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The Day of Pentecost

*“And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:1,4 ASV).*

Pentecost has been observed as a religious holy day by Christians for centuries. It is held in remembrance of the begetting of the Holy Spirit which came upon Jesus’ disciples as recorded in our opening text. The word Pentecost is derived from a Greek word meaning “the fiftieth day” and has as its origin Israel’s Feast of Harvest. This year the Jewish feast, and the day of Pentecost which it prefigured, will be commemorated on the eighteenth day of May, according to Hebrew reckoning.

The principal feature of the Feast of Harvest was the waving of two bread loaves before Jehovah. These loaves were made from the early fruitage of the spring grain harvest. Fifty days earlier, on the 16th day of the month Nisan, a “sheaf,” or handful, of ripe grain was waved before Jehovah. It was unbaked, and consisted of the very first pure, uncontaminated kernels of grain which had been harvested.

The instructions regarding the waving of the sheaf and the Feast of Harvest are recorded in Leviticus 23:10,11,15-17: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat [grain] offering unto Jehovah. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto Jehovah.”

The marvelous fulfillment of this picture centers in Jesus. As the antitypical slain Passover Lamb, he died

on the cross on the 14th of Nisan (Isaiah 53:6,7, John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7). He was placed in the tomb before sundown the same day, and lay there all the next day, which was the Sabbath. In the early morning of the 16th of Nisan, the third day, Jesus was resurrected by the mighty power of God (Matthew 28:1-6, Luke 24:1-7). Thus, the same day that Israel’s priest was waving the sheaf of grain in the temple, the fulfillment of that picture had taken place — the resurrection of Jesus. He was, as Paul later states, the “firstfruits” of those who “slept” in death (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Since the Jewish Feast of Harvest was a celebration of the firstfruits of their grain harvest, the “sheaf of the firstfruits” was considered a part of the harvest. This is shown to be true, because the date of the feast was reckoned by counting fifty days from the day the sheaf was waved before Jehovah by Israel’s priest. Similarly, in its greater fulfillment, the fifty days until Pentecost was measured from the resurrection of Jesus.

Beginning at Pentecost, and throughout the present Gospel Age, the Heavenly Father has been seeking those from every nation, kindred and tongue who will faithfully walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and thereby be counted as part of the “firstfruits” unto God. The “two wave loaves” of the Jewish feast,

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which were prepared from flour made from the grain of the new crop, picture this firstfruits class. Thus, spirit-begotten followers of Jesus since Pentecost are the first to benefit from his death and resurrection. They have, as Paul says, “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Romans 8:23).

The instruction given to Israel was that the two loaves were to be baked with leaven. Leaven is used in the Bible to represent sin (Luke 12:1, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Taking these two things into account, we see that the prospective members of the spiritual firstfruits are selected from the world while still under the effects of sin. However, they become acceptable as an offering to God because the sheaf of grain, Christ Jesus, was offered first, covering their sinful Adamic nature.

The Day of Pentecost

In Acts 1:1-3 we read that Jesus had been seen by the apostles on various occasions for a period of forty days following his resurrection. Now he was assembled together with them one final time. He instructed them not to depart from Jerusalem, but “wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (verses 4,5, Mark 1:6-8). Jesus then ascended to heaven, and the eleven apostles, following his instructions, waited together at Jerusalem. Ten days later, on Israel’s feast day — the “day of Pentecost” — we have recorded the words of our opening text. The record says that upon receiving the Holy Spirit, the apostles “began to speak with other tongues,” or languages. This was evidence that the promise of the Heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit, had indeed been fulfilled.

Since this was one of Israel’s feast days, there was a multitude of Jews gathered from many regions, and who spoke various languages. When they realized that the apostles were addressing them so that each understood in his own language, they were amazed (Acts 2:5-12). Some, realizing that the apostles were not learned men, but fishermen and the like, accused them of being drunk with wine. Peter stood up, however, saying that none of them were drunken, but rather the words of the prophet Joel were being fulfilled. Quoting from Joel’s prophecy, Peter said, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (verses 13-18, Joel 2:28-32).

This fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy related to the development of the firstfruits class during the Gospel Age. As of yet, Peter’s hearers knew nothing about the operation of the Holy Spirit as it was to affect the lives of the footstep followers of Jesus. The



The Day of Pentecost

only experience that they could relate to was with the prophets of Israel. God had dealt with them, in conveying his message and instructions, by visions and dreams. Therefore, that is how Jehovah instructed Joel to describe his dealings with the spirit-begotten during the Gospel Age. Peter’s words signified just the beginning of the fulfillment of this wonderful prophecy. Its full accomplishment will be in Christ’s kingdom, when God’s spirit will be poured out upon the remainder of mankind — “all flesh.”

The enlightening effect of the Holy Spirit upon the mind was immediately evident in the Apostle Peter. He was one of those who just ten days before had indicated by the question to Jesus concerning the establishment of the kingdom that he believed it should start at that time (Acts 1:6). The Holy Spirit had now enabled him to understand that there was a great work to be done before the Messianic kingdom would begin. This new insight was revealed in his interpretation of the prophecy by Joel and by the balance of his wonderful sermons recorded in the second and third chapters of the Book of Acts.

Comfort, Teacher, and Guide

The night before he died, Jesus promised the apostles: “The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will teach you everything, and will bring to your memories all that I have said to you” (John 14:26, *Weymouth New Testament*). An apostle had to be one who had been with Jesus, hearing his words and observing his every action — the one exception being Paul, who later was given special visions and revelations to accomplish this purpose. It was because of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise concerning the Holy Spirit and its enlightening influence, starting at Pentecost, that the New Testament record of the apostles and other writers could be provided in an accurate and harmonious form. Otherwise much would have been lost.

In the last hours of his life Jesus desired to comfort his followers before his departure, and so in a very general way he told them something of the Holy Spirit. He said that after he went away he would ask the Father to send them a “Comforter,” the “Spirit of truth.” It would be a power that would not be discernible by the world, but they would know that they had it because its influence would be upon them and dwell in them. The Spirit of truth, Jesus also said, would guide them “into all truth” (John 14:16,17, 16:13). The thought was that after the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would be able to receive a complete knowledge and understanding of God’s plans and purposes.

In John 15:15 Jesus explained that because of the enlightenment to come by means of the Holy Spirit, he could make known to them everything he had heard from the Father. This would mean a change had taken place in their status. They would no longer be considered servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Rather, they would be friends, or associates, and as Paul later says, sons of God. “For, as many as by God’s Spirit are being led, the same, are God’s sons, — For ye have not received a spirit of servitude, leading back into fear, but ye have received a spirit of sonship, whereby we are exclaiming — Abba! Oh Father!” (Romans 8:14,15, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*)

Paul continues, saying that these “sons” are prospective “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,” if they suffer with him. (vs. 17) Jesus had indicated this to the apostles prior to his death, saying that because of this close relationship to him and the Father, they would suffer persecution, just as he had suffered (John 16:1-3).

Baptized with the Holy Spirit

John the Baptist, in identifying the start of Jesus’ earthly ministry, stated, “He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit.” (John 1:33) Jesus was the first to receive this baptism of the Holy Spirit, and being found faithful, he became the instrument by whom it would then come to his footstep followers. On the day of Pentecost, Peter thus testified: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:32,33).

We are aware of the change that came upon Jesus after he was bap-

tized with the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 3:16 we read: “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.” The thought seems to be that then all the hidden things of God’s Word began to be revealed to him. Assuredly, Jesus, with his perfect mind, knew the Scriptures. However, there were many hidden things in the prophecies and shadows of the Old Testament that were not to be revealed until the proper time.

The 40th Psalm is a prophecy about Jesus at this time in his life. Verse 6 reads as follows: “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering has thou not required.” The key thought in this verse is that Jesus’ ears were opened. In other words, he was able to both hear and understand things that were not known by him before. This information included the many details of God’s plan for the redemption and reconciliation of the world of mankind and his part in it. We also believe that Jesus then understood that there would be associates with him who would share in his sufferings and his glory. The first of these were his chosen apostles, to whom he promised to send the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has had an enlightening effect upon the church throughout the Gospel Age. The Apostle Paul describes it as the “earnest,” or pledge, of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). The Holy Spirit enables us to know and appreciate our relationship to the Heavenly Father.

It also makes possible our knowledge of the privilege and responsibilities of sonship. The Apostle Paul stated, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). It is a knowledge of these things that enables us to walk more fully in the footsteps of Jesus.



Baptized with the Holy Spirit

A New Age Begun

From the standpoint of the day of Pentecost being an event to be remembered, the following points should be considered. The work that was started that day marked the beginning of a new age — the Gospel Age. From this point the Holy Spirit was to be engaged in a work that had never been done before — the development of a New Creation that would have the potential of being like God himself. The apostle wrote: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We recognize, from the standpoint of God's covenants, that the Abrahamic Covenant and its promises had lain dormant for many centuries. During this time the Law Covenant was added, "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Galatians 3:19). In verse 16 of this same passage we read: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The death and resurrection of Christ, the promised seed, activated the Abrahamic Covenant and supplanted the Law Covenant, which had served as a "schoolmaster" to lead God's chosen people, Israel, to Christ (verses 24, 25). Finally, in verses 26-29, we learn that Christ, the seed class, is to be composed

of many members, both Jews and Gentiles, and that all the true footstep followers of Jesus are "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Thus we understand that the day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the development of those who would, along with Christ Jesus, be inheritors of the heavenly phase of the kingdom. The Holy Spirit cannot be poured out on the rest of mankind until the work of completing the Christ, the firstfruits class, is ended. Then will come that glorious time when the Messianic kingdom will be established, and God's laws will be obeyed "in earth" as they are "in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

The Lesson of Forgiveness

"Forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us"
(Luke 11:4 ASV).

When our family goes traveling, we select a book and my wife, Sr. Jan, reads to us during the driving portions of the trip. For a recent trip, our son Eric requested that Jan read the third book in **Br. Eugene Burns'** "Alive Again" series. That volume is entitled, *Fingers Stained with Evil*.

The book begins with the raising to life of Tomas de Torquemada (1420-1498). During the Spanish Inquisition of the late 15th century, he served as the Grand Inquisitor of Spain from 1483 until his death. He put hundreds, if not thousands, of people to death by burning or hanging for heresy. He confiscated all the property of the families of those he executed, so that many spouses and children also died from homelessness and starvation.

In **Br. Eugene's** story, during the resurrection, Torquemada meets several of his victims, who tell him that what he did to them and their families was unforgivable.

In recent years, as victims of crime have been given the opportunity to speak at the sentencing hearing of those who have been convicted of the crime, we often hear them say that what was done to them is unforgivable. We can all grasp why victims, or families of victims, would feel that way.

But there are notable exceptions to this pattern. Some victims, and their families, instead choose to describe the awful impacts the crime has had upon them, and then tell the offender that they forgive them. These exceptions are powerful testimonies to the transforming power of love and its expression through forgiveness.

On February 1, 2020, the unimaginable happened, an alleged drunk driver in a SUV mounted the footpath and struck seven children who had been walking to

buy ice creams. Four children were killed, and one seriously injured. The Three siblings aged between nine and thirteen were killed along with their eleven-year-old cousin. Two other children suffered minor injuries.

To many who came to leave notes, flowers and toys at the crash site, the fact that he was drunk (three times over the limit) and was found to also have cocaine and MDMA in his system meant that this was an unforgivable sin. However just days after the accident the mother Leila made the following statement.

"The guy, I know he was drunk, driving on this street. Right now, I can't hate him. I don't want to see him, I don't hate him," she said. "I think in my heart, I forgive him, but I want the court to be fair. It's all about fairness. I'm not going to hate him, because that's not who we are."

For many that would have been the end of the matter, let justice take its course. But for the parents of the children lost they wanted to do more. On December 31, 2020 the two sets of parents, plus the surviving siblings came together to launch "i4give Day". The father of the three children, a practicing Christian, stated:

"My days are empty. My heart is aching. Tears of hopelessness visit me each day. I am dying on the inside and it's hard to take much more. However, I faced a choice, the choice that I want you all to comprehend. What path do I take? The path of destruction or the path of construction? I chose to seek my refuge in my strength. I chose to obey my father in heaven and forgive. There is power in forgiveness. It is a sign of strength. Forgiveness

gives you freedom and allows you to live your life peacefully.”

As Christians, we know how important and central the concept of forgiveness is to God’s plan of ransom and restitution. We know how much we have been forgiven, and we clearly know that learning to forgive others is an absolutely essential element of our character if the doors of heaven are to be opened to us.

Forgiveness is not always easy as sometimes the ones that injure us either physically or mentally do not do it only once. The Jews had a tradition to forgive someone three times and no more. The Apostle Peter was sure that he had lifted the bar high with his statement “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” We can imagine Peter’s surprise when Jesus answered “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven (Matthew 18:21-22 NASB).

Ellis J. Crum penned a hymn opening with, “Jesus paid a debt he did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay.” This is portrayed in the Parable of the Two Debtors “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. “When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. “But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. “So, the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed” (Matthew 18:23-30 NASB). The result of the failure to forgive by the servant is shown with the lesson for us “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your



Ellis J. Crum

heart” (Matthew 18:34-35 NASB).

But are there some things that are unforgivable?¹ The pages of human history are filled with stories of unbelievable violence against one another accompanied with unbelievable suffering. Humanity’s social and political history is replete with stories of betrayal, oppression, neglect, and hatred.

Despite the magnitude of these injustices, that mankind has perpetrated on mankind, God does not regard these as unforgivable. Our challenge as Christians is to take God’s perspective in such matters, and then act accordingly. It matters not whether the offense was done by someone within our fellowship or someone in the world.

As the peoples of this world have become more divided on many levels-racially, economically, politically, religiously, we must remember that as individuals, following Christian principles, we can rise above and bridge those divides by following the pathway of forgiveness.

Our God’s justice is restorative, not retributive. His entire plan for humanity is designed to bring about a restoration of the relationship He wishes to have with His creation and a restoration of the relationships He intended people to have with each other. The most powerful part of that plan is the forgiveness of sin, hurts, and offenses made possible by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

As we seek to live godly lives, we should be gaining a perspective of ourselves and others like God’s perspective. We can no longer be satisfied with looking at others the way the world looks at them, to judge them as the world judges them. We must have the “higher perspective” that sees the human dignity of every individual — a perspective that looks beyond the sins and failings of their human nature. And then we must live our lives in accordance with this higher perspective. We must forgive ourselves and others for not being perfect.

Returning to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:7). How much we each need God’s mercy! American author Max Lucado wrote, “Relationships don’t thrive because the guilty are punished, but because the innocent are merciful.”

Jesus also said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

(1) During the Gospel Age only the Church is under divine judgement and this judgement is with the Heavenly Father. The criterion for God not to forgive someone is set out in Hebrews “For if we go on deliberately and willingly sinning after once acquiring the knowledge of the Truth, there is no longer any sacrifice left to atone for [our] sins [no further offering to which

to look forward] (Hebrews 10:26 AMPC). One important aspect is the meaning of the word ‘knowledge,’ from the Greek word *epignosis*, meaning precise and correct knowledge.

At the end of the Millennial Age those who decide to follow Satan will be subject to second death from which there is no forgiveness (Revelation 20:14-15, Revelation 21:8).

The Message paraphrase renders it this way: “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That is when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.”

The Apostle Paul wrote, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18). As far as it depends on us. How far are we willing to go to live peacefully with others? Are we willing to forgive them any and all offenses they have committed toward us or others? God our Saviour has shown us that He is willing “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the (accurate) knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4 NASB).

What perspectives can help us find the strength to forgive others, even when the harm they have done to us is great?

- **Acknowledging our own imperfections** and refusing to make comparisons between ourselves and the offender. The Apostle Paul confessed that he was not aware of any accusations that could be made against him, but quickly acknowledged that that did not mean he was perfect. “My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent” (1 Corinthians 4:4). “All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

- **Consider how much God has forgiven us**, and He did it before we even asked for it. Jesus came and paid the penalty. “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

- **Separate the sin from the sinner in your mind** to the best of your ability. Try to think about the positive value the offender may have as a person now, or at least the person he or she can become in God’s kingdom. “Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done” (Bryan Stevenson).

- **Remember Jesus died to save the offender too**, just as he did for you.

- **Jesus prayed for God to forgive those who were crucifying him.** Stephen asked God to forgive those who were stoning him.

- **Remember the Permission of Evil** is part of God’s Plan.

- **Realize what the offender did was not about you** (even if directed at you). It was about him or her—their feelings, their anger, their emotions, their needs, as perverse or evil as those may have been. Jesus warned us that at the end of the age, “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will

grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). When we are insulted or hurt, we can choose to respond with grace and forgiveness. “Grace is when somebody hurts you and you try to understand their situation instead of trying to hurt them back” (author unknown).

Forgiving is not something we do for someone else (although truly repentant offenders may need our forgiveness to heal from their guilt and shame). Forgiving is primarily something we do for ourselves so that our lives are not tied to the injuries and pain of past experiences. Let us follow the advice of the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you” (Colossians 3:12-13).



Br. Eugene Burns, “Alive Again” author

He paid a debt he did not owe,
I owed a debt I could not pay,
I needed someone to wash my sins away;
And now I sing a brand new song,
Amazing grace all day long,
Christ Jesus paid a debt
That I could never pay.

He paid a debt at calvary,
He cleansed my soul and set me free,
I’m glad that Jesus did all my sins erase.
I now can sing a brand new song,
Amazing grace all day long,
Christ Jesus paid a debt
That I could never pay.

One day he’s coming back for me,
To live with him eternally,
Won’t it be glory to see him on that day!
I then will sing a brand new song,
Amazing grace all day long
Christ Jesus paid a debt
That I could never pay.

Ellis J. Crum

“God’s Great Mercy”

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

One of the most soulful books of the Bible is the book of Lamentations. It was written, we believe, by the prophet Jeremiah. In the book we see the broken heart-felt cry of one who is crying over the loss of the soul of Israel. The prophet witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and its aftermath in 586 BC.

The author alternates between horrifying accounts of the destruction of the city and the sufferings of its inhabitants, descriptions and confessions of the sins which caused it, appeals for divine help, and the holding out of hope because of God’s great mercy. We will break this book down into the five chapters that are recorded and reveal the tragedy that followed! The following punishments were prophesied as far back as Deuteronomy chapter 28 verses 14-20, “And do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

“But it shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of the ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in and cursed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me.”

Lamentations

Lamentations 1:1,2: “How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a forced laborer! She weeps bitterly in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; she has none to comfort her among all her lovers. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.”

Sounds very similar to how Israel will be treated at the end of this age! To help outline in our minds how this story unfolds, we suggest the following. The first lament pictures Jerusalem desolate as a result of Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of the city. In chapter two it clarifies the cause of the desolation and resulting captivity. Chapter three stresses the purpose of Judah’s

plight. In chapter four it focuses on Jerusalem’s past and present condition. And finally, in five we read of the prayer appealing to Jehovah for mercy.

We must not forget that God is the central figure in this book, not Jeremiah, or the Judahites. This book is a revelation of God, as is every book in the Bible. The aspect of God’s character that shines through the book from the beginning to the end is His sorrow. Sin and apostasy not only result in inevitable discipline for people, but they cause God great pain. He does not enjoy punishing His people for their unfaithfulness.

In this book of Jeremiah, we sense the heartbreak of God Himself. We can also see foreshadows of Jesus Christ’s heartbreak over rebels against God, which come through strongly in the Gospels, where Jesus’ heartbreak recalls the sentiments that Jeremiah expressed in Lamentations. We read of this in Matthew 2:17,18. “That which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted because they were no more.’”

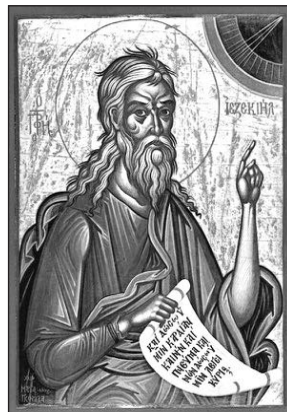
The Book of Jeremiah

The book of Jeremiah contains many warnings about the judgments that would come, whereas the book of Lamentations contains much mourning over the judgment that had come. The fall of Jerusalem is the focus of both books. There is an old expression, “How did we get here?”

Chapter 1 explains how. Israel had unfaithful ministers who gave unsound advice to the people. In Isaiah 56:10-12 we read, His watchmen are blind all of them know nothing, all of them are dumb dogs unable to bark, dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are the shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each one to his unjust gain, to the last one. “Come, they say let us get wine, and drink heavily of strong drink; and tomorrow will be like today, only more so.”

Ezekiel

There are many references to the term “Watchman” in scripture, but none as descriptive as the one found in the book of Ezekiel concerning the fall of Israel, Chapter 33:1-16. These words of Ezekiel are a powerful witness against Israel, showing why they will be judged, and judged severely by God. “The word of the Lord came to me saying, “Son of man, speak to the sons of your people, and say to them: If I bring a sword upon a land, and



Ezekiel



The sin of Jeroboam

the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman and he sees the sword coming upon the land, and he blows on the trumpet and warns the people, then he who hears the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken the warning; he would have delivered his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require from the watchman's hand. Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth, and give them a warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked of his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. But you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your life."

King Jeroboam

So, we begin to see the seriousness of the iniquity of Israel over the past several thousand years, when they did not listen to God's words. For example, 1 Kings 14:10, "Therefore behold I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is gone." Why does God tell them this? The answer lies in the 15th verse, "For the Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the Lord to anger." The Asherim were cult objects that were used in the worship of the fertility goddess Asherah.

King Hoshea

In the reign of Hoshea king of Judah much evil was committed and done in the sight of the Lord. 2 Kings 17:17-19, "Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divinations and enhancements, and sold themselves

to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him. So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced."

Why had Israel done these terrible things after receiving so many blessings from Jehovah? In 17:7 we have a picture of their great fall, which is common even unto this day, verses 7-11, "The falling came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. And the sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right, against the Lord their God. They burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the Lord had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the Lord."

Today, have any of the Christian nations done any different than Israel did in the past, no, and that is why they will be judged severely at the end of this age! We are horrified when we read all the things Israel endured, but we must remember they had walked somewhat in the light and witnessed the miracles of God personally!

Jeremiah Chapter Two

In chapter two the wrath that came upon Israel which had been foretold in Deuteronomy verse one; "How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He has cast from heaven to earth the glory of Israel and has not remembered His footstool in the days of His anger." The reference to the footstool is found in 1 Chronicles 28:2 as are the words of King David. "Then King David rose to his feet and said, listen to me, my brethren and my people; I had intended to build a permanent home for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God. So I had made preparations to build it." Returning to Lamentations verse 2-3, "The Lord has swallowed up; He has not spared all the habitations of Jacob. In His wrath He has thrown down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground, He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. In fierce anger He has cut off all the strength of Israel."

This condemnation that fell on Israel in ages past is to be replayed in the closing end of this age, and possibly beyond. The book of Hebrews chapter 10 verses 28-31 read, "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has

insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay. And again, The Lord will judge His people. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

There are several truths worthy of consideration here, First, the Old Testament was divinely designed to consist of carnal ordinances. Hebrews 9 verses 10-12 refer to the old and the new way, “Since they only relate to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”, Secondly we see that God can and does work through ungodly nations to bring about His will, as shown with Nebuchadnezzar’s razing of Jerusalem!

Jeremiah Chapter Three

Chapter three of this lament is the mountain peak of the book. Here Jeremiah bares his heart, as he frequently does in prophecy. His life was one long martyrdom, in which he served as both judge and intercessor for people bent on their own destruction. Jeremiah never loses complete hope as he says, “Jehovah is my portion” He begins chapter three by these words, “I am a man who has seen affliction because of the rod of His wrath. He has made me walk in darkness and not in light. Surely against me He has turned His hand. He has broken my teeth with gravel; He has made me cower in the dust, and my soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness.”

There are three poetical books in the Old Testament that deal primarily with the problem of suffering. Job treats the problem of personal suffering, and Lamentations deals with the problem of national suffering. Habakkuk also deals with the problem of national suffering. These three books present the problem of God’s justice and His love, or divine sovereignty and human responsibility, though they fall short of solving it.

In the 19th-25th verses of chapter three, Jeremiah began to rationalize the predicament he finds himself and his nation in. “Remembering my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind; therefore I have hope. The Lord’s loving kindness indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.” They are new every morning; Great is Thy Faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul, Therefore I have hope in Him. The Lord is good to those who wait for Him.”

No prophet pleaded with a people in a more impassioned manner, calling for a national conversation, than did he. No one, except Jesus, was treated



Jeremiah (Michelangelo)

with more national contempt! The anguish he endured was painful. “My eyes run down with streams of water because of the destruction of the daughter of my people. My eyes pour down unceasingly without stopping, until the Lord looks down from heaven. My eyes bring pain to my soul” (verses 48-51).

The second time Nebuchadnezzar stormed the city was when Jehoiakim rebelled against him and Nebuchadnezzar replaced him with Zedekiah as the ruler. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that Jehoiakim had done, 2 Kings 24:18. All this disobedience came to bear on Judah.

Jeremiah Chapter Four

Chapter four tells of the inconceivable horror that fell on the people. Jehovah God let the enemy have full reign over His people, to teach them the evilness of sin, and the flagrant disregard of His covenant with them! This siege against Jerusalem lasted for 18 months. Famine was acute. The tongue of the suckling child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst! The young children ask bread, and no man breaks it unto them. Conditions were so horrible that the hands of pitiful women did away with their own children so that they are slain with the sword are better than they that are slain with hunger. But Judah was only reaping what she had sown. Her iniquities were many; the prophets and priests had been corrupted, and the people rejoiced therein. In Jeremiah 5:30-31 the words of God says it all, “An appalling and horrible thing has happened to this land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?”, He says.

Remember that certain truths rule here. First, when children suffered, some doubtless wondered, where is God? Even today when countries such as the US, Canada and England go to war in order to save an entire country, children also suffer. This is an evil world that is plagued with evil, and sometimes the innocent suffer! And so it was, with Israel, back then!

The suffering of God’s people is a problem because it pits the love of God against His Justice. On the one hand God loves people and has promised to do what is best to bring about their blessing. But on the other hand, God punishes people for their sins, and this does not seem to be loving. This is the same problem

that children have who grow up in homes where their parents tell them they love them — and yet punish them. Careful attention to the word of God solves this problem, in most cases, because God has explained why He punishes those whom He loves. Yet at other times, as in the case of Job, whom we mentioned earlier, there does not appear to be adequate reason for their suffering. They only saw the punishment. They had forgotten the reasons for it given in the Mosaic Covenant. This problem was what also concerned the prophet Habakkuk as well.

A great revelation of Lamentations is the covenant faithfulness of God, despite the covenant unfaithfulness of His people.

The Results of Unfaithfulness

The consequences of the siege of Jerusalem, which Jeremiah chronicles in all their horrors, were the fruit of unfaithfulness to God. People cannot escape the death that sin brings — even God's people. Romans 6:23 expresses a universal truth: sin always results in death in some form. The Judahites thought that they could get away with their sins, but even though God was slow to judge them, they finally experienced the devastating consequences of sin. Perhaps one of the reasons we do not hear much discussion on Lamentations today, is that our contemporaries do not want to be reminded of their sin any more than Jeremiah's people did. If there were more preaching on Lamentations, people would have to face up to the fact that sin leads to terrible devastation!

Today we are beginning to see the moral judgments begin to fall on sinful man, as it was in those ancient days! God is moving slowly but very powerfully as He did then. The religious systems are being judged first. In recent times we have seen more and more people coming forward about sexual abuse they have faced as children, bringing lawsuits against the religious institutions that allowed this abuse to continue within their organizations. These cases have resulted in billions of dollars in damages being awarded to the victims. While this will not immediately cause a collapse of these organizations, the public spotlight is beginning to shine. Case after case has been filed world-wide on these egregious acts.

Recently another mainstream church shows signs of breaking up due to differences with members that are LGBT. The spiritual begins to erode first! On the secular side, we begin to see nations embroiled in riots and major political controversy. Religion has come to the forefront as the Muslims try to assert their perceived rights over others religious beliefs!

When we see and hear of all these problems facing the world, I'm reminded of the scripture in Matthew 24:6-8 which states, "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines

and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs."

Turning our attention back to Israel, we begin to see the Hand of God in their affairs. Since 1949 Israel has been involved in 16 wars of various types, the first being their war of Independence, 1947-1949. None were LOST! All of these wars and skirmishes can be attributed to Edom. In ancient times, Edom in one way or another, regardless of which nation was involved has crushed Israel until our day. The year 1948 was the turning point, in which I believe God began to turn His face back to His chosen people.

In our theme scripture we see the prophetic words spoken so many thousands of years ago by the prophet Jeremiah, Lamentations 4:21, "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, who dwells in the land of Uz; But the cup will come around to you as well, You will become drunk and make yourself naked."

We must not forget that God is the central figure in Lamentations. The aspect of God's character that shines through the book from beginning to end is His sorrow! He does not enjoy punishing His people for their unfaithfulness. We can also see foreshadows of Jesus Christ's heartbreak over rebels against God, which come through strongly in the Gospels, where Jesus' heartbreak recalls the sentiments that Jeremiah expresses in this book.

Verse 22: "The punishment of your iniquity has been completed." That word completed according to Strong's word number 8552 means to come to the full, finished. Of course, there will still be trials for the nation of Israel, but not to the extent of the past. Her trials in the future will be those attributed to the fall of Adam, not to the Mosaic Law.

How does God feel when His people wander away from Him, squander His blessings, and get into trouble? He still loves them and remains committed to blessing them, even though He allows them to reap the whirlwind that they have sown.

Parable of the Prodigal Son

To illustrate this facet of God's character, we close with Luke 15:11-32, the parable of the prodigal son.

"And he said a certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father give me the share of the estate that falls to me. And he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living."

Now here is where the parable really comes into play. In verse 18 is a profound statement by the son. "I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father I have sinned against heaven and in your sight." Has this happened yet? No, not yet until these words recorded in Zechariah 12:10 come to pass. "And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication so they will look on Me whom they have

pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first born.”

Then the balance of this parable will become a precious reality. “And he got up and came to his Father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worth to be called your son. But the Father responded quickly by ordering his slaves

to bring the best robe and a ring and sandals for his feet, and said this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.”

In Romans Paul says, “I do not want you brethren to be uniformed of this mystery lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

The Light of Truth

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Was the light of truth extinguished during the reign of the man of lawlessness? This Bright light that burned during the time of Jesus and his disciples started to flicker and get dimmer as the last apostle died.

Slowly, the truths started to be twisted and distorted just as Jesus prophesied it would be. But this light was never completely snuffed out. As time passed the man of lawlessness’ influence on the church increased until around the year 325 during the first Nicaen council, the false doctrine of the trinity was accepted as Cannon Law.

Although the false church accepted this, there were many who would not accept this falsehood including

- Constantius II, (Son of Constantine) who ruled after his father from 337-361,
- Valens, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, 364-378
- Eusebius, Archbishop of Constantinople from 339-341 (he actually baptised Constantine).

These men were all opponents of the false doctrine of the trinity. Eusebius actually ordained a Goth called Uilas as a Bishop, and Uilas went to preach to his own people, the Goths.

So for many many years, the goths, Vandals and other Germanic tribes were anti-Trinitarian. Uifila stated “I Uifila, Bishop and confessor have also believed and in this, the one true Faith, I make my Journey to my Lord, I believe in only one God the Father, The unbegotten and invisible, and in the only begotten Son, our Lord, Master and God ... therefore there is one God of all who is also the God of our God, and one holy spirit and I believe the Son to be subject and obedient in all things to God the Father!”

These Germanic tribes held these beliefs until their destruction by the eastern Roman empire. The Lombards were the last to abandon their Arian beliefs accepting the trinity in AD 653. Although it appeared that the flame of truth was snuffed out, another candle of light appeared in the late 4th Century — a person

by the name of Vigilantius, born in Southern France, near the Pyrenees Mountains. Vigilantius was interested in God’s word, but he saw many falsehoods in the Roman Catholic Church. He witnessed some of the ecclesiastical riots that were occurring on a regular basis. One was when Damasus was elected Pope (AD 366). The dissensions in Rome were so violent that the gates of the Basilica, where his rival (Ursinus, Anti-Pope) was consecrated, were broken open, the roof torn off, the building was set on fire, and 137 persons were killed.

Similar riots also took place in Palestine, and it was stated “that their private quarrels (that is the churches) were as furious as the Barbarians!” He saw that the church was not following scripture when they forbade married men to act as priests, or for priests to marry, that so called religious orders were springing up into a Monastic life of self denial and austerities, religious processions, worship of relics, all night vigils of prayers for the dead, acceptance of Sunday as the holy sabbath day. He was not the only one to speak out against the errors of the false church — but what is quite notable, is that these others — such as Helvidius (4th Century) and Jovinian (4th Century) were all from Northern Italy and that is the area that the Waldenses had settled in. Until recently they were thought to have originated from a man called Peter Waldo who was born in the 12th Century, but this is not accepted today as it appears that these Waldenses were actually the fruitage of these Italians of the early 4th Century. In fact Vigilantius has been called the “Forerunner of the Reformation” (Quote from William Stephen Gilly, *Vigilantius and His Times*, page 12). Also, a quote from the book by George Faber, *The ancient Vallenses and Albigenses*, pages 275-279, called him “one of the earliest of our protestant forefathers.”

Note: If you would like more articles on the early History of the Church in the Wilderness, please let us know!

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“The Lord is Risen Indeed”

The story of our Lord’s resurrection is one of exquisite despair and beauty. The crucifixion had smitten the Shepherd and scattered the sheep. In grief and silence the faithful few had removed the body from the cross and laid it in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

It was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses and Salome who brought the spices to anoint the body. In the dim dawn of the day following the Sabbath they stole to the tomb. The thought of the resurrection did not occur to them. They thought only that the grave had been rifled. One of them, Mary Magdalene, fled away, blind to everything but her own loss, saying, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” The angels in the tomb gave to the other two the glad truth, “He is not here, He is risen, as He said.” Before this truth was brought home to them, they were in despair, their hopes were buried. They had entertained high hopes, but now since Jesus had died, their hopes were dashed. How different when the fact of the resurrection was made known—what joy replaced their despondency! It became true to them, “We are begotten to a lively hope by His resurrection.”

Because He lives, we have grounds for hoping that we shall live also. In His resurrection lies our assurance. It is an interesting study to trace the harmony on this subject between the various writers of the Bible. Matthew, Mark and Luke, Peter, John, and Paul, all make mention of His resurrection. Each account is different, depending on the point of view of the writer, but they are unanimous in affirming the fact that Jesus died and rose from the dead. Remarkably, it is not difficult to combine these various accounts and arrange them into one connected and complete picture. By so doing, we perceive our Lord’s first work was of consoling and encouraging.

He first appeared to the women, turning their sorrow to joy. This was early in the morning, the same day He arose. Then He appeared, the same day in the afternoon, to the two disciples going to Emmaus. As a stranger He talked with them, and finally revealed Himself to them, by the familiar way in which He broke bread with them. Unable to contain themselves, they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the good news.

They were witnesses not only of all the wonderful things He had done; they were witnesses not only of the fact that He was crucified and buried but witnesses especially of His resurrection. How thankful we are that these records have been preserved for the Church today.

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Death of Both Head and Body of Victim Necessary

The brethren understood that they were called to be “members of the Body of Christ” and that it would be after the completion of this “Body” that the Lord’s favour would return to natural Israel, and that He would build again the tabernacle of David which had fallen down; that through them as members of the great Benefactor or Mediator of the New Covenant, a blessing might go to the world and “that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom God’s name is called” (Acts 15:16,17). The brethren addressed were reminded that the death of the Testator was necessary to these: not only the death of Jesus as the original testator to give the blessing to the Church, His Body, but also the death of the Church, His members, under His Headship, to again serve as Testator, and to die, so as to leave those restitution rights for the benefit of Israel and the world under the New Covenant.

Central Purpose of the Book of Hebrews

Let us never lose sight of the central purpose for which this Book was written — that it was to prove that the law Covenant must give way, give place, to the New Covenant. Hence all the things connected with the typical law Covenant should be expected to have antitypes in connection with the antitypical New Covenant. Thus, the sacrifices of the law, which came at the beginning of their year on the Day of Atonement, before the sins of the people could be forgiven, must here find parallel in “better sacrifices” than the bullock and the goat. The New Covenant cannot go into effect until these antitypical sacrifices are accomplished. He thus proved the inferiority of everything Jewish and connected with the law Covenant; that all Christians might see that instead of going back to that or holding on to it, they should rather be grasping, looking forward to the antitypes, and grasping their share in the “better sacrifices.”

In verse 24, of the 9th chapter of Hebrews, the Apostle indicates how much of the sacrificing has already been finished; namely, that the High Priest has gone into the “most holy,” “now to appear in the presence of God for us” — for Spiritual Israel. But he adds we must not expect him to do this every year, as it was done in the type. We must not think that Christ’s sacrifice could avail us only in conjunction with the Jewish institutions as additional thereto. To so suppose would imply that such annual sacrifices would have been necessary from the foundation of the world. But this was not the case: Abraham and others were justified by faith before the Law Covenant was instituted. In the end of the age

Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as men-priests are appointed to die, as symbolically represented in the animals they sacrificed, and as they after this passed into the Holy, and were there put on Judgment, or tested before they entered the “Most Holy,” so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, and, to them that are looking for Him, He shall appear the second time, not as a sin-offering, but to grant the salvation secured by the merit of His sacrifice — to inaugurate the New Covenant, and as its Mediator to set up its kingdom for the overthrow of sin and death and the establishment of righteousness and life.

Two Offerings In One

Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, the Apostle says. His type shows us two offerings, yet the two were parts of one. The first represented the Head, and the second, the Body. The two sacrifices of the Day of Atonement were really one, because the second was based upon the first. The offering as a whole was evidently for the sins of the whole world. Evidently, as the Apostle says, the next thing to be expected, to be waited for, is His finishing His sacrificial work, finishing the sprinkling of the blood the second time, and then coming out, as typed in the high priest clothed “in garments of glory and beauty,” representative of His elements of glory and power. He will stand forth as the Mediator of the New Covenant, the great Messiah, Prophet, Priest, King and Judge.

Recognising Under-priests as Members of the High Priest

Only those who recognise that the under-priests are the members of the High Priest can appreciate this picture. The Lord by His own blood justified us, His Church, His prospective members, when “He ascended up on high, there to appear in the presence of God for us” as our Advocate and High Priest — to sprinkle the Mercy-Seat — to satisfy divine justice on our behalf. He began His secondary offering of His “members” as soon as the Father accepted His offering for us at Pentecost.

Lord’s Goat vs. Consecrated at Pentecost

There “the Lord’s goat” was killed, sacrificed, and the ignominious burning outside the camp commenced. What was done with those ready at Pentecost has continued to be done with their successors since for now nearly nineteen centuries. The sacrificing, burning, etc., have continued, just as in the figure of the High Priest’s anointing, the oil ran down to his feet, so antitypically the holy spirit has come upon

each “member” accepted as a joint-sacrificer. The Lord mean time sits at the right hand of Divine favour, awaiting the consummation of the burning of His sacrifice — expecting or waiting until then to make the final sprinkling of His blood “for all the people” before Justice shall turn over to Him the control or dominion of the world for reconstruction, during the Millennium, under the terms of the New Covenant.

Appearing the Second Time

The appearing a second time is to the waiting people — the groaning creation waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God” in the glory of the Kingdom (Romans 8:19, 22). It is wholly different from His coming, or Parousia, during the harvest time to the Church. His appearing will be in power and great glory, yet only to be recognised by Israel and the world as they shall look for and seek for His Kingdom. “When He shall appear, we also (His members) shall appear with Him in glory.”

Sanctified Through the Offering of the Body

In the 10th chapter Paul proceeds along the same line, proving that Jesus is the great High Priest. He represents Him as saying, “lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” (verse 9). Christ there began the taking away of the first, the typical Covenant, that He might establish the second, the antitypical Covenant. Verse ten shows how we, who have become His disciples, are sanctified by accepting His will and saying, as He did, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” We are sanctified through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ because we, accepted as members of His Body, are set apart to this great priestly, kingly, mediatorial work with Him. Incidentally notice here that previously we were “justified” through the merit of Jesus’ sacrifice, but that now we are sanctified through the offering of the Body. It is only as we obtain this great privilege of sacrificing as members of His Body that we can have any expectancy of participation with Him in His glory. This Body was offered once for all. The individual members of the Church are not offered separately. The one “Lord’s goat” represented the one entire Body of Christ, the “little flock,” all who, during this Gospel Age will be accepted as members and lay down their lives in sacrifice with Him. In verse twelve Paul shows that this one sacrifice of Christ (in two parts, Head and Body) having been offered (the Head at Jordan, the Body at Pentecost), our Lord rests from any further sacrificing, knowing that full satisfaction will be affected by the work already accomplished.

Perfection of Mankind Awaits Consummation of Church’s Consecration

The great Priest has since waited until the Father’s time for putting all things of earth into subjection under Him; because by the one offering (in its two parts), He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. That is to say, the first part of His offering justified His members and their participation in the second part effected their sanctification and secured for them a share in the First Resurrection. Moreover, the

perfecting of all mankind who shall eventually be saved during the Millennium will be the result of Christ’s one sacrifice in its two parts (bullock and goat). As a result of these “better sacrifices,” eventually all mankind shall have an opportunity of becoming sanctified, holy, perfect. The Apostle says that the holy spirit through Jeremiah’s prophecy (31:31) witnessed to this, testified to this ultimate efficacy of the antitypical priest’s work. Then he quotes this reference of the New Covenant, “after those days,” and assures us that when the time of remission of sins shall have come, there will be no more offering for sin. Thank God that with the end of this Age, when the sufferings of the Body of Christ will be finished, then, all sacrificing opportunities being ended, the opportunities for blessing mankind through the merit of those sacrifices will be only beginning!

Under-Priests Now Entering the Holies

In verse nineteen the Apostle reverts to the fact that while this great work is still incomplete, we, brethren (prospective under-priests), may have the boldness (courage) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; we may by faith realise ourselves as under-priests, members of the High Priest’s Body, joint-sacrificers with Him and -under His ministration. We may enjoy now the privileges and blessings of the Holy and be assured that, as members of the great High Priest, and Mediator, we may ultimately go beyond the veil, even into heaven itself, entering that glorious plane of life through sharing with Him in His death. This special way He consecrated for us as the High Priest, by making the merit of His death, typified by the blood of the bullock, applicable to us, permitting us in the strength of that justification to sacrifice with Him and to become His members in glory.

Forsake Not Assembling

Paul exhorts all these fellow members to hold fast to their faith, to provoke one another to love, to not forsake the assembling of themselves, etc. If Moses’ Law inflicted a death penalty, assuredly the one who would willingly transgress under greater light would suffer a more severe punishment. The punishment of those under Moses’ Law was death, but not Second Death, because they had not secured release from the first death; but for us who have been released by “faith in His blood” and who have been consecrated, joined with Him in sacrifice — for us to do despite all the favours and privileges of God’s grace; for us to ignore the great High Priest, for us to count as a common thing our engagement, our consecration to share with our Lord in His death, in His sacrifice, in the blood of the New Covenant, this would mean the taking of ourselves completely out of all of the Divine arrangements intended for our blessing. Verse thirty shows that this is no idle suggestion of the Apostle. We are to remember Him with whom we have been dealing, Him through whose mercy in Christ we have been justified and Him whose holy spirit we received

as an earnest of our inheritance when we presented our bodies living sacrifices, in harmony with His call, that we might become joint heirs with Jesus in glory. To forfeit all this would be a fearful thing — the Second Death.

Cast Not Away Your Confidence

However, the Apostle urges, let us not be discouraged, but remember our past experiences, our illumination, and the afflictions which we have endured, and let us not cast away our confidence, and faithfulness, for the reward will be great. Chapter eleven deals with the faithfulness of God's people during the past ages and dispensations, and, closing, tells us that there is a reward for all of those faithful ones in God's great plan, but something far better still for us, the members of the Body of the Messiah, the Mediator, Priest and King, so that they, without us, should not be made perfect; or, as Paul says in Romans 11:31, "Through your mercy they also may obtain mercy." And then, through them under the New Covenant, Israel and all the nations will receive their intended share of the same Divine mercy, passed through Christ and then through the Church, His Body.

Consecrated Should Consider Ancient Worthies

Chapter twelve still addresses this consecrated priestly class. It suggests that these servants and handmaids, specially begotten of the holy spirit, specially called, having the "high calling," specially devoted to sacrifice, should think of the Ancient Worthies and the faithful witness for God and the Truth which they bore — to which they witnessed by their martyrdom, that these may strengthen us and encourage us to run faithfully in the race that is set before us. He urges that these prospective kings and priests look away from the afflictions and persecutions incidental to their sacrifice and loyalty to Christ; that they look to Jesus, the author of their faith, who is also to be its finisher; that they remember His example and what He endured and that everyone whom the Father accepts into the house of sons under this call must expect to have chastisings, disciplines and various testings of faith and obedience for the development and crystallization of character. He exhorts (verse 15) that we shall watch diligently, lest any fail of attaining to the full privilege of God's grace. And he warns that roots of bitterness may come and defile, and also that, yielding to the pleasures of sin for a season, would signify the selling of this great birthright — that Esau got the mess of pottage, but that Jacob got the birthright by his self-denial, and that similarly we are to endure.

The Inauguration of the Law Covenant Typed the Institution of the New Covenant

The reason for all this carefulness on the part of the consecrated under-priests is that they have not come to (have not approached) Mt. Sinai and the wonderful sights and scenes incidental to the inauguration of the law Covenant, but they have approached (Strong's lexicon, come near) to Zion, a Mountain and City of

the living God — the Heavenly Jerusalem. We have come so near to the antitypical Mount, the Kingdom of God, so near to the antitypical New Jerusalem that we already by faith behold that New Jerusalem, that glorified Church, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, from which the blessings are to flow to Israel and the world, as figuratively coming down from heaven to earth. We are surely nearer to that glorious consummation than was the Apostle. If he could say that the Church of Christ, following Him, their leader, had approached or were approaching or coming near to that heavenly Kingdom condition, how truly may we assent to this today. "Evidently now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed" — nearer than when the first members of the Body of Christ walked in this narrow way of self-sacrifice.

Contrasting Things Expected Soon With the Past

The Apostle proceeds to contrast the things which we may soon expect at the inauguration of the New Covenant with Israel with those things which occurred as types in the inauguration of the Law Covenant. He continues not only are we approaching or coming nearer every day to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Kingdom condition, but also coming nearer to our association with the holy angels, whose numbers are innumerable, whereas ours are limited — 144,000. More than this, we are approaching, coming near, to the "general assembly of the Church" by participation in the "First Resurrection" — "His Resurrection" (Philippians 3:10), for we are "members of His Body." Additionally, we are approaching God, the Judge of all; soon we shall be ushered into the presence of the great King Eternal. As the Apostle declares, our Lord, our Redeemer, our Advocate, having had charge of us during the period of our schooling and sacrificing, and as the Father's representative, having raised us from the dead to glory, honour, and immortality, "will present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). He is the Judge of all. To fall into His hands now, during the sacrificing period and before we have finished our course, would mean to fall out of the hands of our Redeemer and Advocate and to insure condemnation to the Second Death. But then, to be presented before Him faultless will signify that the great Judge will approve us, even as He approves all the holy angels.

Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect

Additionally, we are approaching, or coming near, to the "spirits of just men made perfect." This would seem to apply to the "great company," who will be justified in spirit through destruction of the flesh, though they fail in their sacrificing agreement and will not, therefore, be of the Body of the Christ, Priest, Mediator, King of glory. Next, we read that we have come near to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant. He was prophesied from of old to be the Messiah of Israel and the Messenger or Mediator of Israel's Covenant. He is our Bridegroom, our Advocate, our Head. We, His members, shortly will be forever with our Lord and see

Him as He is and share with Him the glorious work of His Mediatorial Kingdom, by which Israel first, and through Israel all the nations, will receive the blessing of the Spiritual Seed of Abraham.

Then the New Covenant, having been sealed, so far as Divine Justice is concerned, by the application of the precious blood, passed through the Church and made effective “for all the people,” the time will come for the application of the blood of sprinkling to all the people — during the Millennium.

Type and Antitype of Sprinkling Law and People

In the type we read that in instituting the Law Covenant, Moses sprinkled first the Book of the Law, representing Divine Justice, and then, on the basis of this satisfaction, his Mediatorial work began toward the people, and was typically represented by the sprinkling of them with the same blood of the Covenant. So, in the antitype, Our Lord’s blood (the blood of the bullock, Leviticus 16 was applied on our behalf — on behalf of His Body and His house and secured the forgiveness of our sins and opened the “new and living way” for our sanctification — for our privilege of sharing with Him in “His death,” partaking of “His cup.” Finally, when the Church shall have finished using the blood, and, by God’s grace through it, shall have attained to Divine nature in glory, that same merit (as the blood of the Lord’s goat) will be applied “for all the people” at the close of this Age by sealing the New Covenant.

Settling All Claims of Divine Justice

This second application for the people, “For the sins of the whole world,” will settle completely all the claims of Divine Justice against every member of Adam’s race and put the future interests of all into the hands of the Mediator — Jesus, and the Church, His Body. Forthwith the work of reconciliation manward will begin. This is represented as the sprinkling of the people with the blood of the New Covenant.

Each one of Adam’s race, as he comes into proper relationship with the Lord, will receive his share of the sprinkled blood until, by the close of the Millennial Age, when the great Mediator shall turn over His Kingdom to the Father, every member of Adam’s race will have had fullest opportunity to enjoy his share in this sprinkling. Does that symbolical sprinkling in any sense of the word imply condemnation, responsibility for the blood of Christ, as in Abel’s case, when his blood figuratively was said to call to God for vengeance upon his murderer? Oh no! While the death of Christ and of many of His members has been of violence, yet this fact will not call for vengeance, because the life was voluntarily surrendered a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The sprinkling of the blood of the New Covenant upon all the people during the Millennial Age, then, will mean the impartation to each one of his share of the great blessing secured by the sacrifice accomplished by our Lord, “the Lamb of God which taketh away (eventually) the sin of the world.”

“Him that Speaketh from Heaven”

The Apostle intimates that our ascended and glorified Lord is to speak from heaven at the time indicated, the time to which we approach or come near. The prophet tells us that all the blind eyes shall be opened to see Him, to recognise His dominion; and that all the deaf ears shall be unstopped to hear, to comprehend, His message. And Peter, speaking of that same time, declares, “It shall come to pass that the soul that will not obey that Prophet (Jesus the Head and the Church His Body raised up during this Gospel Age) shall be destroyed from amongst the people” (Acts 3:23).

A Warning from Paul

The Apostle interrupts his argument respecting the future, to throw out a cautionary suggestion to the under priests, the members of the Body of Christ, saying, “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” Our eyes and our ears have been opened in advance of the world’s. We have been greatly blessed by this Divine favour. But our responsibility is proportionate to our favour. If we refuse the instructions of our Head, our Lord; if we submit ourselves not to the disciplines in the School of Christ; if we neglect to share in His death and to present our bodies living sacrifices, in harmony with our covenant; if we, as the branches, do not bear the fruit of the Vine, our trial for eternal life may end adversely.

Speaking Yet Once More

Resuming his narrative of the great thing to which we approach, or come near, the Apostle continues to contrast between these coming things pertaining to the New Covenant with the inauguration of the typical law Covenant. He says, “Whose voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven” — the earth symbolising society, and the heaven symbolising ecclesiasticism. The Apostle comments on the prophecy, saying that this expression yet once more implies such a thorough work of the shaking that everything that is temporary, out of accord with the Divine order, shall be shaken out, so that, at the beginning of the Mediatorial Kingdom and the administration of the New Covenant nothing will remain in power or organisation except those things which cannot be shaken, because of their harmony with God.

Holding Fast

Continuing this thought that then we shall be with our Lord as His members, participating in His Mediatorial work, we read, that Since, therefore, we are to receive an unshakable Kingdom, with reverence and godly fear we are to hold fast to the grace of God bestowed upon us, which will permit us to serve God acceptably (not only now sacrificially, but also in the administration of the Kingdom), for gracious as our God is, He is consuming fire towards all unrighteousness.