just this — I know the Twenty-third Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd.”

A. C. Frey

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Exhortation to Follow Christ as Goat Followed Bullock

The Apostle concludes the Epistle with exhortations to the Royal Priesthood, giving helpful suggestions as to brotherly love, hospitality, contentment, submission to those whom we believe to be over us in the Lord (Hebrews 13:7-17). He tells us to avoid new Gospels and to remember that as the earthly priesthood was nourished by the things of the altar, so we have a right to eat of a spiritual altar of which others may not eat. He then calls attention to the sin-offering (verse 11), that they were all burned outside the camp. Jesus, as the antitype of the bullock, was not only crucified outside the gate of Jerusalem, but suffered as an outcast from the social and religious systems of the time.

St. Paul urges that we, as the Royal Priesthood (typified by the Lord's goat of Leviticus 16), shall go forth also sacrificially outside the camp to suffer with Christ social ostracism, and with deadness toward the world. He fixes by this passage our identity with "the Lord's goat" of Leviticus 16, by assuring us that only the blood of the sin-offerings is taken within the vail — to sprinkle the mercy-seat. He also identifies this sin-offering by suggesting that the bodies of those beasts whose blood propitiated for sin were burned outside the camp. In exhorting the Church to follow the Lord in this experience, he clearly identifies our Lord with the bullock of the Day of Atonement and the Church with the Lord's goat, which followed all of the bullock's experiences (Z. 1909, 339).

QUESTIONS ON THE COVENANTS

Question

From Exodus 24 it appears that it was the blood of the peace-offerings and of burnt offerings (not of sin-offerings) which sealed the Law Covenant. Should we not understand the same to hold in regard to the New Covenant?

Answer

Same 'Sacrifices from Different Standpoints

The sin-offering, burnt-offering, and peace offering evidently pictured the same sacrifices, but from different standpoints. In every case we would understand the bullocks to represent our Lord Jesus and the goats to represent the Church, the under-priesthood. The sin-offerings represented the sufferings of Christ and of all who walk in His footsteps as respects their relationship to the Lord, "Outside the camp," and their course as New Creatures inside the Holy and ultimately beyond the second vail in the Most Holy. And it shows the merit of the sacrifice eventually applied on the mercy-seat, and for whom applied — the blood of the bullock

first, for the Church, the blood of the goat afterward, for all the people.

The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering shows the same sacrifices but from a different standpoint — that of Divine acceptance. It shows that the offering was made to God and accepted by God as a whole, even though, as shown in the sin-offering, the sufferings were inflicted by men and the services rendered unto men.

The Peace Offering

The peace-offering (Leviticus 3) would appear to be another view or picture of the same sacrifices, representing the willingness of the individual who sacrificed — that nothing was of compulsion, so far as God was concerned; and that there was peace between God and the sacrificer, so that the offering was not made for his own sins.

Peace and Burnt Offerings re Sealing Law Covenant

So then, it seems very appropriate that, as described in Exodus 24, it was the blood of peace-offerings and burnt offerings that sealed the Law Covenant. The sin-offering feature has to do with the satisfaction, but the burnt offering and peace-offering imply that the sacrificers voluntarily lay down their earthly rights in the interest of those who will be blessed under the New Covenant and that God accepts these sacrifices as sealing that New Covenant — entirely aside from the Atonement for Adamic sin, accomplished by the same sacrifices, viewed from the standpoint of the sin-offering.

Question

Fleshly vs. Spiritual Israel re Requiring Mediator

The children of Israel, whom God called His firstborn, His own people, etc., had and needed a mediator. Should we not correspondingly expect that Spiritual Israel would require a mediator?

Answer

The children of Israel, from God's standpoint, were a typical people — they represented typically all who would ever become Abraham's seed, on the heavenly and the earthly planes. Thus, it is written, "I have made thee a father of many nations." All who will ultimately be saved to relationship with God out of many nations were well represented in the many tribes of Israel.

God took one of those tribes, the tribe of Levi, and separated it from the others for His own special use and as a channel for the blessing and instruction of the other tribes, which represented all the families of

the earth. That tribe of Levi, as we have already seen, typified the “household of faith” — all those who will be brought into harmony with God through the Sarah division of the Abrahamic Covenant. These all, as a household of faith, are together styled the firstborn and are developed under the Faith or Grace Covenant, and not under the New (Law) Covenant.

The tribe of Levi itself was divided, a priestly class being selected, and the remainder of the tribe assisting or serving under them. So, in the antitype — a “little flock,” a priestly class, is selected for the pre-eminent position and constitutes “Abraham’s Seed” on the highest plane, the Divine nature. This class, The Christ, is composed of Jesus, the Head, and the Church, His members. As the centre of the Divine blessing this Royal Priesthood, of which the Redeemer is the Head, has a variety of titles and of offices — King, Priest, Judge, Lawgiver, Mediator, Father — and each of these titles indicates a special feature of its service as the Seed of Abraham in blessing all the families of the earth, represented by the remaining tribes.

The other tribes of natural Israel did need a mediator and the mediator was in the specially set apart tribe. Moses represented the entire priestly class and the tribe of Levi in his various functions as mediator between God and the nation.

Church in Heart Harmony

It is true that God did sometimes speak of natural Israel as His first-born, and similarly Ishmael was the first-born of Abraham. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to this very matter, telling us that natural Israel corresponds to Ishmael, the son of Hagar, who represented the Covenant of bondage. Spiritual Israel constitutes the Church of the First-Born, the Body of Christ, and was never in bondage, being a child of the free woman, “the Heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all.” The Covenant of Grace was represented by Sarah. It had no mediator and needed none. Why does it need no mediator? Because those chosen under this Covenant of Grace are all at heart loyal to God, lovers of righteousness and haters of iniquity. These the Father was pleased to receive into His family, in response to their faith and consecration. They became members of the Body of the Mediator, who, during the Millennial Age, will represent God to mankind, enforcing His Laws and in His name uplifting the willing and obedient (Z. 1909, 339).

Question

Please explain Hebrews 9:15, viz., Revised Version — “And for this cause He is the mediator of a New Covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Answer

This text shows a contrast between the old law Covenant and the New (Law) Covenant. The original or Abrahamic Covenant, under which Christ and His Body as the Spiritual

Seed of Abraham is being developed, is not in the discussion. The Apostle wrote to those who still trusted in the law Covenant and declared that it was necessary, not only to believe in Christ, but also to keep the law and to be circumcised, in order to have any Divine favour. This the Apostle is controverting as untrue. He shows that the law Covenant mediated by Moses was typical of a superior New Covenant, of which Messiah is the Mediator.

Moses’ Covenant was already dead, to the extent that the prize it offered had been won by Jesus. It is still alive, however, upon all the Jews as a bondage from which they could get free only in one of two ways; either by dying to the law Covenant and to all its hopes and prospects and renouncing all earthly restitution rights and thus becoming a joint heir with Christ as a member of Messiah’s Body during this Gospel Age; or, accepting the other alternative, get free from the old law Covenant by transfer, when the New (Law) Covenant shall go into effect as its substitute, at the beginning of the Millennium. Then all Jews and their appurtenances will be transferred from Moses, the incompetent mediator, to the Messiah of glory, the competent Mediator of the better Covenant, whose provisions will bless Israel and all the families of the earth willing to come in under its benevolent provisions.

This text has no reference to any except Jews who were under the old law Covenant. It does not at all refer to Gentiles. It shows that God’s provision is that Messiah is the Mediator of Israel’s New Covenant and that His death, when so applied, will be sufficient to cancel the transgressions of Israel under their old law Covenant. This will make it possible for them as a nation yet to attain the earthly part of the Abrahamic Covenant’s provision for Abraham’s earthly seed, as the sand of the seashore. Thus, eventually Israel as God’s “called” nation will receive all that they ever expected — and more, Israel’s promises were not heavenly or spiritual, but earthly: “All the land that thou seest to thee (Abraham) will I give it, and to thy seed after thee”; and as the chief nation of earth, they were to teach all nations “every man under his own vine and fig tree.”

Those promises are sure as God’s Word. They merely wait until the “Mystery” of a multitudinous Mediator shall be finished (in sacrifice and in resurrection glory). Then the “Mystery” Mediator will have sealed Israel’s New Covenant by His death as its Testator. Then the “called” nation of Israel will “receive the eternal inheritance” for which they have waited more than thirty-five centuries. St. Paul explains this further in Romans 11:27-29, 31.

Question

I understand the Man Christ Jesus, by the sacrifice of His human life, paid the ransom price for the whole world.

Answer

As elsewhere shown, our Lord’s sacrifice did not pay for the sins of the world, but did provide the ransom price, which He will later present to Justice on behalf

of the sins of the world.

Question

If He did not then at His death seal the New Covenant with His blood and become mediator of that New Covenant, could He offer the Church a share in His mediatorial work?

Answer

The Scriptures nowhere say that our Lord sealed the New Covenant with His blood. Neither was it necessary for Him to seal the New Covenant before He would be its Mediator. He was the Mediator of the New Covenant- in the Divine purpose centuries before He became the man Christ Jesus. He was the Mediator of the New Covenant when born in Bethlehem in exactly the same sense that He was then the Saviour of the world: not because He had sealed the New Covenant nor because He had saved the world, but because He was the One through whom the world's salvation and the New Covenant for its blessing will eventually be accomplished.

Our Lord has not yet saved the world, nor has He acted as Mediator of the New Covenant; but He will accomplish both purposes during the Millennial Age; and at its conclusion the prophecy will be fulfilled, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." Our Lord was privileged to offer His Church a share with Himself in His Mediatorial Kingdom on condition that she would share in His cup of suffering and self-sacrifice — share in His baptism into His death. So doing she shall share His reward of glory, honour and immortality in "His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10). And sharing His glory and throne as His joint-sacrificer and joint-heir of the promise she would be with Him jointly the Mediator between God and men — the world — during the Millennial Age — the work of reconciling the world, or so many of them as may prove willing to receive the blessing- of regeneration.

Question

I understand the New Covenant is a law of love; am I right?

Answer

You are not right. There is a difference between a covenant and the law of a covenant. God's law given to Israel summarised was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy being and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That law is perfect and will be the basis of law of the New Covenant. Moses as a Mediator under his covenant purposed to give them eternal life if they would do so. But they were unable to keep that law perfectly in act and thought and word, and hence they reaped its condemnation of death and not its proffered blessing of life. Under that Covenant Moses was privileged to arrange sacrifices and offerings for sin, and thus year by year to cleanse the people for a year at a time from their original condemnation. But he had no means of actually blotting out their sins and no power or right to actually restore them to perfection and ability to keep that law.

The New Covenant will have the same law exactly, but the Mediator having by then paid over to Justice the ransom price of the world, secured by His own sacrificial death, will then have full charge of mankind and be fully empowered to deal mercifully with their imperfections and to help them step by step out of their sin and death condition back to perfection, and to cut off the rebellious in the Second Death. At the close of the Millennium, He will present the willing and obedient to the Father actually perfect.

Thus, it will be seen that God's dealings with mankind under the typical Law Covenant, and under its antitype the New Covenant, is along the lines of actual obedience to the Divine law, and not along the lines of reckoned obedience through faith. As obedience to the old Law Covenant held the reward of human perfection and life, so the rewards of the New (Law) Covenant will be similar — eternal life or eternal death.

Quite to the contrary of both of these arrangements, the Church is now called to a "heavenly calling" under the Abrahamic Covenant — to be members of the Body of Christ, who, with Jesus her Head, will constitute the Mediator of the New Covenant. The Church is "not under the law, but under grace," not judged according to the flesh and earthly restitution but judged according to the heart and intention; and required to sacrifice restitution rights to the attainment of "the high calling" life and glory on the spirit plane as members of the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Question

Please explain John 13:34 — "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." Was it a forerunner of the New Covenant He was about to seal for them?

Answer

No, that "New Commandment" represents a higher law than was given to the Jew under the Law Covenant, hence higher also than will be given to Israel and mankind "under the New Covenant. The New Commandment mentioned by our Lord is not the Father's commandment at all, but the command of our Head, our Teacher, to all those who have entered the School of Christ and who are hoping to become "members" of the Anointed One — members of the Mediator, Prophet, Priest and King of the new dispensation. Justice could not give this new command: all that Justice could command is expressed in the Law given to Israel, namely, supreme love for God and love for the neighbour as for oneself. This new commandment which the Lord gave applies only to the Church of this Gospel Age. In effect it is this: If you would be my disciples, if you would share my throne and glory and immortality, you must have my spirit. You must do more than keep the Law. You must be more than just, you must be self-sacrificing. If you would share my glory, I command and direct that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12) I have loved you to the extent of laying down my life for you sacrificially. You must have this same spirit and cast in your lot with me in self-sacrifice, or you cannot

be my disciples, nor share my glory, and associate in my work as the Mediator for the blessing of Israel and mankind. Whosoever will be my disciple must take up his cross and follow me, that where I am there shall my disciples be. Surely no one can doubt the Saviour's meaning — my disciples must die with me (Z. 1910, 13).

"ABLE MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT"

St. Paul says, "Our sufficiency is of God: who also hath made us able ministers (servants) of the New Testament (New Covenant); not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:5,6).

Servants or Ministers of New Covenant

How could St. Paul and other apostles be servants of the New Covenant, if no such New Covenant is yet in existence? A similar question might be raised respecting our Lord's statement that His memorial cup represented the blood of the New Testament, the New Covenant. The answer to these queries is: (1) There will be no blood of or from the New Covenant after it has been completed. The blood of the New Covenant is the blood prepared in advance of the Covenant, wherewith to seal it and make it obligatory — make it a Covenant. Our Lord's words respecting the cup were uttered before He died.

The cup was symbolical and pointed forward to His own death. It was shed for them, and was the basis for their reconciliation to the Father; but it was to be in due time the blood of the New Covenant — the blood with which the New Covenant would be sprinkled, sealed, made efficacious. It was offered to the Church more than eighteen centuries before the time for the sealing of the New Covenant, to grant the Church, the overcomers, the privileges of participation with Christ in His sacrifice, not only in the sense of Justification, but also in the sense of sanctification, or death with Him.

Symbol of Drinking "Cup"

This St. Paul most distinctly asserts in 1 Cor. 10:16 saying, "The cup of blessing, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The drinking of that cup symbolises our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, our common union in all of the afflictions that came upon Him — our death with Him. By the time all of the members of the Body of Christ shall have taken part in this cup, the time will have come for the application of the merit of that communion cup, that united sacrifice of the Body, with and under the Head sealing the New (Law) Covenant with Israel, and, through Israel, for the benefit of mankind. When the disciples asked if they might not sit in His throne, the one on the right hand and the other on His left, He asked, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" (Mark 10:38). All who would sit in the throne must drink of the cup. All who will faithfully drink of the cup shall sit in the throne as members of the Body of Christ — "the Bride, the

lamb's Wife."

Ministers and Covenant Ready Before Sealing

Take an illustration: Suppose some important documents were about to be signed and sealed. The document itself might be printed and while in the process of being signed might be spoken of as the covenant, agreement or declaration, although it would not be such a document, even after being printed, until duly signed and sealed. Similarly, the ink might by law be specified to be of a certain kind, and the person having charge of it might speak of it as the ink used, in the sense that it was the ink designed to be used in the signing of that Covenant when the proper time should come. Similarly, the person designated to be the mediator of that covenant might be so spoken of in advance of the signing. Similarly, those of his suite, who would accompany him as assistants and who would need certain preparation before they engage in this service, might be spoken of as the ministers or servants of that Covenant, even though it had not yet been signed and really made a covenant.

Church Now Qualifying as Ministers

Thus, the Apostle speaks of himself and others as able servants of the New Covenant. He does not mean that the New Covenant is in effect, in operation, but that in view of this New Covenant which God has promised shall ultimately be signed and sealed and made effective, he and others, the entire Royal Priesthood, are servants of that Covenant, ministering, or serving its interests and fully qualified of the Lord to do so. Of ourselves we have no righteousness, no merit, that could be made effective for the sealing of that New Covenant with Israel. But, being justified by faith in the blood of Christ, we are made able or competent to serve the interests of the New Covenant. We serve it by laying down our lives as Joint-Heirs with our Redeemer for its sealing, and subsequently putting it into operation.

Church Now Act as Ambassadors

Our position is that of ambassadors for God, explaining to men His mercy and His provision of the New Covenant, through which all may be blessed and recovered if they will. So many as receive our message with joy and turn from sin to follow our Lord may be invited to become members of the Body of Christ, the Body of Messiah, the Body of the Mediator, the Body of the great Prophet, the Body of the great Priest, the Body of the great King of the Millennial Age. So, then, we are ministers of the New Covenant in that we are laying down our lives in its service, in its interest, although it is not yet a Covenant, but merely a promise. We are not only laying down our lives but seeking out fellow-members of the Body of the Anointed One and assisting them in the laying down of their lives, under the assurance that these better sacrifices will soon be finished and their application be made by our glorious Head, and we with Him in glory.