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EYE HATH NOT SEEN

“...it is written, ‘Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him’” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

1 Corinthians 2:9 is a verse of Scripture that poses several questions, for example who is the ‘man’ whose eyes do not see and whose ears do not hear, and into whose heart the things that God has prepared do not enter; what are *“the things that God has prepared”*; who are those who *“love him”*; and when will those who love Him be able to *“see”* and *“hear”*?

Man

The context shows that the term “man” refers to those who have not received God’s Holy Spirit; in verse 14 they are referred to as *“natural man”*: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor. 2:14). Thus there are two groups of mankind; those who have not received the Holy Spirit (termed *“natural man”*) and those who have received the Holy Spirit (termed *“us”* in verses 10 and 13): *“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”*.

That is not to say that *“natural man”* does not see the evidence of God’s existence in the world around them. They see the beauty of *“nature”*—the birds, flowers, rivers, lakes, oceans, amazing geological formations and the wonder of the seasons. They also see the calamities, often termed *“natural disasters”*, such as fires, floods, earthquakes and cyclones, all of which indicate that there are forces at play that are beyond human control. Some may attribute these phenomena to a god but they are unable to fully appreciate that they are manifestations of *“His eternal power...”* (Rom. 1:20).

While *“natural man”* is not privileged to understand God’s majesty, it is noteworthy that 1 Corinthians 2:9 does not say that those who have received the Holy Spirit see everything clearly. The Apostle Paul wrote: *“For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”* (1 Cor. 13:12). The Apostle wrote those words even though he had seen a vision of the *“third heaven”* (2 Cor. 12:2), had received his knowledge directly from God by revelation (Gal. 1:13), and on one occasion preached all night (Acts 20:7-11), a feat which would have required an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. Nevertheless compared to God’s realm, Paul realised that his knowledge was minute.

Those who love Him

1 Corinthians 2:9 states that it is for those who *“love him”* that *“God has prepared”* certain things. Jesus gave His disciples a test that enabled them to know whether they loved Him: *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15).

His commandments are not complex—they are contained in two simple instructions: *“Thou shalt*

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love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:36-40).

The concept of one’s “neighbour” is very broad. In the first instance it refers to fellow Christians: *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35). Love for all those who are striving to develop the fruits of the Spirit is an essential component of Christian character.

However the parable of the “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37) shows that those who are outside one’s immediate fellowship are also to be regarded as neighbours. The Samaritan, with whom the Jews had no dealings (John 4:9), was to be regarded as a neighbour of the man who fell among thieves, and the commission is to *“do thou likewise”* (Luke 10:37). Those who are privileged to see the things that God has prepared for them will love their neighbours to the same extent as the Samaritan demonstrated by his care for the man who fell among thieves.

A crown of life

God has prepared many things for those who love Him. Perhaps the greatest is the crown of life: *“... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). The crown of life is the greatest attribute because unless one receives life there is nothing. However the promise is more than just life, it is a **crown of life**. The Apostle Paul called it a *“crown of righteousness”* (2 Tim. 4:8) and the Apostle Peter termed it a *“crown of glory...”* (1 Pet. 5:4). The Christian should be greatly strengthened by keeping their eyes fixed on this crown that God has prepared for them because it does not fade away; it is eternal. **Eternal life** is the objective of those *“who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, (summarised as) eternal life”* (Rom. 2:7).

It is axiomatic that those who have eternal life cannot die. Revelation 20:6 expresses it: *“... on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”*. The privilege of not being subject to the second death is something that cannot be fully appreciated at this

time because no details are given of the subtleness that Satan will use in his attempts to deceive the nations when he is *“loosed out of his prison”* (Rev. 20:7-8). However the mention of the *“lake of fire”* (Rev. 20:15) infers that not all will be able to resist his delusions. Those who receive their crown before that time will already have eternal life and will not be subject to his temptations.

Thus it is a great privilege to see now, in the present life, the reward of a crown of life, and it should stir everyone who has received the Holy Spirit to *“hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”* (Rev. 3:11).

Priests

Revelation 20:6 also says that those upon whom the second death has no power will be *“priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years”*.

The role of a priest has always been to minister to God on behalf of the people. Their duties under the Law Covenant are detailed in the book of Leviticus, especially from chapter 4:13 onwards and are summarised in Hebrews 5:1: *“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins”*.

However there was another part of the priests’ duties that was separate from offering the sacrifices, and that was to teach the people: *“Take heed... that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that **the priests the Levites shall teach you:** as I commanded them...”* (Deut. 24:8). The idea of a Christian of today being a priest during the 1000 years kingdom of God on earth and teaching the nations is something of which the natural man has no knowledge. It will be an essential part of the work to be accomplished during *“the times of restitution”* (Acts 3:21) because mankind will have much to learn as they progress up the highway of holiness (Isa. 35:8). The prophet expressed it: *“... when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will **learn righteousness**”* (Isa. 26:9). In that day the nations will want to learn of God’s ways: *“But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains; and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall*

flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob and **he will teach us of his ways** and we will walk in his ways'; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:1-2). The prospect of being a priest to help the nations learn of God's ways is one source of great encouragement to the Christian and is something about which the natural man knows nothing.

Heirship

Another of the "things that God has prepared for them that love Him" is heirship; the promise is they are to be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Jesus will inherit the world of mankind who are also referred to as "the heathen": "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa. 2:8). Those to whom God has given His Holy Spirit and who receive their crown of life are promised a share in this inheritance. The combination of their priestly work and their reign with Christ for a thousand years means that they will be both kings and priests as Revelation 1:6 states: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen".

Again the natural man does not have any idea of such a glorious position and so it is something that is reserved for those to whom it is given to "know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven", to those who are "blessed with eyes that see and ears that hear" (Matt. 13:11, 16).

Things prepared

The final point to consider is that God prepared all these things before He laid the foundations of the world; they are not an after-thought or things that will be created "when the time comes". On the contrary they have been part of God's plan from earliest times as the Apostle Paul explained to the Christians at Ephesus: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him **before the foundation of the world...** Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to

the good pleasure of his will... Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; **Having made known unto us the mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance**, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:3-11).

The words of 1 Corinthians 2:9 are true—the eyes of the natural man do not see, their ears do not hear, nor has entered into their hearts, any of the things that God has prepared for them that love Him; those to whom He has given the Holy Spirit: "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1).

The Light of the World

The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin;

**The light of the world is Jesus;
Like sunshine at noonday, his glory
shone in:**

The light of the world is Jesus.

**Come to the Light; 'tis shining for thee;
Sweetly the Light has dawn'd upon me;
Once I was blind, but now I can see:
The Light of the world is Jesus.**

**No darkness have we who in Jesus abide;
The light of the world is Jesus;
We walk in the light when we follow our
Guide:**

The light of the world is Jesus.

**For dwellers in darkness with sin-
blinded eyes,
The light of the world is Jesus;
They'll wash at his bidding, and light
will arise:**

The light of the world is Jesus.

**No need of the sun in the city to come,
The light of the world is Jesus;
All nations shall walk in the light of the
Lamb:**

The light of the world is Jesus.

Bible Students Hymnal No. 396

CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIBLE PROPHECY

During 2007-08 there has been much discussion in secular circles about the Earth's climate.

The discussion is not a recent whim; the thirteenth Conference of the Parties ("COP 13") of the Kyoto Protocol was held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007. More than 10,000 delegates from approximately 180 countries attended. It is planned to hold COP 14 in Poland in December 2008 and COP 15 in Denmark in 2009. The objective of the meetings is to formulate strategies for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The emission of greenhouse gases is considered to be responsible for 'global warming', which in turn is causing changes in the Earth's climate and the destruction of several of the Earth's eco-systems.

Greenhouse gases are produced by the burning of fossil fuels, principally coal, natural gas and mineral oil products. The fuels are being burnt to produce the energy required by industry, either at the factory or to generate electricity. Transport vehicles are also considered to be producing a significant amount of greenhouse gas.

The most direct way of reducing the amount of greenhouse gas being emitted would be to reduce the amount of fuel being burnt. However a reduction in industrial activity, particularly electricity generation, would have far reaching effects on the standard of living of almost every person living in the industrialised countries. Both employers and employees would be adversely affected because there would be fewer jobs available and lower company profits. Both of those factors would cause a downturn in the nations' economies, restrict transport and travel, and reduce food production (the current level of food production has been achieved by utilising fossil fuels to power agricultural machinery). Another consideration is that a large reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is required to achieve a worthwhile reduction in global warming and so the adverse effects would be severe.

Days of perplexity

Thus the situation is difficult for the politicians to solve: on the one hand there is the need to "preserve the planet" but on the other any action that restricts industry will reduce the standard of

living. From Man's viewpoint there does not seem to be any solution.

In Biblical terms the current climate change might be part of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Luke 21:25-26: "*And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken*". "Perplexity" means "bewilderment, confusion and uncertainty, a quandary". The Macquarie Dictionary definition of 'quandary' is "a state of embarrassing perplexity or uncertainty, especially as to what to do; a dilemma". Thus, from a human perspective, Luke's prophecy accurately describes the situation that is developing on the Earth. Nevertheless there is no need for alarm because God has the Earth and everything in it firmly under His control.

Changes required

The Biblical prophecies regarding the future of mankind on the Earth declare that changes in the Earth's climate will occur and indeed are required.

Isaiah 35:1-7 is one prophecy that states that climate change will be necessary: "*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly... in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes*".

The basic change foretold by those verses is an increase in the amount of water on the Earth; the promise of streams in the desert, the parched ground becoming a pool and springs of water in the thirsty land suggests an increase in the amount of water in those areas, all of which might be embraced by the prophesy of Psalm 67:6: "*Then shall the earth yield her increase...*".

One may speculate about the source of the extra water. One possibility is that it will come from

the ice caps of both the Arctic and Antarctic regions which some scientists believe are melting. However whether that will be the case is something about which mankind can only speculate; God has the power to provide (or create) water as He did before the great flood of Noah's day—prior to the flood the Earth was watered by a “mist” (Gen. 2:5-6).

There is no explanation of the origin of the water that brought the flood; the record simply says: *“And it came to pass... that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights”* (Gen. 7:10-12). It is possible that God will again use the waters in *“the great deep”* and the *“windows of heaven”* to water the earth.

While the melting of the ice caps is a plausible source of the extra water required to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy, it is not known whether the polar ice caps are the repository of the water that flooded the Earth in Noah's day. The record simply states: *“And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged ... And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen”* (Gen. 8:1-5). Strong's Concordance defines “asswaged” as “(physically) to abate a flood”, and Young's Concordance defines it as “to subside, to sink down”. The outcome is clear, but neither the definition of asswaged nor the other expressions that are used to describe the removal of the water—*“returned from off the earth”* and *“decreased continually”*—give any clue as to where the water went.

Regarding the future, it is noteworthy that God provided water in Elisha's day (after the flood) without rain or mist: *“And he said, ‘Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For*

thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts’... And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water” (2 Kings 3:16-20). Truly God's power is unlimited and He is able to create whatever He needs to achieve His purposes. It is as the Psalmist expresses: *“Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures”* (Psa. 135:6-7). Thus God has the power to remove water from the Earth and to send water to the Earth.

The way that seemed right

Returning now to the issue of global warming, Man's desire to utilise fossil fuels as a source of energy is understandable: many of the comforts of modern day life in the developed countries have been made possible only by the utilisation of such energy. The large majority of people who are living in those countries enjoy greater luxury and greater life expectancy than those in the third world. However the concern now is that the current industrial activity is not sustainable.

In some circles industry has been heralded as the means by which the promised blessings will flow to the whole world of mankind. However a contrary view is that God has allowed Man to develop this unsustainable order of things so that he will be brought to realise that while this way seemed to be right to Man, it is indeed as Solomon declared: *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Prov. 14:12). In other words God has allowed, indeed facilitated, mankind to ‘get into a corner’ from which he cannot devise a way of escape. It will be when Man has not been able to extricate himself from the dilemma that he will be prepared to acknowledge that God's ways are the only way by which mankind can survive on the Earth forever. If that is indeed God's plan, the current change in the Earth's climate may be an indication that the day of redemption is nigh: *“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”* (Luke 21:28).

DISCOURAGEMENT

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

When Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he referred to the records that are now commonly referred to as the ‘Old Testament’ as the “*things written aforetime*”. He explains that the purpose of the records is that Christians may learn about those events and so “*might have hope*”.

Patience and comfort

The Apostle told the Christians at Rome that hope is essential for salvation. He wrote: “***For we are saved by hope...***” (Rom. 8:24). In chapter 15 he told them that a knowledge of “*the things written aforetime*” provides the patience and comfort that are necessary for them to “*have hope*”.

There are many “*things*” recorded in the Old Testament that give comfort, for example the promises that a time is coming when the inhabitant will “*not say I am sick*” (Isa. 33:24), and when “*nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*” (Isa. 2:4).

The emotional experiences of others that are recorded in the Old Testament also give patience and comfort because many Christians have similar experiences and they can empathise with them and thus their bond of love with the Lord is strengthened.

Discouragement

There are many instances recorded in the Old Testament when God’s servants experienced discouragement, even to the point of despair.

One example is the nation of Israel during their exodus from Egypt. In spite of their miraculous delivery from the hands of Pharaoh, which included the slaying of the first-born and the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 12:29; 13:18; 15:22), it was less than seven weeks after they left Egypt when they started to complain and blame Moses for their situation (Exodus 16:2-3; 17:1-3). At one point they even wished to return to Egypt because they lacked faith that they would be able to take possession of the promised land (Num. 13:30-14:4).

Moses also became discouraged during the exodus, but for a reason different from that which caused the people to be discouraged: “... *he asked the Lord, ‘How have I disbelieved you that I am burdened with the care of this whole people? Am I their mother? Where am I to find meat for them all? They pester me with their wailing. This whole people is too heavy for me. I cannot bear it alone. If that is thy purpose for me, then kill me outright. But if I have won thy favour, let me suffer this trouble at thy hand no longer’*” (Num. 11:11-15). Moses wilted under the burden of the responsibility that the Lord had given him, so much so that he despaired. Moses’ disposition is particularly notable because of his lack of confidence at the outset, and the ways in which God strengthened him (Exod. 3:10-11; 4:1-17). Likewise Christians today may feel that the ministry that God has given them is too great for them to carry. God might not give them such dramatic evidences of His support as He gave Moses, nevertheless the lesson is the same: the Christian is to go forward, not in their own strength, but in the strength of Him who has sent them. The Christian must not be overcome by the challenges of the way.

Joshua had a similar experience after Israel crossed the Jordan. They had wandered for forty years and had now entered the Promised Land. They thought that they would win their first battle (against Ai) and consequently sent only about 3000 men to fight. However they were defeated and their defeat caused Joshua to despair. He prayed: “*Alas, O Lord God, why did you bring this people across Jordan only to hand us over to the Amorites to be destroyed? What can I say now that Israel has been routed by the enemy?*” (Joshua 7:7). Joshua momentarily lost sight of God’s longer term plan and was temporarily discouraged.

Elijah also had a moment of despondency when he had to flee for his life: “*It is enough, Lord. Take my life*” (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah reached the very bottom of discouragement, to the point that he did not wish to live any longer.

Jeremiah was yet another of God's servants who felt the full onslaught of His testing: *"Alas, my mother, that you ever gave me birth. I am a man doomed to strife, with the whole world against me..."* (Jer.15:10). Jeremiah was so discouraged that he wished he had not been born.

The disciples

Coming now to "New Testament" times, the Lord's disciples also experienced discouragement. One instance was immediately after Jesus' death. They had trusted that it was He who would redeem Israel (Luke 24:21); they had left all to follow Him (Luke 18:28); but now He was dead. When He joined them on the road to Emmaus *"... he said unto them, 'What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad (sullen, gloomy)?'"* (Luke 24:17). However their sorrow turned to joy when He revealed Himself to them (Luke 24:52). Their temporary discouragement arose from a lack of understanding of God's plan, even though Jesus had told them beforehand of His death (John 14:29).

At one point even the Apostle Paul experienced discouragement: *"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life"* (2 Cor. 1:8). Nevertheless Paul's conviction was so strong that he wrote: *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased (depressed) and how to abound"* (Phil. 4:11-12).

The church

God gives trials to the Christian today for the same purpose as He gave them to Israel of old, that is: *"And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or not"* (Deut. 8:2). Thus the Apostle Peter wrote: *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you"* (1 Pet. 4:12).

However the situation for the church is different from that which applied in earlier times. In his letter to the church at Philippi the Apostle Paul

wrote: *"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example"* (Phil. 3:17). The Apostle exhorted them to look at the example of the Apostles and others, and the principle remains to this day: the lesson and challenge for all is that each one must endeavour to exhibit an example that others can "mark" and thus the whole body be edified: *"... But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things ... even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"* (Eph. 4:15-16).

Remedies

Another means of countering any feeling of discouragement is the remembrance that nothing happens to the Lord's people without His knowledge (Matt. 10:29-31). He has provided the members of His church with all the resources they need to enable them to endure their testing and to triumph: *"... God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Cor. 10:13).

There is a relationship between physical and spiritual discouragement. When one is physiologically discouraged, one does not feel like doing anything and that tends to lead to inactivity. In fact one effective antidote is to embark on some physical exercise. Medical science has recently discovered a hormone that the body produces during physical exercise that suppresses discouragement and makes a positive contribution to emotional welfare. It is very similar in the spiritual realm: "spiritual discouragement" can entice one to be spiritually inactive. However one effective remedy is to take some "spiritual exercise"; just as the level of 'physical hormone' is increased by physical exercise, so the level of 'spiritual hormone' is increased by 'spiritual exercise'. However it is spiritual exercise that is required; worldly exercise does not produce any 'spiritual hormone'.

In the words of the Apostle Peter: *"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 1:8).

THE BASES OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS

One component of the Christian faith is that every person who has ever lived will be judged and that judgment will determine, at least to some extent, the person's eternal destiny.

The doctrine is stated in several verses, one of which is John 5:28: "...an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to a resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment" (RSV). The difference in the conditions to which individuals will be resurrected implies that a judgment will already have been made—some will be deemed worthy of life while others will be resurrected to "judgment" (translated "damnation" in the KJV). Regardless of when the judgment occurred or will occur, all will be judged.

Another verse that states that every person is to be judged is 2 Timothy 4:1: "*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom*". The expression "*the quick and the dead*" occurs only three times in the Bible, the other two instances being Acts 10:42 and 1 Peter 4:5. It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the truths that are expounded in those verses, suffice it to say that all three verses include every individual who has ever lived.

Variety of bases

There are different ideas about the basis that God will use to judge each individual. One idea is that God will use different bases or standards for different individuals, the underlying principle of that idea being that the judgment of each individual will take into account the light that was made available to them during their present life; those who have not had an opportunity to know God will not be judged on the same basis as those who have had an opportunity to know Him, and who will be judged to a "higher standard".

Adam

God has exercised judgment since Adam transgressed in the Garden of Eden. Having failed the test to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a verdict of guilty was passed upon him. Adam was not deceived but consciously transgressed God's dictate. **The**

basis of the judgment passed on Adam was disobedience (Gen. 3:6, 12, 17-19).

Lineage

The sentence that was passed upon Adam has had global consequences as the Apostle Paul explains: "... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:12-19). Thus **the basis of the sentence of death passed upon all mankind is that they are descendants of Adam, that is their lineage**, even though they have not personally been judged. (However that does not mean that anyone has been unjustly condemned to death because "*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*"—Rom. 3:23.)

Another example of lineage being the basis for God's judgment is the judgment of Hagar and Ishmael: "*And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac' ... And God said unto Abraham, 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed'*" (Gen. 21:9-13). The basis of God's judgment between Isaac and Ishmael was solely lineage: Ishmael was the son of an Egyptian bondwoman whereas Isaac was the son of an Israeli freewoman; nothing that either of the boys had done influenced God's judgment. (Galatians 4:28-31 explains that God had a higher purpose in choosing Isaac, but that purpose is not within the scope of this article.)

Election

God's judgment between Jacob and Esau was on yet another basis. The two boys had the same

father and mother and so that part of their lineage was identical. Nevertheless, as the elder, the birthright belonged to Esau (Gen. 27:36). However in the broadest sense of the word, God made a judgment between them to convey His omnipotence: *“And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, **that the purpose of God according to election might stand**, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, ‘The elder shall serve the younger’. As it is written, ‘Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated’. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, ‘**I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy**, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion’”* (Rom. 9:10-15). (God’s judgment also fore-shadowed another part of His plan—that the nation of Israel would lose its birthright to the Gentile nations (Rom. 11:7-11), but that point also is not within the scope of this article.)

The previous examples show that in times past God has used different bases for His judgments, as it is entirely His prerogative to do.

Faith

Another basis that God has used for His judgments is exemplified by Noah: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became **heir of the righteousness which is by faith**”* (Heb. 11:7). Noah was not actually perfect because *“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23), but God arbitrarily deemed him to be perfect on the basis of his faith.

Another who was deemed (or judged) to be righteous on the basis of his faith was Abraham: *“For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”* (Rom. 4:3). Abraham’s belief in God was proved by the requirement for him to leave the land of his fathers and go to an unknown land (Gen. 12:1). His faith was further tested when God asked him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering: *“And he said, ‘Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there*

for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of’” (Gen. 22:2). However Abraham believed that God would still honour His promises to him (Heb. 11:19) and God deemed him to be righteous on that basis—**the basis of Abraham’s judgment was faith.**

Judgment of the church

The *“righteousness which is by faith”* is promised to those who believe that Jesus Christ is mankind’s redeemer: *“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested ... Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ... Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”* (Rom. 3:21-26). The Apostle Paul yearned to be granted the same righteousness: *“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, **the righteousness which is of God by faith**”* (Phil. 3:9). It is the Christian’s hope that they will be deemed righteous because of their faith—*“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith”* (Gal. 5:5).

Judgment in the kingdom

John 12:47-48 reads: *“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”*. Jesus’ words explain two important aspects of the judgment of those who do not believe in Him in this life: they are not being judged at the present time, but they will be judged *“in the last day”*. **The basis of their judgment will be their adherence to His words, that is, righteousness and truth:** *“Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place”* (Isa. 28:17). *“In those days they shall say no more, ‘The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’. But, every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge”* (Jer. 31:29-30); at that time everyone will be judged on the basis of their own actions.

IT REPENTED THE LORD

“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Genesis 6:5-6).

Genesis 6:5-6 are two verses of Scripture that have the potential to be faith shattering.

The thought of repentance conjures up ideas of error or wrong doing; error in the sense that although one acted in what they thought was the correct way it did not bring the desired result, and wrong doing in the sense that one deliberately acted contrary to what they knew was the “right way” and as a result they are now sorry and acknowledge their guilt.

Both of those concepts have the potential to destroy faith in God. In the first instance, it may be contended that although God acted in what He thought was proper in creating man on the earth, the outcome was different from what He intended. Thus one may doubt His **wisdom** and conclude that if His creation of man on the earth was a mistake, He cannot be trusted with the future. Additionally it may be contended that He cannot be regarded as **omnipotent** because the situation that developed was different from what He intended.

When God had finished the creative work He deemed it to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31), which means that initially everything “turned out” precisely as He intended. However that idea can be interpreted to mean that the situation developed in a way He had not intended and, at the time to which Genesis 6:6 refers, the world of mankind was beyond His control.

God’s majesty

Such an understanding is untenable to those who believe the Bible to be the word of God because any idea that God is not supreme and all powerful destroys the authority of Scripture. Through the prophet Isaiah He declared: *“Behold, the Lord GOD...Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance... Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath*

taught him?... Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance... All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? ... It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity... he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. ‘To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?’ saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things...” (Isa. 40:10-26).

In those verses God claims to be the Creator not only of mankind but also of the heavens, the seas and the hills. His superiority is such that the nations of the earth are to Him as a drop in a bucket and as grasshoppers are to mankind. He also declares that “it is He who brings the princes to nothing”, that He is able to make them wither and to have them carried away in a whirlwind as stubble by simply blowing on them. He claims that there is no one who may be compared to Him, no one who may claim to be His equal.

Thus there is a seeming contradiction between Isaiah 40 and Genesis 6:6—in Isaiah 40 God claims to be supreme but in Genesis He repents that He made man on the earth. Is it possible that mankind developed beyond His control and that God made a mistake when He made man on the earth?

The end from the beginning

The seeming contradiction is strengthened by God’s claim that He knows the end from the beginning: “... I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done**, saying, ‘My

counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa. 46:9-10).

The prophet Isaiah is not alone in making such a statement. In Romans 4:17 the Apostle Paul also states that God knows the end from the beginning: “... *even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were*”. In other words the Apostle is saying that nothing can thwart God’s plans and He is indeed able to “*do all my pleasure*”—that is, there is no doubt at all that God’s plans will eventuate.

So then why did God repent that He made man on the earth?

The flood

It may be contended that the statements in Isaiah 40 and Romans 4 relate to events after the flood whereas God’s repentance recorded in Genesis 6:6 occurred prior to the flood, the difference being that since the flood “*the angels that sinned*” are restrained in “*chains under darkness*” (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

However Revelation 13:8 declares that “... *the Lamb (was) slain from the foundation of the world*”. Three key words in that verse are “from” (apo), “foundation” (katabole) and “world” (kosmos). Space does not allow a detailed examination of those words in this article, suffice it to say that Jesus was “slain” **from the beginning of God’s orderly arrangement; that is, God knew before the time to which Genesis 6:6 refers, that mankind would need to be redeemed.**

Repentance after the flood

Another factor to be considered is that there are instances after the flood when God is said to have repented: Exodus 32:14; Judges 2:18; 1 Samuel 15:35; 2 Samuel 24:16; Psalm 106:45; Jeremiah 18:8, 10; 20:16; 26:19; Amos 7:3, 6; and Jonah 3:10. Those instances nullify the suggestion that the changes that occurred at the time of the flood removed the influences that caused God to repent.

Consequently the seeming contradiction remains—on one hand God is declared to be supreme but on the other He has repented, both before and after the flood, with no explicable reason. The situation may be explained by what is called **anthropopatheia**.

Anthropopatheia

Anthropopatheia is a figure of speech in which characteristics that belong to human beings are attributed to God, the purpose being to enable human beings to better understand God’s realm.

One example is Genesis 19:13: “... *because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD* ...”. God does not have a face in the same sense as mankind has a face—God is a spirit and “*a spirit hath not flesh and bones*” (Luke 24:39). The use of the term “*face*” in Genesis 19 helped the men to realise that God had noticed their cry. Likewise in Genesis 32:24-30, which records Jacob’s wrestle with the angel, he declares that he had “*seen God face to face*”.

Exodus 33:11 is yet another example: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend*...”. The verse cannot be interpreted literally because verse 20 reads: “*And he said, ‘Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live’*”. Verse 11 is a self-explanatory example of anthropopatheia; as the verse says: “*as a man speaketh unto his friend*” (that is, as a man speaks to a man).

Exodus 33:23 reads: “*And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen*”. That verse introduces another example of anthropopatheia—the expression “turning one’s back” is commonly used by mankind to indicate favour or disfavour. It is repeated in Jeremiah 18:17 (“*I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will shew them the back, and not the face*...”), and also in Jeremiah 32:33 (“*they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them*...”).

Other examples of anthropopatheia include Enoch “*walking with God*” (Gen. 5:22, 24), God having a strong hand and arm (Psa. 89:13, 136:17, Isa. 40:10, Jer. 21:5, 32:21) and God having a heart (Gen. 6:6, 8:21, 1 Samuel 13:14, 1 Chronicles 17:19, Psalm 33:11, Jeremiah 23:20, 30:24, Ezekiel 28:6).

Thus the words of Genesis 6:6 are an anthropopatheia, using the expressions “*God grieved in His heart*” and “*it repented the Lord*” to convey that the situation was very different from that which God deemed to be “*very good*”.

LOVE SEEKS NOT HER OWN

One characteristic of love that requires continual attention is the denial of self, as the Apostle Paul wrote: *“love seeketh not her own”* (1 Cor. 13:5).

According to Strong's Concordance, the expression *“seeketh not her own”* refers not only to seeking accumulation of wealth but also to seeking “worship”, that is, seeking recognition and esteem from others. Thus there are at least two aspects of *“seeking not her own”*.

Material wealth

Seeking one's own material wealth has the potential to deprive others of their entitlements whereas love demands not only a consideration of the needs of others, but also a preparedness to share one's goods: *“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:17-18).

The ultimate act of sharing is exemplified by Jesus' sacrifice: *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:12-13). There is no greater act of love than to deny oneself the fulfillment of his or her earthly life.

Another aspect of *“not seeking one's own”* in relation to material wealth is explained by Paul in Romans 13:8: *“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another”*. Paul declares that being a debtor to anyone is directly opposite to loving them. Compliance with this aspect of *“not seeking one's own”* is difficult to sustain because some may be offended if their offer of assistance is not accepted, and particularly since their offer may be in ways other than financial. Nevertheless, in the context of the social arrangements that prevailed in the first century A.D., the principle of Paul's admonition is clear and continues to apply; deliberately exploiting credit for the purpose of making selfish gain is contrary to love.

Paul continues in Romans 13 to explain yet another aspect of *“not seeking one's own”*: *“Thou shalt not covet”... is briefly comprehended*

in this saying, namely ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self’” (Rom. 13:9-10). That statement declares that covetousness is contrary to love because it has the potential to cause one to take advantage of another. Again, to sustain compliance with this standard requires continual diligence.

Admiration and esteem

The second aspect of *“not seeking one's own”* is the desire for the admiration of, and esteem from, others. Such a desire is contrary to love because it has the potential to denigrate others.

In Jesus' day some of the chief rulers were unable to divest themselves of the yearning for self-prominence, in spite of the fact that they believed He was the Messiah: *“Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”* (John 12:42-43). The Christian's attitude should be as Paul wrote to the church at Rome: *“Let love be without dissimulation ... Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honor preferring (deferring to) one another”* (Rom. 12:9-10).

Paul also wrote: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”* (Phil. 2:3), and to the Galatians he wrote: *“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another”*. Envy is one of the works of the flesh whereas love is one of the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:19-23).

The principle is simple: *“... O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”* (Micah 6:8).

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