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Written on the Heart

“You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Corinthians 3:2-3 NASB).

The word Epistle in the KJV has the thought of a written letter or written message such as the epistles written by Paul Peter James and John which we have available in our Bibles today. The epistles written by these Apostles have had a profound impact on the followers of Christ, Christians for over 2000 years.

However, when we come to “Epistle of Christ” we find that there is no such written letter or message. While Jesus was on earth, all his messages to the disciples and the public were in parables, sayings, and instructions by the spoken word. The first Epistle written by Paul to the Thessalonians was from about 50 AD, and the first Gospels around 70 AD.

So, the words “Epistle of Christ” cannot be taken literally but must be taken figuratively. The clue to this is shown in verse two “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men.” We are to make sure that we are following the example set by Christ while he was on earth.

One of the most amazing examples that Jesus showed was at the Last Supper. The disciples had failed to take the task of washing Jesus and the disciples feet. Jesus taught them by his example “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:14-16 NASB).

Peter gives another example “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to

Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:21-23 NASB).

Jesus while on earth showed compassion on the children (Matthew 19:13-14 NASB). Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” He showed compassion and not judgement on the sick, the blind, the lame, those who were oppressed, shunned by the religious leaders. We cannot heal the sick, the blind the lame but Paul reminds us “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3-5 NASB).

To be an Epistle of Christ means that those who see us, both amongst the brethren and the world should know that we have been with Christ. When Peter and John were brought before the Council the Sadducees saw them as fishermen uneducated, but once they

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had spoken, we read “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13 NASB). Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12 NASB). Note, not to glorify God necessarily now, but in the age to come.

“Being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh” (2 Corinthians 3:3 ASV). Apostle Paul covers three ways that the Epistle of Christ could be written.

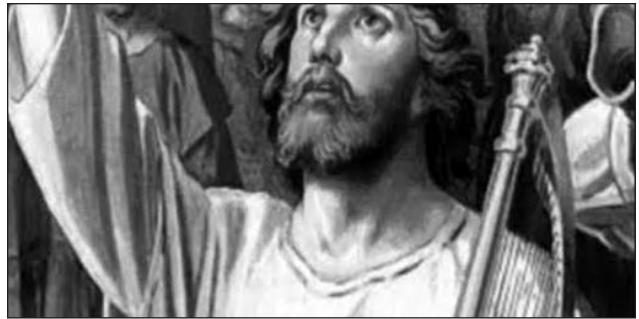
In Ink

Paul’s epistle would have been written on parchment or papyrus with a reed pen and carbon-based ink. These letters would then be passed around the Churches and often copied. The problem was the copies were not always 100% accurate and of course were subject to interpretation after the writer died.

Written in Stone

We are told “He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18 NASB). Being written in stone would give the words of the ten commandments longevity. However, they can be broken as happened when Moses saw the golden calf. We are then told “Now the LORD said to Moses, ‘Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered’ ” (Exodus 34:1 NASB).

Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB). From this verse we realise that all scripture is inspired by God regardless on how it is recorded.



David, the Psalmist

Written in our Hearts

In being written onto our hearts there has to be a change in our heart. The palmist writes “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart” (Psalms 40:8 NASB). We must change our outlook from one of wanting to do the carnal things of the flesh, to become imitators of Christ. The Apostle writes “in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:22-23 NASB).

The more effort we put into learning God’s will, and put on Christ, the more the Epistle of Christ will be written in our hearts. It takes time to study, to learn more of what the Heavenly Father wants us to do, more about His plan for mankind. Although the words are written to natural Israel, the following can apply to us on the narrow way as we give our lives to Christ. “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezekiel 36:25-27 NASB).

This journey starts at our consecration and continues until our death. If we are faithful, we are promised the crown of life. On the journey we are given this promise “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8 NASB).

Are You Unleavened?

The amazing Apostle Paul makes an intriguing statement in 1 Corinthians 5:7, one we are all very familiar with. There he states for us to “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump as ye are UN-leavened. And — as you recall — he goes on to say: “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” As you read this each Memorial season, does it not seem to make you question: Why does the apostle draw our attention to the Memorial — in the context of what precedes this verse? Does it not seem a little strange that the topic has been on

“fornication” and a man having his “father’s wife”? Why is a sobering statement that is the theme text of our Sixth Volume Passover/Memorial study inserted here, in this context?

As we all know, sin is illustrated by “leaven” in the Bible. The Apostle was trying to point the Corinthian brethren, and really all Christians for the next 2000 years, that anywhere, but especially in the ecclesia or church arrangement, sin will corrupt. And it can be contagious. In this fifth chapter particularly, it was the sin of literal fornication; and apparently the

early church Corinthians did not see how corruptibly evil it was. Apparently they were so surrounded by fornication in their worldly environment of sensual life in Corinth, that they did not realize that its environmental osmosis was threatening the sanctification of the Church. Could our unholy culture be even worse today? This particular situation was even one of the most egregious, namely, a man fornicating with his father's wife — apparently a stepmother. To make it worse, the Corinthians were not taking proper measures to "save the sinner from the error of his way" and allowing him to still associate in the meetings without a proper repentance and demonstration of heart contrition. Could this contamination of sin infiltrate the brethren and set an unholy precedent? Could improper handling of the matter even split the ecclesia? Serious consequences threatened the cohesiveness of the Lord's mystical body unless the leaven was properly dealt with — for the main purpose of saving the sinner from the error of their way — and keeping the ecclesia sanctified from such worldly practices of immorality.

What is Sin?

But what is sin? How would you define it? Where did it begin? The Bible tells us that "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). Psalms 19:8 says "the statutes of the Lord are right" and the "judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (see verses 7 through 12). So, would not you say that sin is disobedience to God's instructions, statutes, and commands? It therefore appears that the scriptures define sin as that which is "not right," or opposed to God's commands; that which is scripturally specified by Jehovah as "not right" — iniquity. It fails the tests of justice or fairness and the royal law of love (Hebrews 1:9). How can a world, let alone a universe, operate peacefully and in harmony without total universal love and justice? To succeed in an ultimate universal and harmonic equilibrium, pervasive in tranquil peace and order, the primary rootage of these two principles must be totally operative at all times. Sin cannot exist now or ever for such peaceable results to be attained.

So where did sin originate? How can one go further back than the "mind" of Satan himself for its origin? How could something unrighteous come out of something originally created perfect? And how could sin have gone back further than being conceived in the mind of Satan? Was uncreated pride or perhaps jealousy the first sprout of sin's origin? (Isaiah 14:12-14). Could pride or jealousy be elements of sin that are hiding in our own hearts that need to be thoroughly purged by the sanctifying energy and healing balm of the holy scriptures? Thoroughly purged by holy substance of faith, love, and loyalty in Jehovah God (Hebrews 11:1). A being totally focused on glorifying and pleasing God can hardly fall into a trap of pride, jealousy, or selfishness. Darkness cannot come out of light, unless the light be turned off. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5-7).



Are we unleavened?

Other common denominators of sin are selfish lust or desire of any kind. Are not most moral offenses committed in the world ultimately traced to selfishness in some form or another? And could not selfishness be a tributary of pride? That is why the sin of pride — to whatever extent or proportion we allow it to lurk in the caverns of our heart — threatens and disables proportionately the co-laboring and workmanship of Jehovah's hands, to mold us as new creatures in Christ.

Manifestation of Sin

Sin can manifest itself in many forms, namely: idolatry, covetousness, anger, malice, selfishness, pride, evil surmising and evil speaking, witchcraft, strife, heresies, murders, false witness, lying, and more. Even exaggerations can be a form of lying, because we are "stretching the truth" to make our point. When we stretch the truth, we are actually in the territory of lying. Let us not be too quick to dismiss and pass over a careful introspective look in the holy laver of reflection, to determine whether you and I have any of these leavened elements hiding in our hearts as camouflaged enemies. Quickly find them and destroy them on sight. Our zealous efforts and intentions on doing so will determine, in part, our level of heavenly reward. Earnest efforts of intention go a long way with Jehovah, even with our imperfect results. Jesus said, "Be ye perfect [in perfecting your intentions] even as your Father in heaven is [actually] perfect." Nothing short of these efforts is acceptable to God. Purity of heart is a primary base for building the faith superstructure required in sonship for Jehovah (James 3:17). Yes, dear brethren, it is a high standard, requiring painstaking effort. But attached to it is a very high reward — the highest reward that will probably ever be offered. It is the best bargain imaginable (Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:4, 2 Peter 1:4).

When we celebrate the memorial of our precious Lord's death, we are appropriating by faith the immeasurable value of his meritorious blood for our own justification to be made "right" in the sight of God. In the divine eye we become "legally perfect," in a reckoned sense, by the imputation of that merit. We are then made "holy" and can present

ourselves as acceptable unto God, through the blood of Christ (Romans 5:9, 12:1). The power in the written word of God, the energizing force for positive spiritual growth, gives us our fuel for the process of sanctification. We are not only purging ourselves of sin and introspectively searching the crevasses of our hearts at Memorial time, but we need to seriously do this every single day throughout the whole year and throughout our whole lives as Christian sons. It is a “life and death” struggle for existence. Either we are born in the Spirit eventually, or we will never exist at all, ever! We are never coming back to life in the Kingdom on earth because we gave up our human life rights at consecration (1 John 3:1).

We have an entire human race to morally change in the processes of human restoration in the glorious kingdom of God, someday. In the billions of awakened humanity, the elements of sin will be pervasive and need to be purged thoroughly from the human race as quickly as possible in each individual. We, the spirit-minded Christian sons of God, if faithful, will be the tools of transformation, with our King, Christ Jesus, because of the totality of experiences in the composite Body of “the Lamb’s wife.” That has enormous value to Jehovah, as well as for human restoration in its totality, and God’s ultimate purpose and goal.

The Highway of Holiness

How can we teach humanity the arduous processes of change as they walk up the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35), if we do not understand the difficulties of transformational change ourselves? We are a people for a purpose, God’s divine purpose, sacrificing and crucifying our flesh, mortifying sin entrenched in the depths of our being, purging ourselves, so we can be meet for the Master’s use as “the second Eve” of “the second Adam” in uplifting and blessing **all** the families of the earth. But again, **how** can we teach others what we ourselves have not learned? If we are not sanctified individually and collectively, through internalizing God’s instructions in righteousness and a resolution to love God with **all** our heart, mind, soul, and strength — then how will we ever be equipped to help Christ bring people back to human perfection? If we are not completely submissive to the divine disciplines and tailor made experiences of supervised instruction, how can we be successful candidates for the processes of mankind’s at-one-ment? (Not atonement. That was Jesus Christ alone. But bringing “at-one-ment” of the human race to God.)

Therefore, I submit, that what the Apostle Paul was pointing us to in part, was that the purging processes from sin are essential goals to worship and serve God, individually and collectively, with a very sincere and resolute heart — with the internalization of the Truth and its powerful effects for positive change. A heart so committed cannot intelligently associate and have any communion with someone who is out of accord with that spirit of sanctification — that spirit of oneness, that breaks the bread of communion and



The Memorial emblems represent the blood and body of Jesus.

drinks from the cup of the symbolic body and blood of Jesus Christ. We cannot help but associate with fornicators, idolaters, drunkards and the like in the workplace, at school, in the neighborhood, or even in a family — where we **have** to — for a season of time and temporal purpose. But we do not and should not associate with anyone who claims the name of Christ that practices such things. Proper steps like those given in Matthew 18 for the purposes of rehabilitation of the sinner are mandatory from the commandment of Jesus. Jesus said, “If you love me, **keep** my commandments” (John 14:15).

In this 1 Corinthians 5 context, this same spirit of divine devotion to Jehovah and our Lord Jesus wants nothing to do with idolatry in **any** form. Not just stone or wood idols, but idols of self, or of others, idols of material things, jobs, sports, families, or selfish human desires of any form, that would compete for our time, attention, and adoration of Jehovah, the ultimate source for a perfect life and righteous happiness — and a truly meaningful purpose. Without taking another careful look at the “laver,” we might not even realize we have hidden idols in our camel’s saddlebag, like Rachel did. Remember? (Genesis 31:34).

Dearly beloved in Christ, let us make prayerfully sure that we do things in a proper and holy way in the eyes of God. Let us show Him our loyalty to the Truth and our incredible love for Him and the precious son that He adores; by “keeping the holy commandments” that we are given. All of them. Let us faithfully serve our merciful and loving heavenly Father in “sincerity and truth,” purging daily any leaven that stealthily lurks in our hearts or minds, that we may shine forth with the precious light of Truth we have been given, and emit a fragrant odor of Christ Jesus in our lives (2 Corinthians 2:14-15, Diaglott). Let us internalize the Truth, so we do not just understand it, but soak ourselves in it, so that it absorbs into and penetrates every fiber of our transformed being, with rich fruitage of the spirit and the principles of righteousness. Again, let us do this throughout the whole year, evaluating and scrutinizing daily, but especially at our Memorial season. As determined Christian soldiers may we fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, with the energizing power and love of the Truth that God has so graciously given us; that we might all be to the praise of His divine glory. Amen.

Obedient to the Heavenly Vision

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision"
(Acts 26:19).

These words were part of Paul's answer to charges that had been made against him by the Jews. God had given Paul a vision of understanding, the significance of which to the apostle was that the remaining days of his life were to be spent in the service of Christ whom, previously, he had persecuted and whose followers he had put to death. The far-reaching implications of Paul's vision of truth involve a relationship to the Lord which illustrates what God's promises have meant to His faithful servants throughout the ages.

Paul had been a student of the Old Testament Scriptures. He had been zealous of the faith of his fathers. He would have had clearly in mind the many incidents of the past in which God favored His ancient prophets with special visions that were calculated to change the entire course of their lives. Being thus acquainted with the way God selects and authorizes his special servants to lay down their lives for him, Paul knew instantly when he was struck down on the road to Damascus that God was calling him to a great service. It was in response to this that he lifted his heart and voice to the Lord, saying, "What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

Later, Paul understood from the words he received from Ananias that the Lord intended this vision to have more than a passing effect in his life. He knew its meaning went beyond merely refraining from further persecutions of those who followed Jesus of Nazareth. It revealed that not only was he wrong in persecuting these disciples of the Master, but also that he was being called to be a "chosen vessel" to bear God's "name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:6-17).

Paul's Vision

The vision given to Paul in Acts 9 is only a partial rendering of his commission from the Lord. Only in his testimony before King Agrippa do we find the full account of the vision given at his conversion. Beginning with Acts 26:16, we read these words of the risen Lord spoken to Saul, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet." This statement we find in the Acts 9 account. The rest of the vision that Paul relates to Agrippa is not recorded in Acts 9. Paul then states the rest of the words of the Lord spoken to him on that momentous day: "I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to

God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:16-18 NASB). What a vision, what a commission, was given to Paul by God through the risen Lord!

Paul might well have responded to the heavenly vision merely with a feeling of appreciation that God had called his attention to his wrongdoing, ceased from his wrong course, and returned to his normal life as a devout follower of the Jewish law. In the ordinary affairs of his life, he might have had many opportunities to tell others of how marvelously God had dealt with him and of how merciful he had been in sparing him from further humiliation because of his wrong course of persecuting Christians. He may have borne witness that Jesus was indeed the Christ. However, Paul knew that the vision meant more than this to him. He realized that God, through the vision, was calling him to devote the remainder of his life to serving the interests of the one he had previously persecuted.

Paul was most likely well acquainted with Isaiah's account of the vision with which God had favored him. This is recorded in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, accounting how that vision unfolded to Isaiah. He heard God saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah understood this to be a personal question addressed to him, and he responded saying, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8). Paul recognized that the vision the risen Lord gave him on the road to Damascus contained an implication of the same question, and, in a similar spirit of devotion to God, he responded: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

Isaiah's Vision

Although there is a prophetic application to the vision given to Isaiah, as indicated by John 12:41 and its surrounding context, our consideration of it here will be from Isaiah's perspective at the time the vision was given. The substance of the vision was that it presented to him a mental picture of God's glory, as the prophet says, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). We are not to suppose that Isaiah saw God literally, because the Scriptures explain that no man can see God and live. It was, as the prophet indicates, a vision descriptive of certain characteristics possessed by God. By various means God has similarly revealed himself to all those whom He has invited into His service. These revelations have not always come while the individual was in a trance, or in some other miraculous way. Nevertheless, by some method God

has always made known His will and plan when calling those He desires to take into His confidence and use in His service.

Isaiah in vision saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, "high and lifted up." Those to whom God has truly revealed Himself have always "seen" him in this manner. Those who claim to worship God but depict him as a cruel deity or a triune God are not His. God's position has always been "upon the throne," just as Isaiah observed, and those who have a correct understanding of Him have been made to realize that He is a God whom they delight to worship, and in whose service they are glad to spend their life.

Not only did Isaiah see the Lord "high and lifted up," but also, "his train filled the temple." The word "train" signifies clothing, or robe, and seems to place particular emphasis on the glorious and holy character of God. The prophet saw that the Lord's holy presence and influence, and His honor and great glory, permeated and hallowed everything within the temple. This, in turn, would impress upon Isaiah's mind the fact that if he were to become fully associated with this most glorious being, it could mean nothing else than that God and His divine will was to influence and dominate His every thought and word and deed. There was to be no place for anything else in the prophet's life but God. Brethren, the same must be true of us. "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16 NASB).

So there could be no doubt in Isaiah's mind as to the position of God, the following verses dispel any doubts. "Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:2-3 NASB). The words of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy," indicate that the prophet saw them as representative of God's character attributes, all of which demonstrate His holiness. Isaiah knew that, at the time he saw this vision, the "whole earth" was far from being filled with these holy qualities that would reflect the glory of the Lord. The prophet saw that the time was yet to come for the blessing of all mankind.

Isaiah continues, "The foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:4-5 NASB). Isaiah compares the power and holiness of God compared to his, and the people around him, wretched state. How was he able in this state to proclaim the holiness and perfect plan of God?



Isaiah the prophet

Isaiah's Commission

The vision continues, "Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven" (Isaiah 6:6-7 NASB). God knew of his unclean state but made provision by which his lips could be cleansed. What wondrous grace is here manifested!

It reveals God's ability to use those

who are imperfect by making provision whereby they can serve Him in spite of the handicap of Adamic sin. Isaiah now knew that his service would be acceptable to God, and so, when the question came, "whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Isaiah could answer with confidence, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah received his instructions, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10 NASB). There appears to have been little bright prospect for Isaiah as he entered divine service. He was not to expect that most of the people would rally to the cause. He was to expect, rather, that from the human viewpoint, his entire ministry might well seem to end in utter failure. He was to continue this service irrespective of whether or not the people responded to his message. He even enquired, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people and the land is utterly desolate" (Isaiah 6:11 NASB). In verse 13 he is told that a tenth portion would remain but that even this part would go through great tribulation. The holy seed would survive like a living stump that survives even when the rest is destroyed.

Paul Receives His Commission

Paul's vision came to him under different circumstances from those in which the Lord revealed Himself to Isaiah. In principle, the import of the vision was the same. Paul received a glimpse of the divine character that previously had not been apparent to him. The vision to which Paul later said he was not disobedient, did not all come to him on the road to Damascus. It began there and continued throughout his Christian walk. It was the effect of this greater understanding that later caused the apostle to write, as recorded, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? ... For of him, and through him, and to

him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:33-36).

Paul's sense of his unworthiness to enter the divine service was deeply impressed upon him by the details of the vision in which God called him to be an ambassador. In all good conscience, he had been persecuting the church of Christ. Being an ardent Jew, he would, of course, have been enthusiastic about the promised Messiah, but now it was revealed to him that he was, in fact, opposing that very purpose. In persecuting the followers of Christ, he had been persecuting Christ himself, the long-awaited Messiah. He had been in direct opposition to the purpose of God as it was then being worked out in the hearts and lives of his people. What humility this would engender in Paul's character!

Tracing the experiences of the Apostle Paul, we cannot help but be impressed with the truthfulness of his words spoken to King Agrippa in which he explained that he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision. From the time that he received the Lord's vision on the road to Damascus, until his sacrificial work was completed in Rome, Paul's every talent was devoted to the work of glorifying God. This work led to suffering, privation, imprisonment, stripes, hunger, weariness, persecution, and finally death, yet he never wavered in his determination to be obedient to the heavenly vision. (2 Corinthians 6:4-10; 11:23-31).

Others Who Had Visions in the Bible

The "visions" which came to those such as Isaiah, Paul, and others are not to be identified merely by the special miraculous circumstances that may have accompanied these experiences. Rather, the import in all of these was the understanding of some portion of the divine character and plan that God desired to make known at certain times to various of his servants. It is thrilling to note in the Scriptures the accounts of the understanding that God provided to his people from the days of Abel down to Paul, Peter, John, and others of the apostles. In addition, and of great significance to us, is the understanding of truth through the enlightenment of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, with which the Lord has favored his people since Pentecost, down even to our day now.

Abel was granted sufficient insight into the will of God to exercise his faith by bringing a flesh and blood offering to the Creator. Enoch saw enough of the divine character and plan to enable him to prophesy that the Lord would eventually come to execute judgments in the earth. Enoch was faithful to this vision, the record being that he pleased God. Noah was given understanding, particularly concerning events then due. In the faithful carrying out of his part in the divine arrangement for that time, he cooperated with God in furnishing us valuable information pertaining to the prophetic signs of the time with which this present evil world is coming to a close.

Abraham was given insight into God's character seeing the divine purpose to bless all the families of the earth. God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and continued to reveal many things in connection with His plan which was to be carried out through Israel as types and shadows of greater things to come. These and many others were taken into divine confidence and used to further record the heavenly purposes which, when understood, reveal the true character of God.

When Jesus came at his first advent, he was favored with understanding surpassing anything that had previously been experienced. Matthew 3:16 says, "The heavens were opened unto him." To him the knowledge of the divine arrangement was opened wide, and, because of this, he certainly must have seen, as none other had ever seen, the glory of God. This was the inspiration of his life. "For the joy that was thereby set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 12:2).

The faithful apostles were favored with an understanding of heavenly truths through the enlightening power of God's Holy Spirit. Not all of them in the same way, or circumstances. Nevertheless, they all saw the glory of God as it was revealed in the divine plan of salvation, and they were obedient to that vision.

Visions Fulfilled

In the present "harvest" period, at the end of the Gospel age, a glorious vision of understanding has been made available to God's people through the Scriptures. We have the blessed privilege of joining Isaiah, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts." Jesus promised in Matthew 24:45, 46 that when he returned, he would serve his people "meat in due season." In fulfillment of this promise, a "faithful and wise servant" was used to draw together from the Scriptures the doctrine and principles that constitute the foundation of our faith.

In one sense, there is nothing new in the truths that have been revealed during this harvest period, because they are all based upon the testimony of the Scriptures. However, our present understanding is more glorious than any that has ever been given to God's people previously. This should not surprise us, however, because in its entirety is included the significance and glory of all previous knowledge provided to God's faithful servants.

In our symbolic spiritual vision we find the true meaning of that which was revealed to, and spoken by the mouth of, all God's holy prophets since the world began — the glorious hope of the "restitution of all things," which is now so near at hand (Acts 3:20, 21).

The knowledge of God that we are blessed with reveals His glorious character to us. We see that our Heavenly Father is a God of love. We observe His marvelous and infinite wisdom and see His true

justice and righteousness, and how they work in harmony with His great love. Finally, we understand the necessity of divine power for the carrying out of God's loving designs for the blessing of all the families of the earth. Indeed, our vision of truth harmonizes and expands upon all the insights that previously have been given to the people of God. Thus we can have full confidence in the Word of God, that everything spoken will not return unto him "void," but will accomplish all His righteous purposes and prosper in them (Isaiah 55:11).

Are we obedient to the heavenly vision? God has

favored us with so much spiritual understanding, revealing to us His glorious character in a way that most have not understood nor appreciated. Is that vision of truth continuing to speak to us, as God revealed it to Isaiah and Paul? Is it still saying to us, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" If we still hear that question being re-echoed in our hearts, are we continuing to respond in the words of Isaiah, "Here am I; send me?" If the Gospel message of truth is continuing to mean this to us, are we taking advantage of the opportunities of service which divine providence is setting before us?

The Table of the Lord

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Psalms 23:5).

The "table" to which the Psalmist refers had been prepared for him by the Lord is well illustrated by the oriental shepherd's provision for his sheep. David continues the lesson of the Lord's care for His people by referring to another custom of the shepherd. That was of specially protecting a choice feeding ground from enemies of the sheep, thereby permitting them to graze contentedly and safely.

In that wild terrain where David tended his father's flocks, the sheep were never entirely safe from attack. Often in and around the choicest of the feeding grounds, deadly enemies of the sheep lurked in greater numbers than elsewhere. If the sheep were to benefit from these especially luscious green pastures, extra precaution and watchfulness had to be maintained by the alert shepherd and his assistants. Possibly David referred to this when, in the Shepherd Psalm, he addresses his Lord, saying, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" — that is, directly in the presence of enemies.

What a true illustration of the manner in which God has cared for all His sheep during the Gospel age, particularly those of us who are living at this end of this age. Rich, abundant, and nourishing indeed has been the spiritual food which our Good Shepherd has provided for us. Even though we are surrounded by enemies, His protecting care has enabled us to continue on feeding in peace and quietness. The "table" provided for us consists of all the precious truths of God's Word, His precious promises, His instructions, and the opportunity thus afforded of understanding His plans and purposes. It is these that we live on daily as new creatures in Christ Jesus. Yes, we live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

In a very special way, in fulfillment of His own promise, the Good Shepherd has, at this end of the age prepared a banquet laden table for His "sheep". They have been feasting at this "table" throughout the entire harvest period. This is in harmony with

Jesus' promise that when he returned he would gird himself and serve his people with "meat in due season" (Matthew 24:450). This "meat in due season" has been provided in such abundance. The "Good Shepherd" has indeed prepared a most wonderful "table" for us and in that abundant provision we so much do daily rejoice.

The Present Truth

We are prone to forget how wonderfully the Lord has blessed his people in this end of the age. There is a danger that the truth may become commonplace in our hearts and that we will no longer appreciate it as we should. If we are not sufficiently alert to our privileges it is possible for a spiritual lethargy to creep over us, causing us to become indifferent to the great value of the truth in our lives.

"Meat in due season" is what the Lord has promised to provide for his people. As the Good Shepherd he exactly knows just what his "sheep" need. He knew what was essential for the welfare of the early church. He knew what his people needed throughout the dark Middle Ages. During that dark and threatening time a special place was prepared for them in the "wilderness," where they were nourished for twelve hundred and sixty years (Revelation 12:6,14). Now, in the end of this age, the Good Shepherd is again abundantly providing for his sheep. How soul-satisfying indeed is the "table" he has prepared for us. Also how true it is that it has been prepared in the presence of our enemies!

The Lord's people need the sustenance of present day truth today if they are to remain alive as new creatures. The "weeds" of false doctrine have no power to sustain spiritual life. Erroneous conceptions of Christianity are failing, and those who have nothing better on which to feed are losing their faith in God and in His Word. Unbelief is sweeping over the earth like a tidal wave. The theories of nominal Christendom cannot stand up against it. Only those who know the

truth and who are daily feeding upon it are able to stand firm.

It is said that shepherds of the east, when preparing a “table” for the flock, made sure that no poisonous weeds were growing amidst the grass. How wonderfully this illustrates the Good Shepherd’s care for his sheep during these last days! When our Lord returned, he prepared this abundant table by supplying “meat in due season” for the household of faith. An important phase of his preparation was the removal of the poisonous doctrines of mystic Babylon, that his sheep might feed upon the pure truths of his Word without injury to them as new creatures.

As a result of the foretold falling away from the faith which occurred following the death of the apostles, practically every precious doctrine of the divine plan became totally distorted. Man’s fall into sin and death took on a new and strange meaning. Instead of death being the penalty for sin, it was taught that fallen man was to be eternally tortured in a hell of fire and brimstone! Instead of the hope of salvation meaning that man would have an opportunity of being restored to the paradise he had lost, it meant an escape from the necessity of being tortured forever.

The coming to earth of God’s beloved Son to be the Redeemer of the lost race was distorted to mean that God Himself became incarnate in flesh. The death of Jesus was misinterpreted to mean that God only appeared to die and suffered beyond what a man could physically endure. By some strange quirk of theology it was taught that while Jesus was divine when on earth, after his feigned death and resurrection he returned to heaven as a man, in a human body, scarred by the wounds received at Calvary.

The call and development of the church, which is shown in the Bible is to be a preparation for the later blessing of all the families of the earth, became merely a means of escaping eternal torture. The heavenly promises of the Bible, assuring each one who follows faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus, receives if faithful unto death, glory, honor, and immortality. Having the privilege of reigning with Jesus in his kingdom which will bless the world came to mean, that the only ones to be saved were those who would go to heaven instead of to eternal torture when they died.

The true understanding of the manner and purpose of Christ’s second coming was also totally lost, with the result that his return became associated with what was often thought of as the “crack of doom.” Misconceptions of our Lord’s return included the much feared burning up of the earth and a twenty-four hour judgment day. These are but some examples of the crude notions and weird superstitions which, through the centuries, had replaced the pure doctrines of the Word of God. All of these might very well be classified



God's sheep are well fed.

as “doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1), for surely they represent the cunning mind of the adversary, the arch deceiver of mankind.

Returning to the shepherd and sheep illustration, we might think of all these misconceptions of God’s plan as poisonous weeds which through the centuries had grown up in the feeding grounds of the “sheep.” We can see that in preparing a table of meat in due season for his people in this end period of the Gospel Age, it was essential for the returned

Lord to remove these weeds, so that the pure food of his Word might flourish for the benefit of his people. The thoroughness with which he has done this can be testified to by all who rejoice in the present truth.

Where outright miracles are not required, the Lord used a human messenger in preparing the present truth and laying it out on a table for his people — “that servant” who was “wise” because he humbly followed the directions of God’s Word, and “faithful” to the full extent of actually laying down his life in the service of the Lord, the truth, and the brethren (Matthew 24:45). The monumental library of truth, *Studies in the Scriptures*, stands today as a true banquet of truth for the spiritual nourishment of those who are endeavoring faithfully to follow the Good Shepherd.

Today, through the loving provision of the Good Shepherd, the Lord’s people are able to discern between the nourishing spiritual food of the Scriptures and the errors which through the centuries became associated with the truth. Oh, what a great source of rejoicing this has been to all the consecrated! Instead of marking the end of all hope for the unconverted, the second coming of Christ signals the ushering in of a time of blessing for “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3), the “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

In light of the glorious hope of restitution for mankind, the ransom work of Jesus takes on a depth of meaning that previously was impossible to discern. We now see that the death of Jesus as man’s Redeemer guarantees an opportunity of life for all mankind, the dead as well as the living, and that a provision has been made through the great Mediator of Christ and the church, for the merit and efficacy of the ransom to be testified to all “in due time” (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

With these basic truths of the divine plan freed of the entangling errors which prevented the Lord’s people from discerning their beauty, other features of the plan fell so readily into place like a jig saw puzzle. Each in its own way revealing the glorious attributes of the divine character in a way that increased the faith and hope and love of all, who were privileged thus to feast at the table which the returned Lord had prepared for his “sheep.”

The fall of man, the giving of the Law to the typical house of Israel, the manner and purpose of God's dealings with the fleshly house of Israel, the first advent of Jesus and its manner and purpose, the call of the church and her exaltation to joint-heirship with Jesus in the heavenly phase of the kingdom. In fact, all the doctrines of the divine plan, can now be seen clearly and the truth-hungry "sheep" of the Lord's pasture can feast abundantly upon them in quietness and in assurance.

Our Enemies

This bountiful provision of spiritual food is spread for the Lord's sheep, the Psalmist declares, even in the presence of enemies. How true that is of the experiences of the Lord's people who, while in the world, are not of it. We are surrounded on every side by enemies, enemies that would rob us of the right to enjoy the blessings of the Lord's table, if permitted, and would destroy us as new creatures. Chief among these enemies is Satan, or as the apostle describes him, "your adversary the devil" (1 Peter 5:8).

The devil is a wily foe. His attacks are stealthy and subtle. He endeavors to make the sheep believe he is their friend. Operating through human agencies, he suggests that there is far better food than that which is to be found at the Lord's table. He tries to convince the sheep that poisonous weeds of error are far better for them than the wholesome grass of pure doctrines found within the outline of the divine plan of the ages.

Satan is too clever to suggest openly to the Lord's people that false doctrines are better for them than the truth. His method is to raise doubts in their minds concerning the truth. He appeals to their pride, telling them that they should allow those who do not believe the truth to air their unbelief among them. They are told that they should be "broad-minded," and be willing to give others "the benefit of the doubt."

Those who have been genuinely feasting at the abundant table which the returned Lord prepared for them do not have doubts, and regret that some who seemingly rejoiced in the bounties of this rich spread of truth are now doubting various doctrines. Christian love does not allow that the doubters should be given the privilege of promulgating their unbelief among the sheep. If we follow the instructions of the Good Shepherd, we will be safeguarded against all of these various and insidious attacks of the enemy Satan.

The world is another enemy of the Lord's sheep. The world holds out its allurements to the sheep to attract their attention, their time, and influences them to leave the luscious green pastures of truth and seek satisfaction elsewhere. There are certain obligations which we all have towards those in the world, time and interest in material things come within the category of what Jesus described as the "care" of this world and "the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22). In these and other ways the influences of the world are at enmity with the new creation. Here again the Good



Jesus, our teacher

Shepherd protects us if we but heed his instructions and have faith in his promises.

The Lord's sheep have enemies within as well as without. One of the most formidable enemies we have is our own fallen flesh. The "table" of rich spiritual food which the Good Shepherd prepares for us is for the benefit of the new creature and seldom does the flesh find this diet entirely satisfactory. As the flesh is often in rebellion against the truth because the truth, the "meat in due season," induces those who feed upon it to offer themselves in sacrifice to God, but the flesh shrinks from the thought of sacrifice.

Satan knows how the flesh feels about sacrifice, so he works through our flesh in his efforts to draw us away from the Lord's table. In practically every instance the various viewpoints which are being offered to the Lord's sheep as substitutes for present day truth offer escape from the necessity of sacrifice, either in whole or in part.

A doubting Christian is not a sacrificing Christian, so when through the fleshly mind Satan succeeds in putting doubts in our hearts concerning a doctrine of the truth, the result is that we lose our desire to lay down our lives in sacrifice as witnesses of the truth. The flesh reasons, why should one sacrifice his life for something which he is not sure is the truth? Thereby the flesh finds satisfaction in doubts.

Through the mind of the flesh, Satan has a ready substitute to offer the new creature, a different conception of the Christian life. It is the idea that the true Christian life consists merely of uprightness and morality, and a sense of joy and satisfaction that the Lord is near and will care for all our needs. With this substitute is mingled the false theory that it is really unimportant what we believe with respect to this or that doctrine of the divine plan.

This is not a new deception as it has been used through the entire age. The whole Protestant world has been put to sleep by it. This appeals to the flesh, for in addition to sidestepping the responsibility of sacrifice, except the giving up of sinful things, it tends to put one in a favorable light even in the eyes of the world. Honesty, kindness, and patience are qualities which are appreciated by all right-thinking people. Every Christian should possess these qualities, but they alone they do not constitute one a Christian.

The true Christian life is one of sacrifice, by following in the footsteps of the pattern and template of our dear Lord Jesus. We cannot even begin to follow in his steps until we have cleansed our flesh from sin, and are to the very best of our ability endeavoring to live a morally upright life. Jesus was always perfect. His sacrifice was not that of sinful things, but of his perfect human life. Through the merit of his sacrifice the Lord reckons perfection to us, and upon this basis we can offer our bodies a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) to him, just as Jesus did. The practical outworking of this means the use of our time, our strength, our talents, and our means, in the divine service.

The glorious doctrines of the divine plan reveal this privilege of sacrifice, inspiring us to lay down our lives. As we continue to feed upon the truth, we are strengthened to continue following in the footsteps of Jesus. But if we become weary in well doing, the flesh, with the aid of Satan, is quick to offer a substitute plan, an easier way to follow, a way of less responsibility and sacrifice. If we are not on the alert, we will find ourselves listening sympathetically to his subtleties. The fleshly mind can be quick to agree with the Adversary and will reason that, after all, the Lord does not want us to be extremists. It is all right to bear witness for the truth when it is convenient to do so and when we are sure there is a

hearing ear. But this is only incidental as it is wrong to suppose that God wants us to lay down our lives as his ambassadors, the Adversary tells us.

Again the Good Shepherd comes to our protection if we but give our full consecrated attention to him. We know that he wants us to be upright and pure in thought, word, intention, and deed. In addition to this we note his description of those who qualify to live and reign with him, that of these it is said that they “were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God” (Revelation 20:4). We know from this and many other revealing passages of the Bible that the Good Shepherd has prepared the table of truth in order that we might know the divine plan and be inspired and strengthened to take our place in it as sacrificing followers of him who gave all in order that we might have life.

So, we continue to feed at the Lord’s table and are thereby strengthened to resist all the appealing allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which must be resisted by the new creature. The “table” the Good Shepherd has prepared is thus found to be so bountiful in all its provision of spiritual food, that food is luscious delicate and toothsome. It is so satisfying that all the enemies by which we are surrounded are unable to attract us away from it or to hinder us from continuing to rejoice in the Good Shepherd’s tender and loving care.

The Dawn Bible Student Association has Moved

The Dawn’s began moving the plant operations from New Jersey to Florida in the spring of 2020, though very cautiously due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2021, this transition continued, by the Lord’s grace and over-ruling providence, and with the assistance of many willing hands and hearts.

In the early part of the year, we resumed production of foreign language Dawn magazines, which had been necessary to put on hold for most of 2020 due to the pandemic. With much thanks to the Dawn workers, both remote and on-site, we are presently caught up with all eight language of Dawn magazine production.

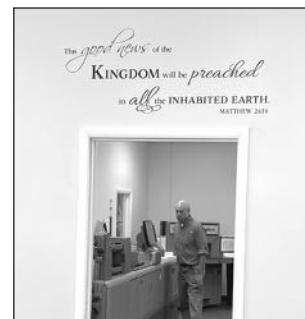
In April, the Florida Dawn facility received two shipments of literature/materials from the Dawn Plant in East Rutherford, New Jersey. As a result of this, the transition of printing and operational matters pertaining the Dawn are now being completed at the Dawn Plant located in Longwood, Florida.

Most recently, the Dawn began reprinting booklets that have been in short supply or temporarily out of stock. In November, the dawn printed and had bound a new softcover

book, *The Mind of Christ*. This book consists of a series of 24 articles which appeared in The Dawn magazine in 2013 and 2014.

(More information about the Dawn’s operations is available on Australian Bible Students website, www.australianbiblestudents.org/events/news)

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Memorial Service

There will be an online Memorial service on April 14, 2022, at 7:30 pm EST.

If you need more information, Email — australianbiblestudents@gmail.com

Australian May Convention

Online Convention, May 13-15, 2022

For more information —

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Email: australianbiblestudents@gmail.com

Correction

The text number to order the book "Mind of Christ" was wrong. It should be: +614 291 72606.

A Cloud of Smoke

A sailor was the only survivor of an unfortunate foundering of a vessel near an uncharted and desolate island. The only way to reach the island was by swimming; but one had to be a very good and strong swimmer to reach the shore. All others, save this one sailor, who attempted swimming the distance were lost.

On the island, from sticks, reeds, stones, etc., he built for himself a little shelter to protect him from the in clemencies of the weather. Much of his time was spent in experimenting with the wild vegetation for food; and in searching out the island for some other human beings. In some way, he had gotten a little fire started to keep himself fairly comfortable when the nights were cold; but he had to keep it burning continuously. On first reaching the island, he had taken his wet shirt and fastened it to the top of a very tall tree atop a high, in the hope that some vessel passing might see it and come to rescue him.

Day after day, he kept searching all over the island. One morning as he climbed a hill, he saw a cloud of smoke rising heavenward. He began to feel reasonably sure that this was evidence that there was another human on the island. Both his heart and his pace quickened, but on reaching the top of the hill and looking down he saw that it was his own little shack with all of his earthly belongings that had burned away.

Slowly, and disappointedly, he wended his way back to the shoreline. There he sat down in the sand, with his head in his hands, he gazed out upon the restless sea, wondering if it were not better for him to walk out into it to drown himself. Surely, this would end all his misery. ... Suddenly he spied another column of smoke, but it was on the distant horizon. He watched it anxiously and hopefully, somewhat assured that it was a vessel come to rescue him. It was nearing the island; but suddenly it stopped in its approach, and his hopes again were shattered. However, in another moment he noticed that a small lifeboat was being put down along side of the vessel, and that a man in the rowboat was making for the shore where he stood. The man in the boat ceased rowing, and cupping his lips, shouted to the forlorn sailor, "We just saw your smoke signals, and have come to rescue you."

So too, the great salvation is not for us, until all of our earthly hopes and ambitions have been abandoned, for the greatest of all treasures — that great redemption in Christ Jesus!

"Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where our riches are" (Matthew 6:19-21 GNB).

The Bible Teachings (Part Eleven)

On the Covenants — Mediator — Ransom — Sin Offering — Atonement

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Past Sins — Daily Trespasses

The new creature needs not to apologise, nor ever to remember the weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh appertaining to the period preceding the sacrifice. By faith the new creature should remember that old things have passed away and all things have become new, for thus the Apostle declares, “There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.” Our Advocate did a thorough work as respects the sins of our flesh; they are past and gone through the forbearance of God (Romans 3:25). The Father did a perfect work in reckoning us dead indeed to everything of the past, and in begetting us by the spirit as new creatures, sons of God. It is for our faith to grasp the situation and to enjoy it.

Fleshly Imperfections

However, as new creatures we are imperfect in that we have only the old body with its blemishes through which to serve the lord. Because of antagonism of the legally dead flesh “We cannot do the things which we would.” What shall we do in respects to our failure to come up to all the requirements of the Lord because of our fleshly imperfections? Shall we say to ourselves and to each other, God knows that as new creatures these imperfect things of daily life are not willingly ours, and therefore we need not confess them?

Christ’s Imputation Does Not Cover Future Blemishes

We answer that this would not be the proper course. The imputation of Christ’s merit to our consecrated sacrifice merely covered the blemishes against us at that time but did not cover blemishes future. Hence, daily we should remember before the throne of heavenly grace the imperfections and blemishes of each day and hour and should ask Divine forgiveness for these through our great Redeemer. Thus, He taught us, “Pray ye, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” This would not relate to Original Sin, which could not thus be forgiven. It relates to our subsequent shortcomings, after we have become children of God through the begetting of the holy spirit. Thus, the Apostle writes, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

“Forgive Us Our Trespasses”

Our Advocate not only imputed His merit for our past sins, but He is still with the Father and has an abundance of merit. Our Advocate has merit sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world, and therefore to

cover all our blemishes. Hence, when we go to the Father through Him, we may realise that provision has already been made for the covering of our trespasses, but that we can obtain forgiveness only through prayer. God doubtless intended a great blessing in making this arrangement. He intended that each time we come to the throne of grace, we should earnestly repent of our imperfections, and earnestly promise Him that we will strive against them in the future. He would thus encourage us to earnestly seek to fortify our characters along the line of these weaknesses, that we might become stronger and stronger in the power of the lord and in His might and be strengthened unto every good work.

Earthborn Clouds

When thus we come to the lord to obtain mercy and to find grace to help in every time of need and promise continued and increased zeal in fighting the good fight, it puts us on our honour, as it were, and makes us more careful respecting our future course. If perchance we fail again along the same lines, we are properly abashed. Then comes an important testing to us. The suggestion comes that we should refrain from going to the lord in prayer; that we should feel too much humiliated to go to Him. If these suggestions be followed, the result will be alienation, coldness. The earthborn cloud will hide from us the heavenly Father’s face. Even if we do not go off into greater outward sins, such a course would mean a loss of fellowship, which is very important to our growth in grace and knowledge.

“Without Spot or Wrinkle”

Every error, every slip, every mistake, is a spot upon our wedding garment and should be repented of and expunged. With great humility we should go to the tester that we might have such spots promptly cleansed away; as it is written, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us (new creatures) from all sin.” Thus, we are able to abide in His love. Those who neglect this matter may find themselves increasingly careless respecting the spotlessness of the robes, until perhaps, if they do not fall completely into the Second Death, they find their garments bedraggled and unfit for the wedding. The Bride must be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and the arrangement on her behalf by her Bridegroom is ample to this end. Those, therefore, who for any reason allow the spots to accumulate, and do not have them cleansed, will have a further test and be obliged to decide to return like the sow to her wallowing in the mire of sin, and thus come under the condemnation of the Second Death, or else, as members of the Great Company, they must wash

their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, in the great tribulation with which this age will end (Z1910, page 215).

RANSOM

Ransom — Difference Between Price of and Value of Its Application

Our Lord Jesus gave Himself a Ransom (corresponding price for all mankind) at the beginning of His ministry, at the moment of His consecration; He continued that giving throughout His public ministry for three and one-half years. He finished the sacrifice of Himself, the “man Christ Jesus” at Calvary. When the Father raised Him from the dead, He was the possessor, so to speak, of the value of His precious sacrifice, which He was at liberty to offer as He pleased. The making of the sacrifice was one thing and the applying of its merits was another thing. As, for instance: Mr A is in trouble, requiring \$5000 for his relief. Mr. B has a property which he can sell for \$5000 — enough to pay A's debt. When he sells the property A's debt is not paid, but merely B now has the amount, the price, which he can give for A's relief, if he will; and it is for him to elect how and when and where it shall be applied. Christ gave all that He had in order to purchase the world and the treasure which He saw therein — Adam and his family, sold under sin and death. When our Lord ascended up on high, He did something with the merit of His sacrifice which brought a blessing to a certain class (the household of faith). That He made reconciliation for their sins is the Apostolic statement, and the giving of the holy spirit at Pentecost was in demonstration of the fact. But it is equally clear that our Lord did not make an application of His blood to all mankind, because the holy spirit did not come upon all mankind, nor did any message come to them declaring the forgiveness of their sin.

Ransom — Value Not Yet Applied for the World

On the contrary, the subsequent Apostolic declaration was that “the whole world lieth in the wicked one,” and that only the Church, the household of faith, has “escaped the condemnation that is upon the world.” Furthermore, the Apostle's declaration is not that our Lord appeared in the presence of God as our Mediator, nor as the world's Mediator, but that He appeared in the presence of God as OUR Advocate — but not as the world's Advocate. All this is very plain, if our minds and hearts are in condition to receive it; but of course it will not be clear, and is not to be understood nor to be clear under any other circumstances.

Gospel Church Separate from World

Just what Jesus did when He ascended upon high we are not more particularly informed by the Apostle; but he pointed us to the types, the Law. Looking there we note the various details of the typical atonement day of Israel, which foreshadowed:

(1) The forgiveness of sins for the HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH, under the Abrahamic Covenant with believers.



Jesus is our passover lamb, providing the Ransom.

(2) The subsequent forgiveness of the sins of all the remainder of the world by preparing' for the sealing of the New (Law) Covenant with the blood of Christ.

This division separating the Gospel Church from the world was very distinct in the picture, and also distinct in the teachings of our Lord and the Apostles. Our Lord said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). He ordained them to go and bring forth fruit — permanent fruit, everlasting fruitage. The Apostle declares of our Lord, “He is a propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins (the Church's) and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Here again a sharp line of distinction is drawn between the “elect” Church and its blessing, and the non-elect world and the blessing that will come to it in due time.

One Sacrifice in Two Parts

Looking into the type again (Leviticus 16) we see that there are two separate and distinct sacrifices, and that they were not offered to God upon the mercy-seat both at the same time —

(1) The blood of the bullock was first shed and first offered.

(2) The blood of the goat was subsequently offered.
Did Jesus Die Twice?

Our lord did not die twice, and the two animals did not represent Him — except as Head and Body. Not only so, but the type distinctly tells us that the two offerings of the blood upon the mercy-seat were applicable to different classes, the first, applied to the tribe of Levi, included the priests. The second applied to all the remainder of the people of Israel. Will anyone claim that our Lord Jesus died twice, first for the antitypical Levites, and second for the remainder of mankind? Christ certainly died once for all. What, then, is the meaning of these two sacrifices and distinctly separate applications and separate acceptances and separate blessings?

Tabernacle Shadow's Testimony Regarding "Hidden Mystery"

This question is already answered in great detail in the little book entitled, "Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices," a fresh reading of which is commended to all, as an elaboration of the "hidden mystery" of the fellowship of the Church, the Royal Priesthood, with Jesus the great High Priest, in the sufferings, the sacrificings of this present time, and in the glorious work and blessings of the future. Remember, too, that this treatise was first published in 1880. Therein is shown that no man can redeem his brother, and that it is because all are sinners, all under the death sentence. It is shown also that our Lord's death, represented by that of the bullock, applied on behalf of the household of faith, justifies them freely from all sin and permits them to become "holy and acceptable sacrifices" (Romans 12:1). It is shown that the sacrificing was all done by the Lord, that our part ends in our presentation of ourselves living sacrifices, and that if we maintain this condition of self-denial our Lord counts us as New Creatures, members of His Body, and our flesh His flesh, and its sufferings and death His sufferings and death.

Sacrifice of THE Christ Progressive

Thus, the sacrifice of Christ, Head and Body, has progressed for over eighteen centuries. We believe that the consummation is near at hand. When the High Priest shall have accepted the last member of His Body, and shall have finished the sacrificing, He will apply, beyond the veil, the blood, His own blood — the blood of His members — on the mercy-seat, on behalf of all the people. Then will be due that which the Lord promised through the Prophet Joel — that He would pour out His "spirit upon all flesh," just as at the completion and offering of the first sacrifice He poured out His "spirit upon His servants and handmaidens" at Pentecost. Who that has spiritual eyesight cannot see this? And if we once saw it and it is now becoming dim to any of us, what is the remedy? All such should go immediately to the great Physician for eye salve. They should haste in fear lest complete blindness and outer darkness overtake them. Fasting, prayer and heart searching we earnestly recommend.



The Millennial Kingdom, brought by Christ, will be wonderful.

Jesus as a MAN was the Ransom

Note that it is not our lord in some pre-human condition who gave Himself a ransom for all, but the MAN Christ Jesus. His is a Ransom for all, in that through His sacrifice alone all mankind shall be rescued from the sentence of sin and death and given an opportunity to hear and accept the good tidings of eternal life. The Ransom is none the less for all mankind, because it was first applied to the Church. The water we drink is none the less from the sky because it comes to us through pipes and faucets.

Use of "Mediator" regarding "Covenants," "Mediator Between God and Men"

As already noted, we believe that wherever the word mediator is used in the Scriptures it relates to a covenant between parties who are alienated. God and the world are at enmity. God has condemned the world, because of sin. That condemnation still rests upon the world (except that small portion of it which has been justified by faith). The "world still lies in the Wicked One" — is still under condemnation. A Mediator was necessary — someone to go between and reconcile these alienated parties. Our lord Jesus came into the world to be the Saviour of the world as well as the Saviour of the Church. The work which Jesus did, His sacrifice, was in the Divine program with a view to His becoming the Mediator between God and mankind in general — the world, sinners. That purpose will be carried out, though it has not yet been done. It is proper to speak of our Lord Jesus as Mediator and to speak of the New (law) Covenant as though it were already mediated, because the matter is fully intimated, foretold, promised, by the Lord, who cannot lie, and is in process of accomplishment. God will make such a Covenant with the House of Judah and the House of Israel after these Gospel days (Hebrews 8:8-10). He will provide a Mediator, who will then, during the Millennium, mediate between God and man. It is, therefore, proper to speak of Him as such now-to speak of the things which are not yet as though they were. This in no degree contradicts the thought that this Mediator is growing day by day-adding members.

Delay in Mediatorial Work

Why should there be any delay? If the man Christ Jesus was the Mediator and the plan for a New Covenant was unalterably fixed in advance, why should it not be ratified at once? We answer again that this was one feature of the "Hidden Mystery" — "Christ in you, the hope-of glory" (Colossians 1:26, 27). It is a part of the Divine purpose that Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant (He whose merit furnishes the price and who shortly will apply that price for the sealing of the New (Law) Covenant) be the Head of the Church, which is His Body — "members in particular of the Body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27). In the Divine purpose the antitypical Isaac is to include the Church. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise" — the children of the Faith Covenant (Galatians 4:28). Jesus the Mediator, by Divine arrangement,

accepts members, who must be His joint-sacrificers, and by and by be His joint-heirs.

Church Not Included in Word “Men”

This Church class is not included in the “men” of our text — not included in the world. “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). “The world,” “men,” need the great Mediator to reconcile them to God. And the New Covenant and the Kingdom which it will inaugurate are Divine provisions which shall bring blessings for the world, for men, to chasten them, to break their hearts, to cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess to God’s glory. The Church, as the bride, not only shares in the sufferings of this present time, but also in that glorious work of reconciling “men,” “the world,” to God by the power and forces and influence of the Millennial Kingdom.

The class now accepted by the lord as separate from the world needs not the drastic measures of the Millennium to cause them to bow and to confess. They are a special class, who, in the midst of sin, love righteousness and hate iniquity. They are like their lord and Redeemer, of whom it is written, “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness (holy spirit) above (Head-over) thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:9).

Works Enemies — Not Heart Enemies

But someone may inquire, does not the Apostle speak of some of the “household of faith” as having once been aliens, strangers, foreigners, from the commonwealth of Israel? Yes, so was Cornelius all of that as a Gentile, yet he revered God and gave much alms to the people. But as a Gentile he was naturally an alien from Israel’s privileges and blessings until, so far as the Gentiles were concerned, Christ made an end to the law Covenant, nailed it to His cross, and admitted Gentiles to His favour and to the still greater blessings of the original Covenant.

Church at Heart Never Opposed to Light and Truth

But does not the Apostle say that some who had become saints had been liars and abominable persons, “alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works,” and could the world be worse than this description? (Colossians 1:21). We answer, so far as works are concerned, and the divine standards, yes, “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,” both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 3:19). But such as at heart were not opposed to the light and Truth, had a different standing in the Divine estimation. Through ignorance and weaknesses, they were like the whole world, yet in other respects they were different and very differently estimated by the lord. These, because of their right-heartedness, were blessed in being drawn to Christ by the Father, that they might be justified by faith in the precious blood, and that they might be sanctified by a knowledge of the Truth, and that thus they might become associates in the sufferings of Christ and in His coming glory and

work. During this age only such are drawn, and only such received: “No man can come unto me,” except the Father which sent me, draw him (John 6:44). Of such “elect” St. Paul says, “If God be for us who can be against us.” “He who began a good work in us is able to complete it.” These needed the blood and could not be justified without the Redeemer’s sacrifice, but they do not need that He should mediate the New (law) Covenant for them, since they are acceptable under the better, the Faith Covenant, made with Abraham.

We see the difference in the present time: Some, under the influence of error, are terrified with fear of eternal torment, and may live outwardly according to high standards, loving sin, but fearing to practice it. When the Truth reaches such and their fears are dispelled, they have no special inclination toward piety. Others, on the contrary, hearing of the lord’s grace and wonderful providences, are drawn, constrained, to become followers of Jesus, even at a cost of sacrifice and temporal interests. This latter class need no mediator to whip them into harmony with the Divine laws. To the extent of their ability, they delight to do God’s will. This faith and its spirit of obedience God counts to them for righteousness. These, after justification by faith in His blood, are invited to become members of The Christ. A sufficient number of these will be found to complete the membership of His Body, and to fill up the sufferings of Christ, and to constitute the very “elect” members of the Mediator for the world.

Christ, Head and Body, the Antitypical Moses

Let us remember that Moses was the mediator of the law Covenant, which failed, not because of being a poor law, but merely because its mediator was incapable of doing for the people all that they needed. God purposes to give to that nation, and other nations through them, The Christ, the better Mediator under a New Covenant or Agreement, to be sealed with His blood — the merit of His sacrifice applied indirectly through the Church. Remember how St. Peter, after telling about the time of Restitution to be inaugurated at the Second Coming of Jesus, says, “For verily Moses said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren like unto me” (Acts 3:22). The Prophet like unto Moses began to be raised up in the person of our lord Jesus, the Head. The raising up process has continued throughout this age, and shortly will be completed. That antitypical Moses, Christ and the Church, Head and Body, is to mediate that New Covenant so long promised between God and Israel. That the Apostle is not speaking of anything yet accomplished is evident from the context, “It shall come to pass that the soul that will not obey that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from amongst the people” (Acts 3:23). All who do not obey Jesus during this Gospel Age are not destroyed; but, under the great Mediator between God and men, the antitypical Moses, who shall rule the world during the Millennium, the Scriptures will be fulfilled — all that will refuse divine favour under that New Covenant will be utterly destroyed (Z1909, page 61).