

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 122

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In this Issue:

Page 1. Editorial		Brother Russell Gregory
Page 3. Behold He Cometh.		Writer unknown.
Page 7. The Two Sons of God.	Chapter Four.	Brother Edward Turney
Page 15. Jesus said...	No. 10.	Brother Russell Gregory

Editorial

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

As many of you will have heard, Brother Albert Woodhouse fell asleep in the Lord on the 5th March after only a very short illness. The funeral took place on the 12th March and Sister Ruth says "It was a sunny day and Leo gave a wonderful Service." Brother Albert was 83 years of age. I am sure we all send our sincere sympathy to our Sister Ruth in her sad loss, and also to all their family. Sister Ruth sends her "thanks to all the Brothers and Sisters for cards and letters of Love and Hope in the Truth."

In this part of England winter has passed us by and spring has followed a long 'autumn.' Indeed, many spring flowers are already over which at this time of the year are usually coming to their best, and the gardens are already bright with cherry blossoms and forsythias.

Several letters received during the month continue the subjects already raised. Brother Phil Parry writes:

"... now to remarks in the March Circular Letter. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 15:56, "The sting of death is sin," and "the strength of sin is the law." "By one man sin entered the world and death by sin;" under the law the "High Priest went alone into the second Tabernacle once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." Hebrews 9:6-8. This was to keep in mind the "Sin" of Eden and the temporary nature of animal sacrifices. In other words, the "sting" still had strength because it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take it away, so that as long as the law and its rituals of sacrifice was in force, the strength of sin was the Law. Hebrews 10:1-26. Having read Hebrews 10 it will be seen that had not Jesus voluntarily given His "life in the blood" as the equivalent of the "life" lost in Eden by Adam's sin, animal sacrifices would have availed nothing, but what do we read in Hebrews 9:15? "And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." John Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus took away the "sting," He abolished, not natural death, but the Death by sin. Therefore to remain under the latter is to reject the cure offered and accept eternal oblivion. Hence Paul's words of gratitude, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Brother Harold Dawson writes:

"The sting of death referred to in my exhortation in the February Circular Letter, I would firstly refer to the atoning work of Christ in His sacrifice which was purely for us. He died the death for ever on our behalf and however, survived it because "God would not leave His soul in hell (the grave) neither should his Holy One (Jesus) see corruption." Jesus accepted an inflicted death of which Adam was warned, if he was disobedient. Without this sacrifice of Christ, when we die physically, because we are mortal, we should stay dead, but because of the sacrifice of Christ for us physical death is a sleep from which we shall awake and rise from on the resurrection morning. Jesus was not condemned under Adamic condemnation

because He was not the Son of Adam but the Son of God - and as the Son of Mary He kept the ten commandments perfectly and so was not subject to eternal death when He died on the cross. Thus death for us is not eternal, it is temporary, although we are lost to loved ones and they are lost to us during this sleep of physical death. In this way then, Jesus took the "sting" out of death for us - through and by His sacrifice; for Adam did not pay for his disobedience - Jesus did, by laying down His unforfeited life."

Regarding the remarks on the "Christadelphian Magazine" and "Glad Tidings" Brother Phil Parry writes:

I have found over the years that the writers invariably write things that are contrary to the scriptures. The late Brother Ernest Brady and myself some years ago reproached the present Editor of "Glad Tidings" for stating among other errors that human nature was synonymous with the Devil. In recent months I have written comments on statements by the Editor of the "Christadelphian Magazine" and also articles by various writers in "Glad Tidings," I received a reply from a man who deals with "Glad Tidings" readers abroad who seemed to be considering the wisdom of what I had written and requested a copy of my comments to the booklet by the "Christadelphian" Editor entitled "Raised to Judgement." This I sent but so far there is silence. Sister Linggood has written to "Glad Tidings" as you will have seen in the March Circular Letter and which received an evasive comment and no admission of being incorrect. Since then one writer in the "Glad Tidings" has expressed the view that Jesus was part human and part Divine. This coincides with what I have just read from an old pamphlet "The Meaning of Sacrifice" by Islip Collyer where the statement at the bottom of the first page simply destroys any meaning of sacrifice in relation to Jesus and though it is a quotation from R. Roberts, Islip says of R. Roberts:-

"Brother Roberts used a phrase which perhaps better than any other expresses the meaning of Christ's sacrifice. The work of our Lord was described as "the complete repudiation of the flesh as a basis of approach to God." Christ was begotten not of the will of the flesh but by the power of the Highest, the Holy Spirit of God. Human flesh was thus rejected as unable to effect any redemption. Christ was nailed to the cross... the flesh was thus completely repudiated but the personality of the Lord Jesus, the spirit-begotten and the spirit-developed character, was raised to life by the same power that had originally "called Him from the womb;" and only through this exalted Son of God can we approach the throne of Grace."

This latter part relating to the raising of Jesus is the equivalent view of Jenkins the Bishop of Durham who described the resurrection of Jesus as "a conjuring trick with bones." No body - a mere character to emulate in our daily conduct. What has become of the well worn Hebrews 2:14 emphasising that Jesus was human nature? What does the memorial breaking of bread signify if not the Lord's body, (given, not repudiated), for His disciples? "Handle me and see that it is I, a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have," so said Jesus. It was a body of flesh and bones that came forth from the tomb, a person of flesh without the need of blood. As a man of flesh and blood there is no evidence that God repudiated His only begotten Son or even rejected His nature as a basis of approach to Him. The nature of Jesus was the same as that of other men, the scriptures says and we believe this, yet we are the people accused of believing that Jesus had a different flesh from us, whereas we find in some instances of their writings Dr Thomas, R. Roberts and others have given the impression that Jesus was a God-man or Hybrid, part Divine and part man enabling Him to keep the precepts of God which though enjoined upon man, they suppose that man is unable to keep on account of his nature being weak and defiled. The Hybrid Christ is still being taught because of devotion to the Roberts teaching which confines them to bondage and ignorance from which E. Turney endeavoured to release those of 1873. Instead, R. Roberts resurrected the Gnostic renunciationists of 1 John 4:2,3 and put E. Turney's name to it; he produced a phrase "Unclean flesh" in application to all men, then concocted what he thought must be its opposite, that is "Clean flesh" and charged Turney and his sympathisers as believing Jesus to being a possessor of it, when nothing of the sort was ever expressed by Turney. This misrepresentation has continued, yet the guilty party continues to spread a Hybrid Christ, "a unity of Spirit with flesh equal to the Deity," Dr Thomas in "Eureka." "Christadelphianism and The Statement of Faith are synonymous." The building is there, and only the bricks coming out of it can weaken it and expose it to the elements of Truth which will sweep away the refuge of lies. Wherefore come ye out from among them and touch not the unclean thing. Why stay in it and appear to condone such an edifice and mixture of doctrines? The building or Temple of God must be a unity, it must be fitly framed together in line with the chief cornerstone and become a fit habitation of God through the Spirit. There is

only one basis for this, we cannot make one of our own. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, the real Christ. I have just perused a book of this title "The Real Christ" but the real Christ of this author is the usual one expressed as having destroyed the Devil in His flesh by allowing Himself to be crucified. I am not confused but I despair for those who are led astray by false interpretations, whichever denomination or sect they belong to. May God's Holy Word therefore go forth and not return unto Him void." - Brother Phil Parry.

Another point which has been raised in recent issues of the Circular Letter is the use, of the term "eternal death." I feel we cannot limit its meaning to "the act of dying" for it also has the meaning of "the state of the dead." I quote from "English Synonyms and Antonyms and Prepositions" by J. C. Fernald: "ETERNAL holds quite strictly to the vast and sacred meaning in which it is applied to the Divine Being and the future state. EVERLASTING, ENDLESS, and ETERNAL may be applied to that which has no life; as EVERLASTING chains, ENDLESS night, ETERNAL death..." "Eternal death" then, would appear to be an acceptable term to use. Also the Psalmist seems to use the term "death" as being the state of the dead when he wrote "for in death there is no remembrance of Thee:" Psalm 6:5.

A Sister writes, "One subject that rarely gets a mention in magazines is the Scape Goat." Would anyone like to write an article on this subject, or suggest an article which could be included in the Circular Letter?

This Sister also says, "Another thing that bothers me is cremation. I cannot accept it and would like to know what others think."

Perhaps this subject and the subject of Jephthah's daughter mentioned in last months Circular Letter could be passed on to the Chat Section, so please send your comments to Brother Harold for inclusion in next months Letter.

I hope you have all received a copy of "Study Notes of the Revelation" and I look forward to receiving your comments.

With sincere love to all in the Name of Jesus Christ. Russell Gregory.

Behold He Cometh!

The New Testament is filled with words of expectancy, words of urgency, words that call for intense action. "Watch! Pray! Seek! Repent! Go! Tell!"

What is the reason? Why this intense spirit among the early Christians? What in their lives was so stirring, so vitalising?

It was the message of the coming King of kings. "Behold he cometh..." It was the message the angels had given to the watching disciples the day Jesus ascended into heaven. They had been walking with Him when suddenly "He was parted from them" and "a cloud received Him out of their sight." "And while they were gazing after Him into heaven, two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them, and said to them. Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? this very Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in just the way you have seen Him go up into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11. Williams).

All through the Bible the promise is repeated and confirmed. It is "that day," "the day," the "last day," the "great day," the day when Christ will return to earth.

"For I know whom I have believed," said Paul, "and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (Timothy 1:12). "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown

of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." (2 Timothy 1:18). Again, in the book of Hebrews: "let us consider one another... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25). "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Romans 13:12). It is "the day" of the coming again of our Lord to earth.

The second advent of Christ has been sustaining hope of God's people through the ages. It is the central theme of poets, prophets and apostles. Often their message was related to conditions then present; many prophecies were short-ranged; but always there was the greater, longer-ranged significance which permitted men to think beyond the limits of the world they could see to the Day when God's plan would be culminated on earth.

We find prophecies of Christ's second advent and the work He will perform in the Old Testament and in the New.

Isaiah tells us that the Lord "will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him." He will "come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger (judgement) with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." (Isaiah 40:10. 66:16-17).

Jeremiah tells how God will raise up a "Righteous Branch, and a King" which will "reign and prosper, and... execute judgement and justice in the earth," (Jeremiah 23:5).

Ezekiel says Jerusalem will be in an 'overturned, unsettled condition "until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him." (Ezekiel 21:27).

Daniel foresaw in vision the time when the "kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Daniel 7:27). He knew also the time when the days of the kingdom of men should be accomplished and "the God of heaven" should set up "a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." (Daniel 2:44).

Hosea saw in prophetic vision the number of the children of spiritual Israel "as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered," people of whom it shall be said, "Ye are the sons of the living God." He tells of the day when men shall "Seek the Lord their God, and David their King (Christ, the greater Son of David) and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." (Hosea 1:10-11, 3:5).

Joel describes how the Lord "shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people." (Joel 3:16-17). It is the day when there will be "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." (Joel 3:14).

Obadiah prophesied of the calamity which would befall the nation of Edom but climaxed his message with the far-sighted vision of the great triumphant day when "the kingdom shall be the Lord's." (Obadiah 21).

Micah tells of the time when "the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." He announces the end of all war, for Christ will have returned and will be reigning supreme. For He shall "judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off? and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid." (Micah 4:2-4).

Nahum saw in vision the Lord having His way "in the whirlwind and in the storm", a description of His judgements upon the earth at the time of His second advent. He speaks also of the mountains quaking and the hills melting at the sight of His presence. (Nahum 1:3-6).

Habakkuk assures us that though “the vision is yet for an appointed time” it is surely coming, for “at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3).

Zephaniah warns of “the great day of the Lord,” the day which “is near, and hasteth greatly.” The day when God will make His people “a name and a praise among all people of the earth” and “thou shalt not see evil any more.” (Zephaniah 1:14; 3:9,15,20).

Haggai foresaw a mighty shaking among all nations when “the desire of all nations shall come”: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Haggai 2:7).

Zechariah gives us a picture of the Lord coming “and all his saints with (Him)” when His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, and the mountain shall divide and “the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and His name one.” (Zechariah 14:4,5,9).

Malachi closes the Old Testament with the promise of the coming of Him who “shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,” who will take swift action against all workers of iniquity.” He speaks also of “the Sun of Righteousness” which shall arise with healing for all men, and then concludes his message by announcing the work of Christ’s herald, Elijah the prophet. (Malachi 3:2-3; 4:2,5,6).

The New Testament continues the theme of Christ’s return. In Matthew, Christ is the Bridegroom who comes to receive His bride. In Mark, He is the “certain man” who “planted a vineyard, and.... let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country” and who came again at the appointed time. In Luke He is the “Nobleman” going into a “far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return.” (Matthew 25; Mark 12:1-10; Luke 19:11-21). The gospel of John records the words of Jesus Himself: “I will come again.” (John 14:1-3).

The book of the Acts of the Apostles tells how the apostles went everywhere proclaiming the message of Christ who lived, died, and was resurrected, ascended to heaven and is coming again in like manner as He went away. (Acts 1:3-11).

In the letter to the Romans Paul tells of the “day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” Romans 2:15. He confirms this fact by quoting the prophet who said, “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer.” (Romans 11:26).

To the Corinthian brethren Paul wrote of Christ who was the “firstfruits,” that is, the first to be resurrected and rewarded with immortality; then follows the promise to every true believer: “but every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at His coming.” (1 Corinthians 15:23).

To the Ephesians Paul wrote of the day when God will send Christ who shall “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” (Ephesians 1:10).

In Philippians Paul says that “our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile (mortal) body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” (Philippians 3:20).

Colossians says that “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4).

1 Thessalonians tells us “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

2 Thessalonians gives us the picture of “the Lord Jesus... revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God... when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

1 Timothy gives us a command to keep “without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” By doing this we may lay up “in store for (ourselves) a good foundation against the time to come/that (we) may lay hold on eternal life.” (1 Timothy 6:14,19).

In 2 Timothy we read about the crown of life which is laid up in store for all those who “love His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

In the epistle to Titus, Paul tells of the grace of God by which “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:12-13).

Hebrews speaks of Christ coming “to them that look for Him” the “second time without sin unto salvation.” Hebrews (9:28).

James tells his readers to “be patient... unto the coming of the Lord.” (James 5:7-8).

In his first epistle, Peter encourages his brethren to endure the fiery trial of their faith that they might “be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:7). He said also, “When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter 5:4).

In the second epistle of Peter we find the warning of scoffers who shall come in the last days, saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?” Nevertheless, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” 2 Peter 3:3-4,10.

1 John gives the great promise to all the faithful: “Now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3).

Jude records the words of Enoch of old: “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints.” (Jude 14).

The whole book of Revelation is given to revealing events which shall accompany the second advent of Christ. Almost its closing words repeat the promise of Jesus Himself: “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be... Surely I come quickly.” (Revelation 22:12,20).

Must we conclude that these promises are past due and out of date? Must we believe that the early Church was disappointed” and that the hope on which they staked their lives is forever unfulfilled? Never! The fact that those early Christians were alive with anticipation shows only their wholehearted commitment to the cause. Paul warned them plainly that “that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Jesus warned His eager disciples that it would be a “Long time” before He would return to reckon with His servants. (Matthew 25:19).

Some nineteen hundred years have passed into history since these words were recorded, and the “long time” is nearly over. “Behold he cometh!” The day draws steadily nearer. Jesus Christ is coming again. All history is moving towards that great climatic event when “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This present hour may easily be the last in the long day of man’s mismanagement. Jesus Christ is coming as earth’s Conqueror, Redeemer, and King. We do not know when, but His coming is as certain as tomorrow morning’s sunrise. It is as certain as the coming of winter, spring, summer and autumn in their appointed season.

Do we believe it? Do we feel the impact of this message from God? Do we sense the urgent responsibility that this promise lays upon us? Then let us stir ourselves with the intensity of those early Christians. Let us believe with every nerve and sinew of our body that Christ is coming. Let us “awake! Arise! Watch! Pray! Seek! Repent! Go! Tell! Then in the eighth chapter Paul describes a man who is

“delivered,” - a man to whom there is no more condemnation, because he is “not in the flesh” or following the fleshly passions, but in Christ, walking after the commandments of the Spirit. The phrase “my flesh,” in this place, therefore, appears to be a shortened form, similar to the phrase, “the flesh,” before spoken of.

* “Hardly anyone, I think, reading the whole passage continuously, without any regard to the arbitrary break at the close of the seventh chapter, would be in danger of supposing that the Apostle Paul, though speaking in the first person, is describing his own character, in his regenerate sanctified state, when he describes a man “sold under sin;” “brought into subjection to the law of sin;” “doing the evil that he would not;” “not doing the good that he would;” and living a life of wretched contradiction to his own judgement.’

*See Whateley’s Extract, ‘Christadelphian Lamp’ November 1873, page 19.

THE TWO SONS OF GOD

Chapter Four

AARON AND CHRIST

There is no character mentioned in the Bible whose presence so fills the eye, whose appearance is so imposing, as that of the first high priest of the tribe of Levi. Considered as high priest, Aaron surpasses Moses in dignity. In the genealogy he is placed before him, for by birth he had the priority. All Aaron’s sons were elevated to the priesthood, but the posterity of Moses are reckoned among the Kohathites, who were ministers to the priests.

The exalted position of Aaron is one sign of the still higher position of Christ. In that beautiful and convincing comparison drawn by Paul in Hebrews between Aaron and Christ, we observe that one mark of Christ’s superiority consists in His appointment by the oath of God, “Inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest: by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.” (Hebrews 7:20,22). “For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware and will not repent. Thou art a priest; for ever after the order of Melchisedek.” (Verse 21).

The Almighty’s oath is as unchangeable as Himself; and the priesthood of Christ being built upon it, is proof of its immutability; whereas the Aaronic priesthood, not being founded upon an oath, was indicative of its temporary character. Therefore it is that Paul says, “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.”

This reasoning would enlighten and persuade the Jews concerning the proper place of the Mosaic covenant in the grand economy of redemption. They would be brought to see that a covenant which rested on a changeable priesthood, must of necessity itself be changeable; therefore no everlasting pardon or remission could possibly be obtained by its sacrifices. But Christ was to be “perfected (see margin) for evermore;” in Him, therefore, they would recognise an unchangeable priest, able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.

The apostle declares that “such an high priest became us.” This is equivalent to affirming that the salvation of man could never have been achieved by a sinful priesthood. Paul makes this evident by his next words: “who is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” The excellence of Aaron’s house was merely that of appointment. The excellence of Christ was intrinsic. Aaron was a sinner by birth and by deed, and therefore could not be a saviour. But Christ was neither. The apostle says, “in Him is no sin.” (1 John 3:5). He was a human sinless manifestation in order to take away our sins. It is this very thing that constitutes the basis of our hope. If we break in upon this arrangement our hope cannot be “sure and steadfast.” Nothing short of absolute righteousness can save sinners.

Be it ever remembered that it is “the word of the oath” that “maketh the Son” what we have just noticed in the words of the apostle. No man “born in sin and shapen in iniquity” could be said to be “undefiled and separate from sinners.” It could not be predicated of such an one, “in him is no sin.” Christ Jesus was “the body prepared” of the Father on which “He laid the iniquities of us all.”

Between all types and the things they typify there is of necessity certain important differences. The general character of a type is relative imperfection) or inferiority to its antitype. This is true of Aaron. He was a sinner sanctified, that is to say, a sinful man set apart for the service of Jehovah as the high priest of Israel. His offerings were, like himself, all relatively inferior; they possessed no real power. The whole performance may be described as a dramatic rehearsal, not of a past but a future original.

The difference between Aaron’s sacrifices and Christ’s sacrifice has often been remarked by expositors. “In this passage,” observes McKnight, “the Apostle takes notice of three particulars, which distinguish the sacrifice offered by Christ from the sacrifices offered by the Jewish high priests. 1st, He offered no sacrifice for Himself, but only for the people. 2nd, He did not offer that sacrifice annually, but once for all. 3rd, The sacrifice which He offered for the people was not of calves and goats, but of Himself.”

In allusion to the one offering, Paul writes, “for this He did once.” There is a singular unanimity among all commentators on these words. They say the sense is, “this last he did once, namely he offered up sacrifice for the sins of the people.” Both Whitby and Wells refer to the complete agreement of all ancient expositors on this passage.

When Aaron offered sacrifice he had linen garments upon his person from head to foot. The robes on his body prefigured the perfect righteousness of Christ. The place where and the condition in which Aaron offered, were inferior to the place and condition in which Christ offered Himself. The typical high priest presented himself in an imperfect state in a tabernacle made by man; the true High Priest entered in a perfect state into “the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.” This Paul speaks of in Hebrews 9:11, as “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this (the Mosaic) building.”

The mediatorial office would not begin outside the sanctuary. Christ therefore could not act as our High Priest while He was on earth. “For if He were on earth He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law; who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” (Hebrews 8:4,5).

Aaron entered the holy of holies with blood; Christ entered by His own blood into heaven itself. The conscience of the faithful worshipper is purged, because of the perfection of the offering. Any moral or legal blemish in the sacrifice and the priest would leave the worshipper unpurged. He would be no better than the Israelite under Aaron; a blemished victim and a blemished offerer could never “make him that did the service perfect.” In preparing the body of Christ the merciful Father practically illustrated and solved that which to man was, and must have for ever remained, a hidden mystery. The birth, death and resurrection of Christ, are a tangible and truly a glorious “revelation of the mystery” which had been hid for ages and generations. “In other ages,” wrote Paul to the Ephesians, this mystery “was not made known to the sons of men.” But the record God has given of His Son unfolds it all by patient and devout study; and the free and equal invitation to the Gentiles also explains “the fellowship of the mystery;” showing how the Gentiles should be made fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.” He who understands these things and loves them will feel the fitness of the apostle’s words when he styles them “the unsearchable riches of I Christ.”

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The Mosaic high priest and his work were “the mystery of the Christ” in symbol; and during the whole period of the existence of the symbol the solution of it was, we are told, a subject of anxious desire on the part of the prophets, righteous men, and angels. The Eternal Spirit in the prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ; but neither men nor angels were able to say what those sufferings signified.

The Birth of the Son of God was the signal for praise and joy among the angel host of other orbs. Gabriel, who had been commissioned by Jehovah to visit His "handmaid" in the city of Nazareth, had probably carried to them the glad tidings. It was he, perhaps, who visited the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem to announce to them, amidst a terrific display of light, the advent of the promised seed. While watching their flocks in the awful stillness of the night, alert for the least sound indicative of the approach of a lion or of wolf, "Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid."

The plain was wrapped in electric fire, and the white glistening figure of an angel stood in the midst and cried, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

When he had pronounced these words, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And then the light faded; the echoes died away among the distant hills; the startled flocks sought fresh repose on the dewy grass; the angels had gone away into heaven; the group of shepherds forgot their flocks, and stood for a moment wondering in the starlight at what had occurred: their decision was soon taken; it was resolved to go at once into Bethlehem "and see this thing which," said they, "the Lord hath made known unto us."

JEZREEL

The geographical and doctrinal aspects of this Hebrew name are full of interest. The city from which the famous valley of Jezreel takes its name belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, and was situated on the west of Jordan, between latitude 32½ and longitude 35½ degrees. The valley is of vast extent, and though uncultivated, it is still very fertile. It is judged to be highly suitable for the production of wheat. Thistle are said to abound in parts of it, and to reach a growth of eight feet high. Where once fine palaces of the kings of Israel rose, and rich vineyards flourished, there the Arab finds pasture for his sheep and goats, and roams unfettered as the winds.

In Jacob's prophetic blessing the vale of Jezreel was assigned to the tribe of Issachar as part of their possession. The old seer likened his son to "a strong ass, couching down between two burdens; and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute."

Two hundred years later the great captain, Joshua, stood with Jacob's sons upon "the land of promise," drawing lots for its division among the tribes. And he tells us himself that "the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families." This was a grand lottery of rich prizes; and the issue of the drawing was controlled by Him who directs all things after the counsel of His own will. "Their border," which "was towards Jezreel," enclosed "sixteen cities with their villages," and "the outgoings of it were at Jordan."

No doubt Jezreel, which signifies the seed of God, stood with feverish anxiety waiting the issue of lots. Nevertheless the whole seed were sure that whatever difference there might be as to the desirableness of their respective estates, a valuable portion somewhere in the land would fall to every one.

Four hundred years after the holy seed had taken root in the soil of Canaan, the first king fought his last battle in this part of the country, and, with Jonathan, his son fell ignominiously, on the mountains of Gilboa. The enemy cut off his head, and nailed his body to the wall of Bethshan. This sad event touched David's heart, and was the occasion of the first out-burst of his poetic fire. His generosity would not allow the least allusion to the ill-treatment he had received from Saul; he remembered him only as the Lord's anointed and Israel's valiant king. His shame at the thought of these evil tidings reaching Gath and Ashkelon; his passionate apostrophe to the mountains of Gilboa; his invocation to the daughters of Israel to weep over Saul; and his overwhelming distress at the memory of Jonathan's fidelity and love, make up an ode, whose strains melt the soul, and will be admired through all time.

Jezreel, or the seed of God, is a kind of *imperium in imperio*. The entire seed was made holy by divine appointment, and separated from “the seed of men” in the universal sense. But among this chosen seed there has been in all its history but a very small proportion that has borne good fruit. The Jezebel section of the community has generally been in power, and even the prophets of Jehovah have been compelled to hide themselves for a season. Those who delighted to walk after the flesh have always found some pious and plausible reason for seizing the humble vineyard of Naboth, conspiring to accuse him of treason and blasphemy, and to stone him to death.

Paul seems to have had the figure of a kingdom within a kingdom in his mind. When he declared that “he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.” And again, when he dictated this passage, “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of

Abraham are they all children; but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

The prophets of Israel and their children sometimes represent the Great Prophet and His children, who are styled “the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.” One plain instance of this is found in Hebrews, where Paul quotes the first part of the eighteenth verse of the eighth of Isaiah, in application to Jesus and His brethren.

“Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” The object of the apostle, we judge, is to show that, like as the prophet’s children partook of their Father’s nature, so Messiah was a partaker of the nature of His brethren; that is, of “the seed of Abraham.”

But the rest of the prophet’s words Paul did not find occasion to cite. They bear upon a subject he did not then wish to speak upon, but which serve to illustrate what is said in the beginning of the preceding paragraph. Those words are as follows: “for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion.” And if the reader will place together the meaning of the names of Isaiah’s children, he will perceive that they reveal the future purpose of Jehovah to be accomplished by the holy seed with Christ at their head. Isaiah’s children were for signs and wonders to be fulfilled in Israel when Christ shall come forth for Israel’s deliverance with ten thousand of His saints.

A like doctrine is couched in the names of the children of the prophet Hosea; one of which names has been selected as the heading of the present chapter.

It will be observed that this prophet appears to hold a relation to his wife similar to that which Jehovah often chooses to employ Himself in relation to Israel. That is to say, the prophet is put in the place of God, and Gomer, the prophet’s wife, stands for the whole nation of God’s chosen seed.

When we consider the character of Gomer, her fitness as a figure of Israel at large is seen to be perfect. The Almighty pictures Himself in the prophets as having married Israel; as having loved and betrothed her to Himself when she was an outcast, a slave, and despised. No figure could more forcibly and beautifully portray the exceeding love of God, and the exalted position of the chosen seed.

Israel’s crime was black in the highest degree. She was unfaithful to her Husband and her Lord; she openly went after other lovers; she departed from the Husband of her youth, and courted favours of the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Egyptians. This national infidelity and spiritual unchastity is described at length by the prophets, particularly by Ezekiel in the twenty-third chapter.

Hosea was commanded to take unto himself a wife, who should literally represent to the nation the crime of which they were guilty. The first child was the prophet’s own son, and under the command of God was named Jezreel, which, as before stated, imports “seed of God.” It may be inferred that the other two children were illegitimate, and symbolize the cast-off and the restored Jewish nation. Herein also the great condescension and forgiveness of the Almighty is strikingly taught, inasmuch as He permits His

unfaithful wife to return to His lost favour on condition of repentance. Nay, He is even described as pitifully alluring her to return and dwell with him in faithfulness and peace.

Jezreel, the prophet's own son, stood as the "seed of God" before his nation, and was the representative of that portion of it who obeyed the commands of Jehovah. It is somewhat significant that a personage styled the "seed of God" should be appointed to mark out the highest attainment of obedience to God. In short, this fact at once brings to mind the burden of Scripture that God had declared He would have a Seed or Son, in whom He should be well pleased. And it is hereby suggested that while this Seed of God should be manifested in the nature of his brethren, he would be far above them all in his relationship, being God's own and only child.

Such seems to be the typical value of Jezreel. No expression could so forcibly show the descent and the high standing of the Messiah as the phrase "Seed of God." No language would better imply Messiah's absolute freedom from sin. The nature in which this promised Seed appeared did not contaminate it; it was pre-eminently "the Holy Seed." All the other was only holy by appointment or adoption; this was holy from birth. The other was "the seed of the serpent," because Adam sold it all to the serpent; or in Paul's words, it was "sold under sin." Messiah was not "the serpent's seed," but the "Seed of God." The seed of the serpent has no power to fulfil the prediction against himself; it cannot bruise its own head. Its function was to inflict an inferior wound on the "Seed of God," while the latter was to destroy it altogether. To distinguish the "Seed of God" from "the seed of men," or "the serpent's seed," it is also styled "the seed of the woman." This is the great Seed which the Eternal promised to Abraham; and which He also promised to raise up unto David, of which Seed He said, "I will be to him for a Father, and he shall be to Me for a Son." (This rendering is more correct than the C.V. The passage is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 from 2 Samuel 7:14).

As a consequence of a future betrothal "in faithfulness," the prophet predicts a large outflow of temporal blessings. "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel." This figure indicates a hearing, or concurrence, or subordination, or servitude throughout all things, directed by the hand of God for the advantage and comfort of His seed.

In the wording of the next verse there is an evident allusion to the meaning of the title Jezreel. "And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people. Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

All these great and good things circle round the one Seed, which is Christ. The rest of the seed have become the seed of God through the Anointed. They were constitutionally the seed of the serpent. In this respect the Jews were no better than the Gentiles. Paul declared that he had proved both Jews and Gentiles that they were all under sin. They were all under sin because all had become the property of sin. Viewing them in this enslaved condition, Paul applied the Scripture which saith, "There is none righteous, no, not one."

The Seed in chief purchased the rest with His own blood. He gave His life a ransom. None of them could by any means at their command redeem his brother. The rich could not buy, neither could the poor beg the wondrous boon. They could not be redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. The great and precious price was not to be found in earthly riches. It must emanate from God, therefore God sent His only begotten Son. None of the good and righteous men of old had any power. They all needed help themselves, being "without strength." The arm of the Lord was seen, mighty to save in Jesus Christ, The Righteous. He is the Root and Branch on which all the seed is borne in the spiritual sense; and being of royal Israelitish offspring also. He has the natural claims to sovereign power. Every setting sun marks the approach of this Great Sower, who will fill the earth with the "seed of God;" this will be the great day of Jezreel.

BETH-EL

The city which bore this name, the meaning of which is The House of God, has a kind of double history, presenting a general resemblance to the history of that other House of God composed of living stones.

The town stood a little to the north of Jerusalem, and between it and Ai, another spot of great interest, lay Mount Ephraim. It was to this mountain that Abram came and builded an altar to the Lord, after he left Haran, traversing Sichem and the plain of Moreh. On his return journey from the south he stayed here a short time and made an arrangement with his nephew. Lot, as to what portion of the country each should dwell in.

In this matter Abram showed a true generosity, giving his younger relative the first choice. By this time, Abram had become very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. He is a rare example of a rich and righteous man. His quickly acquired wealth does not appear to have cooled his religious ardour. It is recorded that on his second visit "he there called on the name of the Lord."

Here Jacob saw the vision of the ladder connecting earth with heaven. Messengers were ascending and descending in the execution of their offices as watchers over the affairs of men, for the final good of the House of God. The erection of the pillar, and the anointing of it with oil, might, to the troubled mind of the patriarch, have a mystic significance, foreshadowing the Chief Corner Stone, the Anointed One. Under temporal trial it is that the heart seeks shelter and repose in a strongly guarded future. The human bark cuts her moorings and flies to some pacific isle, resting on the bosom of an ever glassy sea.

When the prophet Samuel judged Israel, he included Beth-el in his yearly circuit. The last day that the prophet Elijah sojourned on earth he called at Beth-el, and there prayed Elisha not to follow him farther. It was there also that the children were torn by bears for mocking Elisha on his return from beyond Jordan, after his master had been carried off in a chariot of fire. In that memorable revolt which rent the house of God, it was at Beth-el that the usurper placed one of the golden calves, appointed a feast, ordained priests, and built an altar to hinder the people from again repairing to Jerusalem. Before this altar stood a man of God, out of Judah, and uttered an awful prediction, which was confirmed by the altar being rent and the arm of Jeroboam being dried up while in the act of putting it forth against the prophet. These denunciations were literally fulfilled three hundred and fifty years afterwards by Josiah, who tore open the graves of the idolatrous priests, took out their bones, and burned them on the altar. "And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them." The two very ancient prophets, Hosea and Amos, foretold the destruction of Beth-el and its idolatrous worship.

When Paul and Peter speak of the obedient believers of the gospel, they sometimes employ the figure of the house of God, borrowed no doubt from the literal house in Jerusalem. In his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul refers to Moses and his house, to show in a more striking manner the exaltedness of Christ. Moses was a servant, but Christ was a Son; Moses ruled in the house of another; Christ in His own house; Moses builded his house according to a given pattern; Christ was the creator of His own house. The difference is very great.

The Son of God was the true Lord and owner of the house which He builded. Jesus was quite as faithful, nay, more faithful than Moses; but His conduct towards God was that of a son to his father. Moses gave his commandments, not in his own name, but in the name of the Lord. Jesus spoke as one that had supreme authority; issued precepts in His own name, and plainly declared Himself to be the Lord and Master of His disciples.

In consequence of this, Christ was counted worthy of more glory than Moses. His sovereign dignity is strongly sustained by Paul in the first and second of Hebrews. He is not only superior to men, but to angels. In rank every angel stands far below Him. Yea, they are commanded to do Him homage. He was superior to angles in dignity, and higher than all men in purity; separate was He and undefiled.

He is the foundation of His own house, and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Neither Jew nor Greek can enter into the composition of this building, and remain unclean; those who touch it are cleansed and sanctified thereby. The truth makes clean, and Jesus is the truth. All the children of

Christ have been given to Him by His Father. They are gifts to the altar, so to speak. The altar is greater than the gift; and every gift is sanctified by the altar to which it is brought.

As the spotless victims under the law were for the reconciliation of the house, so Christ hath, by His own blood, made full reconciliation for His own house. This is accomplished for the constituents of the house while they were sinners; enemies of God; by which God commended His love towards them. There is, therefore, the gravest assurance that they will be saved by His life. This was God's work. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; and the apostles, as Christ's ambassadors, prayed man and besought them, saying: Be ye reconciled to God, for He hath made Him, that is, Christ, who was without sin, a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

God, according to His gracious promise, opened a fountain to the house of David, for sin and for uncleanness. The fountain was soon made accessible to Greek as well as Jew. It is open still, and will be till the end of the Messianic age, when this world will be purged from sin. Like the Syrian of old, we are implored by the humble messengers of Jehovah to wash and be clean.

Faith in these things, which works by love, purifies the heart. This is the great object of all: "be ye holy, for as I am holy." It is a most salutary reflection that, like as God dwelt in Christ, He desires also to dwell in us. Think of the goodness, the purity, the love, the long-suffering of God. Are we so governing and purifying ourselves as to become a fit dwelling-place for this marvellous perfection and power? Or, are we daily defiling and polluting His temple, cleansed and reconciled by the blood of His spotless and only Son? Are malice and envy still tenants of the house? Do wrath and clamour yet echo within its walls? Do these barbarous sounds still shock the strangers' ear, where all should be holy calm, or rapturous music from the heavenly lyre?

THE FLESH

The frequent occurrence of this phrase, and its connections in several of the most striking passages of Paul's letters, make it well worthy of our consideration.

As the epistles were addressed to Jews as well as Gentiles, there are portions which speak sometimes to the one, sometimes to the other, and sometimes to both. To profit by the reading, it is therefore necessary to take due notice of these distinctions. It will be immediately perceived from the context of the words taken from the third verse of the third chapter of Philippians, that Paul made allusion to the Law of Moses: the expression "the flesh" is therefore at times equivalent to "the law." It is still more comprehensive, for it includes circumcision; and thus it may be said to cover the whole legal existence of the Jew from Abram to Christ. To make this plain we will transcribe the passage:

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more."

"Any other man" is to be taken in a limited sense. The rest of the passage shows that Paul meant any other Jew at Philippi; not any other man, Jew or Gentile, in the whole world.

"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee."

Here the apostle specifies the advantages he could/if he thought proper, boast of in "the flesh," that is, as a Jew of high standing; a member of a noble tribe - for Benjamin was classed with Judah - a pure Hebrew by father and mother, not as many who were born of Grecian women - and of the noblest sect among the Jews. And more still, the apostle declared himself to be, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." In this last particular Paul was like Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless."

"The flesh" then, appears to be an elliptical or shortened form of words, signifying the Law of Moses and circumcision. The same law is elsewhere styled a carnal ordinance, that is, an ordinance pertaining to

the flesh, briefly named “the flesh.” This abridged and laconic style is not uncommon in the Sacred Oracles, and is very convenient to the writer; though to foreign readers, or to readers of a much later age, it is not without difficulty, and demands the exercise of the thinking and enquiring faculties in order to a good understanding of the subject matter of discourse.

In other parts of Paul’s epistle he uses the expression “the flesh,” in quite a different sense, which shows the need there is for determining the import of the same words by the connection in which they stand.

“They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” From a misapprehension of this text some have concluded that to please God it is necessary to die – to put off the flesh in a literal sense; the flesh is essentially a wicked thing. However this may be, the text in question does not teach such a doctrine. Just before Paul explains what he means by “they that are in the flesh.” “The carnal mind,” he says, “is enmity against God.” And in the verse but one preceding he indicates clearly what he intends by “the carnal mind.” They that are of carnal mind “do mind the things of the flesh;” that is to say, they gratify their animal passions in every way at their command. In this there is such a wide field, and some vices seem so near akin to virtues, that it is incumbent to be always watchful.

The curious extremes of the human mind have often made excessive devotion and excessive carnality meet in the same individual; hence it has not seldom been remarked that one man was composed of several different characters. Piety and inconsistency, spiritual and carnal extravagance, often walk together, and the brighter the light the darker the shade.

These defects did not escape the observant eye of Paul. His counsel in the matter was, “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” “Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.” Such, as do not give heed to this wise counsel are said to be “in the flesh;” while to them who follow it Paul would say, “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.”

Consider in how many ways this may be true; how it may apply to all, the rich and poor; but particularly to the rich, who have means, and consequently the temptation, to keep “in the flesh,” and therefore for whom it is no easy thing to “walk in the Spirit.” A rich man living with moderation and frugality that he may have the more wherewith to do good unto all men, but especially to the household of faith, is a truly noble and admirable sight.

But in view of the frailty of human nature, and the temptation of riches, the Christian is almost constrained to desire only those things that are sufficient for his daily wants. It is easier to be content with little than with much. Contentment is a chief element of spiritual life, “godliness with contentment is great gain.”

“The carnal mind,” which more literally translated would read “the thought of the flesh,” Paul says, “is death.” That is, it leads to death. But this saying’ must not be strained, or it will charge the apostle with affirming what he did not intend. The foregoing remarks have probably shown that one of the senses in which Paul employed the words “the flesh,” indicates animal or worldly- mindedness. It is this which he declares to be death. An extreme view of the passage would make the apostle teach that flesh cannot conceive a single idea but what is displeasing to God. This interpretation will not stand.

God, who created the brain, has rendered it capable of evolving thought, both good and evil. There is no change in the material of this organ or engine of thought, because the owner of it avows himself a convert to the Christian faith. It is qualified for a variety of work, and according to circumstances, one part may be very active, while another is almost dormant. This is produced by what phrenologists call “cultivating” and “restraining,” the best lessons for which are found in the Scriptures. The Book of Proverbs and the New Testament Epistles abound with advice to suit every variety of humanity; but if you will have it in one brief sentence, take the comprehensive admonition of Christ:

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” Romans 7:18. If Paul here referred to his material body and its members, there would seem no need to throw in the clause “that is, in my flesh,” after the word “me.” The “me” can point to no one but himself, whether in his Christian character, or in an assumed position. “That is, in my flesh,” looks much like a comment on the word “me,” as though he were using it just there in a particular way. The seventh and eighth chapters well support this sense. In the first the apostle takes the part of a carnal-minded Jew, who has a certain knowledge of the law, but finds himself in a wretched condition because he cannot fulfil the desires of the flesh, and keep the commandments of God at the same time.

Then in the eighth chapter Paul describes a man who is “delivered,” - a man to whom there is no more condemnation, because he is “not in the flesh” or following the fleshly passions, but in Christ, walking after the commandments of the Spirit. The phrase “my flesh,” in this place, therefore, appears to be a shortened form, similar to the phrase, “the flesh,” before spoken of.

* “Hardly anyone, I think, reading the whole passage continuously, without any regard to the arbitrary break at the close of the seventh chapter, would be in danger of supposing that the Apostle Paul, though speaking in the first person, is describing his own character, in his regenerate sanctified state, when he describes a man “sold under sin;” “brought into subjection to the law of sin;” “doing the evil that he would not;” “not doing the good that he would;” and living a life of wretched contradiction to his own judgement.’

*See Whateley’s Extract, ‘Christadelphian Lamp’ November 1873, page 19.

To be continued...

Jesus said.....

No.10

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Matthew 10:34.

Not the literal sword of course, for the scriptures show no place where either the disciples or Jesus Christ are to use the sword or engage in physical warfare. Jesus said to His disciples, “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52) and earlier, John the Baptist had forbidden the use of the sword when soldiers came to him for baptism, for to them he said, “Do violence to no man.” (Luke 3:14). While of Jesus it is written, “Sit thou on my right-hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Psalm 110:1 & Matthew 22:44).

However, “the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17) proclaims, upholds, and defends the gospel. There can be no gainsaying or overcoming God’s word; it stands supreme and all opposition must ultimately fail; truth will live though personal beliefs may die.

Jesus came as a preacher of righteousness and wherever it is preached there is opposition. God’s laws are righteous and there can be no peace apart from putting God’s laws before all else, and for those who follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master persecution is inevitable in this present age. It was in this sense Jesus “came not to send peace but a sword,” but Jesus set out to establish a victory and the victory He won cast out the prince of this world for His followers.

“Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 15:57.