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### A RANSOM FOR ALL

*"Behold The Lamb of God!" - John 1:36.*

Jesus was unapproachably distant from all who ever were honoured with a divine mission, with no predecessor and no successor in the multitude and harmony of his spiritual revelations. The Hebrews epistle opens thus: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days *spoken unto us by his Son*"; a fulfilment of a promise which waited many centuries for its accomplishment.

This promise had been given in the days of Moses to Israel - "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deut. 18:18) This the Son confirmed: "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should speak." (John 12:49) Those who heard and saw testified, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." - John 6:14.

#### **"HIS GRACIOUS WORDS"**

His hearers, enthralled, "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded forth from his mouth" as he appropriated to himself the divine commission recorded by Isaiah eight centuries before: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:17-22.)

A wondrous light burst upon sin-sick and weary humanity. He spoke forth doctrines strange for their searching character and revolutionary for their boldness, and always with the air of authority: I am the Way - the Truth - the Life - the Door - the Bread from Heaven - the Light of the World; no man cometh unto the Father except by me. A most astounding message of salvation "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord"... "*a hope of eternal life* which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Heb. 2:3; Tit. 1:2.)

It was "the word," said Peter to Cornelius, "which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all;) that word, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him." - Acts 10: 36-38.

His deeds attracted attention and enforced awe at the mysterious power which lay in his hand and voice. He defended the weak, forgave the sinners, fed the thousands, healed the sick, raised the dead. "The people were amazed and said, Is not this the son of David?" (Matt. 12:23.) Here was a transcendent character and a Teacher without parallel, who could instruct in truth higher than man had conceived, opening vast and pure reaches of the unseen realms of knowledge.

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shone forth from his face. The ruler Nicodemus confessed, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." (John 3:2.) "The common people heard him gladly, and would have made him king." - Mark 12:37; John 6:15.

#### **"HE OPENED THE SCRIPTURES"**

But resolutely rejecting all human exaltation he "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," in marvellous obedience to a greater commission entrusted him by the Father. This commission he revealed to his inner circle of disciples in words perplexing and strange: "The Son of Man must be lifted up." (John 3:14.) "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45.) "My flesh I will give for the life of the

world.” (John 6:51.) “I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:15.) “This is my body, broken for you. This is my blood, shed for you.” (Matt. 26:26-28.)

But His words fell on unbelieving ears for they were incompatible with the disciples’ expectation of an immediate establishment of God’s Kingdom. They were not to comprehend until after his resurrection when he spoke to them again: “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Then he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that *repentance and forgiveness of sins* should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”-Luke 24:25-27;44-47.

In these plain words explicitly and unqualifiedly does Christ, the central and supreme theme of all Old Testament disclosure, affirm *his atoning death* to be the one fact that gives vital significance, substance, and value to the entire body of the Inspired and Written Scriptures of that time. For God has made the Death of Christ the procuring means of Human Salvation. This, the central and cardinal fact of divine revelation, found its concentrated expression in the heralding Baptist’s sublime announcement when, pointing to the approaching Christ, he exclaimed:

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD!” -John 1:29.

#### **“FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH”**

We are thus brought directly to the ultimate objective in Jesus’ earthly ministry. He who had existed before the world was—who had made all things—who had left the glories of a higher nature and been made lower than the angels—whose birth, supernaturally of a virgin, was heralded by the spirit host—dedicated his life to the will of his Father, and in perfect submission to that will “emptied himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:8.) He became a man for the very purpose of “tasting death for every man.” He took on him the human nature “for the suffering of death” -the very penalty that was against our race. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” (2 Cor. 5:19.) “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17.)

The revelation of God through the Mosaic Law resulted only in proving Jews and Gentiles as all under sin; stopping every mouth and making the world subject to divine judgment, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the revelation of God through Jesus Christ brought justification freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. For though “the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”-See Rom. 3:9-24; 11:32, 6:23; Gal. 3:22.

#### **CENTRALITY OF THE RANSOM**

This doctrine of the atonement, effected by Jesus in the sacrifice of himself, is the grand touchstone by which we may determine what is Truth and what is not Truth. For in the great Plan of God for human salvation the Ransom constitutes the very central feature from which radiate all the doctrines which end in the fullness and completion of that Divine Plan. The vicarious aspect of Jesus’ death is the definite teaching of many Scriptures, for example:

Matt. 1:21: He shall save his people from their sins.

Matt. 26:28: My blood ... shed ... for the remission of sins..

Isa. 53:5: He was wounded for our transgressions.

Isa. 53:12: He bare the sin of many.

Dan. 9:24: To make an end of sins.

1 Cor. 15:3: Christ died for our sins.

Gal. 1:4: Who gave himself for our sins.

Eph. 1:7: We have redemption through his blood.

1 Tim. 1:15: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Heb. 9:26: He was manifested to put away sin.

1 Pet. 1:19: Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

1 Pet. 3:18: Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous.

1 Pet. 2:24: Who his own self bare our sins.

1 John 2:2: He is the propitiation for our sins.

1 John 1:7: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all our sins.

Rev. 1:5: Washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Typically, also, the elaborate sacrificial system of the ceremonial Law of Sinai revealed the same truth. The substitution of an unoffending animal for the human offender-where nothing less than the lifeblood (Lev. 17:11) of the substituted victim sufficed for the remission of deserved penalty, with the offerer's act of laying his hand on the animal, an exercise of faith in the transfer of guilt-conveyed the fact and meaning of Atonement.

These sacrifices of Israel were intended and adapted to point onward to Him in whose death a real sacrifice was offered, in whose death a real want of mankind was met. This truth is forcefully expounded in the Book of Hebrews, particularly chapters 9 and 10-the key thought itself in 9:22: "Without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins."-R.SV.

### **PHILOSOPHY OF THE RANSOM**

Jesus' atonement work must not however be crudely construed as simply shedding literal blood to placate an angry Deity. We may be certain the Philosophy of the Ransom is commensurate with the lofty attributes of God. In seeking to understand the workings of Him, "whose thoughts are not our thoughts, and whose ways are not our ways," we may accept the theologian Hooker's dictum: "Let us not think that, as long as the world doth endure, the wit of man shall be able to sound the bottom of that which may be concluded out of the Scriptures."

This question as to the ability of the human mind to comprehend absolute truth need not, however, diminish our appreciation of the boundless love of God for his human creatures; in whose Plan on our behalf the "Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world"; and who "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Students of the Scriptures are generally agreed in a Philosophy of the Ransom which magnifies the Creator; an interpretation whose pivotal truth is expressed by the Apostle in 1 Cor. 15:21, 22: "As by a *man* came death, by a *man* also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This interpretation has been briefly stated thus: "The ransom views the matter of man's recovery from sin and death as a purchase-a redemption. The basis of this thought is the divine law, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life.' (Deut. 19:21.) Adam and his entire race of thousands of millions are in dire distress through sin and its penalty. God has provided a recovery by a ransom process-purchasing back from their fallen condition."

### **ECONOMY OF THE RANSOM**

"Our first thought naturally would be that to redeem, or purchase back, the right of humanity to life would mean that each member of Adam's race must be purchased by the life of another person, holy, harmless, unsentenced. But looking deeply into God's, Plan we find that only one man was tried before the divine court-namely, Father Adam; that only Adam was sentenced to death; and that all of his children go into death, not because of their individual trial and death, but simply because Adam failed to maintain his perfection, was unable to give his children more life or rights than he possessed. And so it has been throughout the entire period from the time of Father Adam's sentence until now."

"Here we see a wonderful economic feature connected with the Divine Plan. God would not permit more than one member of the human race to be tried and sentenced to death; for his purpose from the beginning was that the sacrifice of one life should redeem the entire human race. By one man the whole trouble came; by another Man the whole trouble will be rectified."

"Thus we see the value of Jesus' death-that it was not merely for Adam, but included all his posterity. We see, too, how necessary it was that Jesus should be 'holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners'; otherwise, he, like the remainder of the race, would have been under a divine death sentence. Because all of Adam's race were involved in sin and its penalty, it was necessary to find an outsider to be the world's Redeemer; and that outsider, whether angel, cherub, the great Michael himself, the Logos, must exchange the spirit nature for the human nature in order to be a corresponding price-a ransom for the first man."

"It was not a god that sinned; hence the death of a god could not redeem. It was not a cherub that sinned; hence the death of a cherub could not redeem. It was a [perfect] man who sinned, and the ransom for him must be furnished by the death of a [perfect] man. It was for this cause that the great Logos, in carrying out the divine plan for human redemption, left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, humbled

himself and became a man, was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.”

To this agree the words of Jesus himself: “The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom (*lutron-anti* a price to correspond) for many.”-Mark 10:45.

In Romans 5, verses 15-21, we read Paul’s contrast between Adam and Christ. The two great heads of the race are introduced, Adam in the Fall, Christ in the Redemption; and the results of the Fall and the results of the Redemption are shown in strong and pointed contrast. In brief, this remarkable passage teaches that Adam, the progenitor of the race, carried all his descendants with him into corruption, condemnation, and death; that Christ, the Second Adam, and constructive Head of the race, carried, *potentially*, all the race redeemed by his vicarious death, with him into regeneration, justification, and life.

### **OUTCOME OF THE RANSOM**

The Scriptures are thus explicit in their assurance that our Redeemer bought the world with his own life, “his own precious blood.” Here is also assurance of the *unchangeableness* of divine law, which could not be broken, but instead provided redemption at so great a cost. The remission of the death penalty is not a violation of God’s justice, but its satisfaction by his love; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:26.)

We may be grateful and satisfied that the *Truth of the Atonement stands as a Fact*, clear, immovable, and supreme among the stupendous verities of Divine Disclosure, and that it is unchangeably interwoven with them all. “Mercy glorieth against judgement.” “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” -Jas. 2:13 ; Psa. 85:10.

This sovereignty over all will be realized in the glorious Millennium. For “God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”(Acts 17:31.) “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a *ransom* [*anti-lutron* corresponding price] for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Tim. 2:6.)

This will be the “times of restoration” which will see the original purpose of God in the creation of man accomplished in the peopling of earth with perfect human beings, restored thus and to eternal life through Christ’s Ransom Work. Of the result of that ransom, and of the work of redemption as it shall finally be accomplished by the close of the Millennial Age, the Prophet speaking of our Lord says, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”-Isa. 53:11.

In spirit, we can add our voice to that of the “ten thousand times ten thousand, and ten thousands of thousands” of angels as they rapturously proclaim:

“WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING,” (The Herald)

### **HE TOUCHED HER HAND”**

*“When Jesus came into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s Another kid and sick of a fever, and He touched her hand, and the fever left her.”*  
(Matt. 8:14, 15)

“He touched her hand and the fever left her.”  
He touched her hand as He only can;  
With the wondrous skill of the great Physician,  
With the tender touch of the Son of Man;  
And the fever pain in the throbbing temples  
Died out, with the flush on brow and cheek,  
And the lips that had been so parched and burning  
Trembled with thanks that she could not speak.  
And the eyes where the fever light had faded  
Looked up, by her grateful tears made dim;  
And she rose and ministered in her household,  
She rose and ministered unto Him.

“He touched her hand, and the fever left her.”  
Oh, we need His touch on our fevered hands,  
The cool, still touch of “the Man of sorrows,”  
Who knows us, and loves us, and understands.

So many a life is one long fever!  
A fever of anxious suspense and care,  
A fever of getting, a fever of fretting,  
A fever of hurrying here and there.  
Oh! What if in winning the praise of others  
We miss at the last, the King's "Well done"?  
If our self-sought tasks in the Master's vineyard  
Yield "nothing but leaves" at the set of sun?  
"He touched her hand, and the fever left her."  
Oh, blessed touch of the Man Divine.  
So beautiful then to arise and serve Him,  
When the fever is gone from your life and mine.  
It may be the fever of restless serving  
With heart all thirsty for love and praise,  
And the eyes all aching and strained with yearning  
Toward self-set goals in the future days;  
Or it may be a fever of spirit anguish,  
Some tempest of sorrow that dies not down  
Till the cross at last is in meekness lifted,  
And the head bends low for the thorny crown;  
Or it may be a fever of pain and anger  
When the wounded spirit is hard to bear,  
And only the Lord can draw forth the arrows  
Left carelessly, cruelly, rankling there.

Whatever the fever, His touch can heal it,  
Whatever the tempest His voice can still;  
There is only joy, as we seek His pleasure,  
There is only rest, as we choose His will.  
And some day, "after life's fitful fever,"  
I think we shall say in the home on high-  
"If the hands that He touched but did His bidding  
How little it matters what else went by!"  
Ah, Lord! Thou knowest us altogether,  
Each heart's sore sickness, whatever it be;  
Touch Thou our hands! Let the fever leave us,  
And so we shall minister unto Thee.  
(Author Unknown)

## **PRAISE IS COMELY FOR THE UPRIGHT**

*"The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer." 2 Sam. 22:2*

The entire chapter (2 Sam. 22) from which the text is taken is one of David's songs of praise and gratitude to God for His goodness and His loving providences, which had been so manifest toward him ever since his anointing by Samuel, the prophet, and doubtless before that as well. It calls to mind another expression in one of his psalms, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright." (Psalm 33:1). Indeed, the writings of David, and all the prophets and apostles as well, abound in fervent expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God.

They not only praise the Lord themselves, lovingly and gratefully recounting all His mercies, but with impassioned eloquence and holy enthusiasm they call upon all the children of men, and everything that has breath, and even inanimate nature to laud and magnify His holy name. The worshippers are also bidden to bring with them to the concert of praise every musical instrument of human device; and blessed reverence exclaims, "Blessed be His glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." (Psalm 72:19)

As we thus consider that, by the voice of inspiration, the whole human race is called to praise and worship and thanksgiving, we are led to consider further the relationship which the spirit of praise has to the Christian or godly character. David says that it is "comely for the upright", but why so? It is because loving gratitude is one of the divinely implanted instincts of a soul bearing an image of God, and one which therefore should be cultivated. It is this element of the intelligent creature that is designed to be responsive to the divine goodness

and benevolence; and it is this element of character in mankind which makes fellowship and communion with God possible.

If the goodness of God could awaken in us no sense of grateful appreciation, if we were wholly dead to such sentiments, there could be no pleasure on God's part in manifesting His goodness to us, and there would be nothing in us to call out His love; and also nothing of all His goodness and grace would awaken love in us. But since for the divine pleasure we are and were created (Rev. 4:11), God endowed His intelligent creatures with this element of character which, being responsive to His own goodness, institutes a lively and delightful fellowship with Himself, which is the chief end of human existence, both on the side of the creature and the Creator. (Psa. 16:11, Prov.11:20; 15:8)

It is plain therefore that the Christian's secret of a happy life lies in the cultivation of the spirit of praise, thanksgiving and loving appreciation of all the manifest goodness of God. For the cultivation of such a spirit it is necessary that we continually call to mind His acts of mercy and of grace; that in our prayers we frequently tell Him how all His goodness is remembered; how every fresh evidence of His love and care causes faith to take deeper root and makes the sense of His presence and favour more fully realised; and how through such experiences our love and joy are made to abound more and more.

We love Him because He first loved us, and every time we see some new mark of His love, our love, if we have truly appreciative hearts, is called out more and more, and we are made to rejoice in God, in whose presence is fulness of joy. It is to this end that our Lord encourages our frequent coming to Him in prayer with large requests for His favour, saying, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24) We note that in Israel the spirit of praise was cultivated by calling to mind and recounting what the Lord had done for them. "If I do not remember Thee", says David, "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." (Psa. 137:6)

So the Christian should continually call to mind the works of the Lord, especially his or her own individual experiences of the Lord's leading and care, of His deliverances from dangers and snares and from the wiles of the adversary. If we keep these things in mind and meditate upon them, our appreciation of God and His goodness grows, and the spirit of love and praise takes possession of the heart; thus we are able to rejoice in the Lord always, and in everything to give thanks. So also the soul is made to hunger and thirst after God and to realise that God alone is its satisfying portion, and to desire more and more of His fulness. Thus, as the Psalmist suggests, our prayer will be."As the hart panteth after the water brooks, do panteth my soul after Thee, O God." (Psa.. 42:1)

The same principle of gratitude and praise, which reciprocates loving kindness and generosity, is that which makes human friendship and fellowship possible and delightful. In our dealings with one another, if the kindness we show awakens no sense of appreciation, receives no acknowledgement, and their repetition is expected as a matter of course, there can in the very nature of things be no such thing as fellowship. True, as Christians, we may not relax kindness and generosity on this account; for we, like our Heavenly Father, are to be kind to the unthankful as well as to the thankful (Matt 5:44-48), but when this goodness awakens no appreciation, no love, fellowship becomes impossible.

In David's thanksgiving for victories over his enemies, we observe that they were the enemies of the Lord and of His people, whom David was commissioned by God to conquer. He undertook these battles in the strength which God supplied, and the victories he properly ascribed to God, the Rock of His salvation. The words, regarded from the standpoint of the future, are also prophetic of the victories of Christ, of whom David was a type. To Him Jehovah will grant victory full and complete over all His enemies - the enemies of God, the enemies of truth and righteousness. The whole strain of thanksgiving, thus viewed in its wider application to the conquests of Christ, is eloquent in its prophecy of His glorious victory, as well as in praise to Jehovah. (1 Cor 15:27,28)

Meantime, the subject text is a blessed assurance, applicable to all the Lord's people, and it is amply verified to all those who delight themselves in the Lord, who meditate upon His goodness, and render to Him the praise that is due to His holy name-

*"The Lord is my **Rock** (upon which I may safely build my hopes); and my **Fortress** (in which I may safely hide) and my **Deliverer**" (in every time of trouble). (2 Samuel 22:2)*

## **"CALLED OF GOD, AS WAS AARON"**

**(Why Does God Seem to Favour Some More Than Others?)**

*"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He that saith? unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee." Heb. 5:4,5*

The honour which no man was to take unto himself was that of Israel's high priest. Aaron was specially called by God, or favoured by God, for that important office, being typical of Christ, who also honoured not Himself to be made a High Priest, but was highly favoured by His Heavenly Father. The background to Aaron's being called by God for service is recorded in Exodus 4,7 and 28. In Exodus 28:1, we read - *"Take unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office.* No one had the right to enter into this high priestly office unless he had qualifications prescribed by God, who favoured Aaron no doubt because he saw in him, a Levite and worthy descendant of Abraham, one suited for His purposes in Israel. In Psalm 106:16, he is called "the saint of the Lord."

Following God's wonderful covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we find a comprehensive statement about His choice of Israel to be His particular and typical people in David's psalm of thanksgiving recorded in 1 Chron. 16:13-17 - *"O ye seed of Israel His servant, ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones, He is the Lord our God; His judgements are in all the earth. Be ye mindful always of His covenant, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; even of the covenant which He made with Abraham, and of His oath unto Isaac, and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant."*

### **"HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN"**

That the Lord continued to recognise Israel as His favoured people down the centuries to Jesus' first advent is evident from the fact that He sent John the Baptist to call them to repentance, that they might more readily accept their Messiah at the appointed time. Jesus was some six months younger than John the Baptist, thus allowing those few months of preparatory ministry by John prior to Jesus being baptised and commencing His ministry at thirty years of age. This is briefly recorded in John 1:6-17. Sadly, we read in John 1:11 that *"He came unto His own (His own nation Israel) but His own received Him not"* - that is, as a people, as a nation.

Nevertheless, that Israel belonged to God, to whom Jesus was sent, is evident when He declared on appropriate occasions - *"I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* From early in His ministry, our Lord began to find the "lost sheep" who were worthy to be favoured, to be called by God. In John 1:35-42, we have an account of John introducing two of his disciples to Jesus, showing clearly that John knew his mission was to prepare those disciples who were worthy to learn from Jesus what was required for discipleship in the Christian way. John was pointing his own disciples to Jesus as though to say, There is the Lamb of God, follow Him!

We read that *"the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus"* (V.37) and later in Verses 40 - 42: *"One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ, and he brought him to Jesus."* To be able to detect that Jesus was the Messiah after only a few hours of teaching from Him (*"they abode with Him that day"* - V39), shows that they were ready and worthy to be favoured with His truth, of being called by God.

### **FINDING AND BEING FOUND**

The next day Jesus had a similar experience with two others of similar disposition to Andrew and Peter. *"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me....Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto Him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."* (Verses 43,45) What a lovely experience that must have been for those two disciples! We note how the account reads - **"Jesus findeth Philip"** **"Philip findeth Nathanael,** and saith, **We have found Jesus."**

We realise that these "findings" were not accidental. Philip and Nathanael were just waiting to be found; they were yearning and longing, no doubt, for the promised Messiah and for Jesus' message of truth; when they were found, they knew from their hearts they had found Jesus. We can readily understand why these disciples were favoured by the Lord more than Israelites in general at that time. And the Lord is still "finding" Philips and Nathanaels, as well as Marthas and Marys, who are in the right condition of heart to be found, and, when they are **found** by **Jesus** they also realise that they have **found Jesus**.

Nathanael was cautious when he heard Jesus described as "Jesus of Nazareth". "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he asked. Philip's answer was a worthy one - "Come and see."

That is just the message that we can offer people who are cautious or in doubt. - Taste and see that the Lord and His message are good. The record of Nathanael's call continues - *"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knoweth Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."* (Verse 47, 48)

### **CALLED TO DISCIPLESHIP**

It has been said that in those days the fig trees had branches right down to the ground, almost like a tent. Possibly Nathanael had been under the fig tree praying and the Lord knew. Whatever the case, Nathanael was impressed at once - here was a man who knew what he was doing, knew his character, even before He could clearly see him. His response was - *"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the king of Israel."* To this the Lord replied - *"Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these."* (Verse 49, 50) No doubt, Nathanael would go on to see the wonderful truths of the heavenly calling, and would accept them from the Lord's hand, as one called by God.

While we have this record of Jesus finding His disciples and their feeling that they had found Him, it was still necessary that their faith confidence in Him and His teachings should be consolidated and it has been suggested that the incident of decision recounted in Luke 5:1-11 may have taken place up to twelve months after our Lord had commenced His ministry. On that occasion, Peter, Andrew, James and John, although previously "found" by Jesus, committed their lives fully to be His constant, full time disciples, to become "fishers of men." From the account in Luke 5, we learn that Jesus had been teaching the people out of Peter's ship (Verses 1-3) and no doubt His message would cover the privilege (and cost) of discipleship.

The four disciples would hear this wonderful sermon which the Lord preached to the people on shore. He would speak to them of the favour of being called of God, and afterwards the miraculous haul of fish (Verse 4-7) would impress on them the reality of the Heavenly Father's power. They might well say, "Who is this One whom we have previously found? Here is God's power operating." The Lord would know that this miracle would help to confirm the hearts of these disciples once and for all, for He did not hurry anyone into His ministry. They were able to reason and the Spirit, working quietly in them even before Pentecost, would enable them to say, Here is the One we will follow for the rest of our lives.

Peter's initial reaction to the miracle is recorded in Verse 8 - *"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* He was overwhelmed, feeling unworthy to associate with one who could do such a thing, but the Lord knew Peter's heart and told him *"Fey,- not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men."* (Verse 10) The Lord knew that Peter would be a wonderful servant, one to be favoured, one to be honoured, one called by God. The following verse 11 tells us that *"when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him."* How clearly we can see the reason for the Lord's favour being shown to these disciples above others.

### **COST OF DISCIPLESHIP**

In Luke 9:57,58 we read - *"As they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."* Why would Jesus present this picture to one who seemed so willing to follow Him? The Lord did not want any to think that it was an easy undertaking to follow Him; He requires all to know that being a disciple is a solemn undertaking, so that from the heart they will present their lives to Him and become real followers.

The Son of Man indeed had no place to lay His head, that is, of His own; He had no possessions of His own, no headquarters for His ministry. Nevertheless, the Lord found resting places. Israel was God's covenant people, and there were homes in Israel that delighted to have the Lord with them, because His blessings were upon them. One such was the home at Bethany of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. What a privilege it was for them to invite the Lord and His disciples to dwell with them, and to receive a blessing from His hands! But during all His ministry, He had no place of His own to rest His head.

In explanation of the sacrifice required of a follower of the Master, we have His words in Luke 9:23 - *"If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* If anyone feels invited, has been so honoured, let him or her take up the cross daily and follow the Lord. Jesus needed to put these propositions before all His disciples, and the same still applies to all who would follow Him today. We must see the privilege, not "must I" but "may I" sacrifice with the Lord. What a joy a it is for those who realise the privilege of being favoured at this time above others, of being invited into God's family.

Two other instances of reasons advanced for postponement of discipleship are recounted in Verses 59-62. The Lord however could detect the minds of those who wished to follow Him and knew that, in these cases, to be detained along the lines of earthly affairs would be a serious hindrance. In all these accounts, the Lord was showing the privilege of being favoured with the invitation to the heavenly kingdom, and that it was to be appreciated above all else. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."*

### **"BE YE SEPARATE"**

In Luke 17, we have a prophecy of our Lord concerning the time in which we are now living, and showing what was expected of those who would be favoured with the harvest truths of God's word, so that they may be His people, united to Him as individuals, free from the errors of false systems of religion. Verses 34 to 37 were given to promote a separation of the Lord's people from all such systems in this end of the Age. In each

of the three illustrations, the call to separateness is to the alert, the watchful, who can detect and appreciate the Lord's food from His storehouse of truth. The truth is their very living, these are of those favoured by God above others, because they have an appetite for spiritual truths. *"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."*

The majority, not so favoured by God during this Gospel Age, are not forgotten by Him, as we shall see later, for God's plan provides for every human being who has ever lived. God is not selecting some to the detriment of others; but He is selective and has been choosing some in the ages past and in this Gospel Age. The favoured position of those who now are keen-eyed and alert to appreciate the truths of God's word, who seek zealously to feast on His spiritual food, (as eagles around the carcass), is helpfully illustrated in Judges 7:1-7, which describes the reduction of Gideon's army, from the original 32,000 to a mere 300.

Of the original number, 22,000 became afraid and returned home. In the Christian context, these are outside the call altogether. Of the remaining 10 000 who faced the test of drinking the water, only 300 remained for the Lord to use in demonstrating that the victory over the Midianites was His. Those who bowed down and put their mouths to the water thought of nothing else than to get a drink. Those who lapped the water were alert and keen-eyed, and would detect an enemy quickly; these would picture keen-eyed Christians, appreciative of God's truths when they find them, in contrast to the rest of the 10,000 who were wholly absorbed with the drinking of the water - taken up with material things.

### **"YE SEE YOUR CALLING"**

The words of 1 Cor 1:26 to 29 also help us to understand God's selection during this Gospel Age. *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and base things, and things which are despised, hath God chosen to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."* "You see your calling, brethren!" Do we grasp our calling as a privilege from the Lord? Is it the greatest privilege under the sun? Each Christian needs to see it in that light. The mighty, the noble, the great, are generally more or less self-sufficient, and think only of their own abilities. These are great in the world and its affairs, and are not invited to be servants of the Master. Those who are favoured by God are the humble and lowly, who feel their own weakness and know that their strength in and for the truth comes from the Lord Himself.

The scripture assures us that those whom God has not favoured during this Gospel Age are not forgotten in His plan of the ages. In Rev. 22 we have the picture of the kingdom of God set up and the blessings flowing out to all the families of the earth. The opening verses declare that "there is no more curse" for the curse of death has been overcome by the sacrifice of Christ and the resurrection of mankind has been accomplished. Verse 17 shows that the opportunity for lasting life will then be available to all, when the Bride of Christ is fully made up and reigning with Him. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

At that time, grace will be extended to all mankind. During the Gospel Age and earlier ages, however, selection and election have been going on. God has been doing the selection. *"No one can come to me, unless the Father draw him"* were Jesus' words. God's Spirit draws to Jesus those who are worthy and who accept the privilege of walking in His steps, that they may also reign with their Lord to accomplish the blessing of all the families of the earth in the wonderful kingdom of Christ. So we can be glad that God's plan of salvation does not overlook any of the human family.

Meantime, we can rejoice that God has favoured some of mankind more than others, because it is His will. It is not because they are better in themselves than others. It is the poor of this world, the despised ones, those who are not, who are chosen to confound the mighty. **God knows whom to choose.** His Spirit can transform such poor material into vessels fit for His service now, and prepared for greater service in the kingdom to come. (EM/74)