

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 202

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings

In the book of Judges we read about Jephthah who was born in Gilead. He was the son of a man called Gilead and a woman described as a harlot. Jephthah's father had other sons by a lawful wife. We are not told why or how Jephthah's birth came about, but because of his mother, his half brothers drove him out of the family home fearful that he would share their inheritance with them.

Jephthah fled to the land of Tob which was on the edge of the desert. Here in spite of or perhaps because of, his difficult parentage and all it had led to, he developed into a strong and forceful character. Gradually he became a leader of a group of destitute men and became known as a skilled and daring fighter, "a mighty warrior." His exploits and brilliance must have reached the ears of those who had thrown him out of his home in Gilead and when they found themselves in dire difficulties and in need of the sort of help in which he had become expert, they sought him out and urged him to lead them in a struggle they were facing against the Ammonites, who were at that time making regular incursions into their territory. Understandably and somewhat bitterly Jephthah said to them "Did you not hate me and drive me out of my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?" It is strange how families, even today, feel little compunction after having cast somebody off, yet when the need arises call the same outcast back into play when it suits their purpose. I've seen similar events myself at first hand. However such treatment has its upside as it did for Jephthah. He was in an excellent position to make some conditions if he were to accept such an assignment and he took full advantage of the situation. If he were to be victorious in the fight with the Ammonites he would, he said, expect to remain the tribal leader. This was agreed to and the arrangement was solemnly endorsed at Mizpah where the Israelite defenders had mustered.

Jephthah shewed good sense for as soon as he assumed command he tried to come to terms with the Ammonites by peaceful means. He sent a delegation to their king proposing that their forces be withdrawn. But in his reply, the Ammonite ruler laid claim to all the Israelite territory in Transjordan to the south of Gilead which was occupied by the tribes of Gad and Reuben. Jephthah sent his envoys back to prove that there was no historical basis for this claim, for the children of Israel under Moses had taken the area from the Amorites under King Sihon and since then the Israelites had lived in these territories for three hundred years: 'Why did you not recover them within that time? I therefore have not sinned against you, and you do me wrong by making war on me.'

The king of Ammon rejected Jephthah's diplomatic overtures and hostilities broke out. Before going into battle Jephthah took a dangerous vow, one that was to have terrible consequences for him personally. He said that if he won the battle he would sacrifice to the Lord 'whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious...'

Jephthah returned in triumph when he had roundly repulsed the Ammonites. To his horror the first person who came to meet him was his daughter, an only child, dancing to the sound of timbrels. Jephthah tore his clothes and cried out in grief. Amazingly, his daughter, obviously a female with as much strength of character as her father agreed that his sacred oath could not be broken. She asked her father to send her away for two months and she departed with some companions and bewailed her virginity. On her return the sacrifice was carried out. Because of this tragedy the custom arose for the young women to go out each year for 4 days, mourning Jephthah's daughter. Another quarrel broke out this time between the men of Gilead and the tribe of Ephraim. Jephthah drove them back across the river and sent detachments ahead to cut them off at the fords. Those men who sought to cross and denied that they were Ephraimites were asked to pronounce the word Shibboleth, which means 'an ear of wheat.' If they pronounced it sibboleth, according to the dialect of Ephraim, they were slain on the spot. Thousands of Ephraimites lost their lives in this ill-advised expedition.

This is a difficult narrative to contemplate in the 21st century. Particularly the account of the sacrifice by a father of a beloved daughter. Our modern sensibilities are offended at the idea of a man entering into such a vow and then carrying it out. Also not a little astounded that the daughter in question should agree that the vow is sacred and must be honoured. In Tyndale's Old Testament we are given a bit more detail, when greeting his daughter Jephthah says, "Alas my daughter, thou makest me sorrowful and art one of them that trouble me. For I have opened my mouth to the Lord and cannot go back." And she said to him "My father, if thou have opened thy mouth unto the Lord, then do with me according to that proceedeth out of thy mouth, forasmuch as the Lord hath avenged thee of thine enemies the children of Ammon."

In those far off days the believers had a very close relationship with the Almighty and His people acknowledged this by drawing Him very intimately into their everyday lives in a way that we are not expected to or even perhaps able to do today. Presumably this is because more of God's plan with the human race is now available to us, through the pages of the Bible in particular, and our place is to have a steady and unwavering faith in God's plan and promises and to wait patiently for the culmination of all things. In some ways it is less demanding than the relationship Jephthah and his family had with God. It demands from us a different type of strength and faith in the face of a dispiritingly Godless world. A world where people like us with eyes fixed on things to come that were promised centuries ago seem to 99% of the populace to be the stuff of stupid idle dreams.

Russell tells me that there is a school of thought that is of the opinion that Jephthah did not in fact sacrifice his daughter. That she was spared but never married or was not permitted to marry. I do not know any more than this and I cannot find any confirmation of the theory in any books of reference. If anyone can enlighten me further I should be very pleased to hear.

The 126th Psalm offers words of comfort to all who wait on the Lord, to Jephthah and his daughter whatever her fate: "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad... they that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Love to all, Helen Brady

Brother Phil Parry writes:

Some time ago our attention was drawn to a circulation to all Christadelphians Ecclesias of the anxiety felt by the Northern Ireland Belfast Ecclesia that there was too much laxity in the conduct of many members that needed to be corrected. Brother Russell Gregory and I combined to write, in anonymous capacities at first, to Mr Bloomfield, one of the persons responsible for issuing the request. We reminded him that there was more to it than laxity in conduct - that there was no doubt that his Belfast members should be drawn to the fact that there was amongst Christadelphians, an immense laxity not only in conduct of the members they were concerned about, but in the doctrines they held and thought to be 'The Truth.' We both pointed out the errors, which if good conduct were attained, would remain an obstacle and bar to the salvation offered

through the Atoning blood of Christ - which they were expected to believe was “unclean” from the veins of Mary.

After correspondence with Mr Bloomfield and his assistants it was obvious we were not Christadelphians of the sort he was anxious about but we did inform him of our beliefs and doctrinal faith which was a faith of confidence and Truth, not fear of ‘The Truth’ which we have since discovered to be the case with all who prefer to harness themselves to the Robert Roberts compiled Christadelphian Statement of Faith.

Regarding this Statement of Faith, Mr Bloomfield made no progress with us in its support and finally closed the correspondence adding in his final letter to me that a Christadelphian friend of his in Scotland would continue the correspondence, thinking probably that he would be more successful. Alas. Nothing was heard from Scotland.

It is the same old story!

A lion was being set against Eric Cave, a sincere man of sixty years in membership of the Christadelphian community in the area where he was associated with and very well known to the late Alfred Norris, who was informed, prior to his decease, of the change of views held by Eric and circulated by the latter in full assurance that he could prove to Alfred and all orthodox Christadelphians that they were misled.

Brother Eric made known the doctrinal errors in a printed circular for the benefit of all Christadelphians and entitled it “The Divine Plan - A Re-appraisal of Some Christadelphian Traditions” (October 1998), which resulted in his disfellowship, but not by all Christadelphians, nor, as they untruthfully published in The Christadelphian magazine, for denying Holy Scripture, but for questioning the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith which he had discovered to be based on the false doctrine of “Original Sin” a pagan teaching introduced into the early church by Origen and Augustine.

Through much of the contents of this Circular the teeth of Michael Ashton’s Lion had been drawn and rendered powerless and Brother Eric Cave was very disappointed by the cowardly attitude displayed and by the weakness of their case - be it by “The Christadelphian,” “The Testimony,” the “Glad Tidings,” “The Logos,” or any other Magazine supporting the errors of the Christadelphian views, especially those of the Atonement through the sacrificial death of Christ. All Michael Ashton could do was to tell Eric Cave’s Ecclesial leaders to withdraw fellowship from him which was a possibility in that context - but not with God and His Son.

Some are no doubt aware of Christadelphian advertising of seminars dealing with the subject “How to Read The Bible Effectively,” but when proof of doing so is shown in person or in writing the people who arrange these seminars are found to be those who do not read the Bible effectively because they will not dare venture outside the perimeter of their man made creed and basis of fellowship. An example of this was revealed when our Brother Russell Gregory attended a seminar under the above title for a period, where chosen subjects were discussed by Christadelphians in his own area of Sutton Coldfield, the atmosphere being mainly of a subdued and friendly nature. But what happened when Brother Russell learnt who would be speaking on the subject of the Atonement? He said that if the speaker expressed the views held by Christadelphians and taught in their literature he would challenge him. The very man to speak whom Russell addressed replied that if Russell did so he would ask him to leave - even though Brother Russell was already aware of the contents and statements the speaker would make and for which he must be challenged where not in accordance with Bible teaching and read effectively. Was not this “reading effectively” the motive and reason for the seminars which were arranged by Christadelphians in several parts of the country? Brother Gregory attended the final seminar but the speaker chose instead the subject of the genealogy of Jesus through from Adam to Mary (which incidentally had no male pedigree in the case of Jesus apart from God as His heavenly Father) and he ended with the statement that Jesus died for our sins, but he did not attempt to explain in what way Jesus died for our sins as it was obvious he could not without having to deal with the Atonement.

This type of people seem to profess a form of Godliness but when they are faced with The Truth they appear to exhibit a fear of it. They don't like people rocking their boat which has already been weakened and tossed by the waves of true doctrinal exposition.

Another example of this has come to the surface as a result of a visit our Brother Hampton made, unawares, to a Christadelphian residing in the Isle of Man to whom our brother mentioned in conversation that the Christadelphian community was full of divisions and trouble. Brother Hampton received a direct and heated denial followed by a question, "Who told you this?" One wonders how he could profess ignorance of such a state of things at his age unless it be as I said, fear of 'The Truth' and satisfied in his trouble-free isolation, thinking the name Christadelphian will see him through.

I decided to write to this Christadelphian when given his name and address by our Brother Hampton. In my letter I informed him of my history in the Christadelphian community some fifty or so years ago and of the facts and misrepresentation Edward Turney received after his lecture on "The Sacrifice of Christ" which Robert Roberts tried to prevent because the contents were in opposition to his own blasphemous teaching concerning the nature of Jesus and why He died on Calvary, in addition to other false views which contradicted the Holy Word of God. I sent him our Sister Helen Brady's reply to a Mr Curley who had sent her an article by H.P.Mansfield, "Christ's Death and Your Salvation" in reply to her request for an exposition of the Atoning work of Christ. It turned out to be unscriptural and distasteful and she told him what she thought of H.P.Mansfield, the Editor of "The Logos" magazine. I myself had already written a reply to that same article and this I also sent to the Christadelphian in the Isle of Man together with my two booklets "By Man Came Death -What Death?" and "Raised to Life."

Everything I sent was returned with a written request to take his name and address off the mailing list - a list he was never on. And what of "The Book of Life" - is it written in that list of names - to be removed if necessary? What a serious prospect for all who profess to know God and His Son, yet are in fear of being told he only Truth which makes one free!

"Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, or Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. AMEN."

Brother Phil Parry.

The Shofar Magazine

Published by the Unamended Christadelphians in the U.S.A.

Their very commendable objectives are:

- Arouse zeal among readers concerning God's Word.
- Proclaim the Hebrew roots of Holy Writ, our relationship to it, and its effect upon us.
- Rekindle the pioneering spirit of individual thought, adventure, and discovery.
- Revisit historical issues and viewpoints in the brotherhood with objectivity.
- Alert the brotherhood to impending dangers both internal and external.
- Share and examine unexplored, obscure, or suppressed topics in light of compelling evidence.
- Promote biblical principles above politics, personalities, and party spirit.
- Offer possible solutions to emotional, and sometimes divisive subjects.
- Approach prophecy in a studied, reasoned, and non-intimidating manner.

The Nazarene Fellowship started out as Turneyite Christadelphians as opposed to Robertsite Christadelphians, and we feel sure that if they were alive today both Edward Turney and Dr. Thomas would be members for they were both zealous for the Word of God, knowledgeable in Hebrew, especially Dr.

Thomas, both had the pioneering spirit of individual thought, adventure and discovery, and wished to share viewpoints with the brotherhood with objectivity; they both were most anxious to alert the brotherhood to impending dangers; they wished to share and examine unexplored, obscure, or suppressed topics in the light of compelling evidence and to promote biblical principles above politics, personalities and party spirit. Both offered solutions to emotional and divisive subjects, and were keen students of Bible prophecy and presented their views in a non-intimidating manner.

It is these very things which brought the Nazarene Fellowship into existence and the reason we circulate the Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter amongst the Christadelphian community to this day.

It is in the spirit of the above we now write the following notes hoping it will lead to a meaningful exchange of views:-

For some time now The Editors of the “Shofar” magazine have put forward a very convincing argument in support of the meanings of “*Muth Temuth*” and “*B’Yom*” in Scripture. They have shown their readers that the expression “dying thou shalt die” means an inflicted death in the very day of Adam’s and Eve’s transgression, a day of 24 hours, and does not refer to a prolonged process of ageing and eventual death as taught in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith and believed by many.

We have no reason to suppose the Unamended Christadelphians have come to their understanding as a result of learning from the Nazarene Fellowship but rather by reading the Bible effectively for themselves and for this we must commend them and encourage all to keep on reading the Bible effectively and prayerfully, for only by so doing can any of us expect to come to a full knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ by the grace of God.

While we have always felt that our small booklet, “The meaning and Usage of *Muth Temuth* and *B’Yom*” gave sufficient proof to satisfy most people, we find in the “Shofar” magazine hundreds of pages devoted to proving this case over and over again! They have proved beyond all question that the old Christadelphian teaching (that the eventual death of Adam was the penalty for his transgression in Eden) to be utterly false and without foundation.

Those of us who have been receiving the “Shofar” magazine rejoiced to see such good sense in a Christadelphian publication and we look forward to this view spreading throughout the whole community with the complete rejection of the view pronounced by Robert Roberts in the B.S.A.F. However, in the March 2003 issue of “Shofar” we felt there was an unaccountable loss of good sense. We were not altogether surprised because we saw it coming but waited for the final summing up of their reasoning for their view of “sin in the flesh.”

It goes something like this:-

‘A worker by working produces a work’
‘A talker by talking produces a talk’
‘A sinner (Adam) by sinning produces sinful flesh.’

Oops!!! Really? Surely not!

Well, in the observation I haven’t reproduced their words exactly so here they are, and just to make sure there is no mistake on my part I have had the relevant section, page 31 of the March issue of the Shofar magazine, checked and double checked. Here first is their brief introduction:-

“The word “sin” then, is seen to have a twofold meaning. In its primary sense, it is transgression, and in its secondary sense that which transgression produced. What was produced may be further understood by the boxes below.” –

“SIN”—A VERB AND NOUN

A common relationship between verbs and nouns is one of cause and effect. The word “sin” as a verb, designating action, is directly related to “sin” as a noun, designating our nature. The verb being the cause, and the noun being the result or effect of that action. The relationship can be seen in a number of common verbs, such as “working” which produces a “work” “talking” which produces a “talk”, etc. The action of sin in the beginning produced our nature, which is therefore called “sin”.

This view allows us to see how Christ was “made sin” (2 Cor. 5:21), and how by Adam’s transgression many were “made sinners” (Rom. 5:19), not in the individual sense of action, but in the sense of possessing by inheritance that which was produced—a sinful nature.

We had hoped someone would write in to the editors to express their surprise at such absurd ‘logic’ but nothing was reported in the June 2003 issue of “Shofar.”

Many pages of support are given for their reasoning which is well summed up in the writings of Dr. Thomas in Eureka:-

SIN AND “SIN NATURE”

The word sin is used in two principal acceptations in the scripture. It signifies in the first place, the “transgression of the law”; and in the next it represents that physical principle of the animal nature, which is the cause of all its diseases, death, and resolution into dust; ...so that sin, in the sacred style came to stand for the substance called man. ...Men are sinners in a twofold sense: first, by natural birth; and next, by transgression. “Elpis Israel,” p.126.

“Sin” is a word in Paul’s argument, which stands for “human nature,” with its affections and desires. Hence, to become sin, or for one to be “made sin” for others, (2 Cor. 5:21), is to become flesh and blood. This is called “sin,” or “Sin’s flesh,” because it is what it is in consequence of sin, or transgression. Eureka Vol. I, Diabolos p-247

With regard to Romans 5:19, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners...” this cannot mean we have been given a sinful nature, even though this is the Roman Catholic teaching of ‘Original Sin;’ but the word “made” in Romans 5:19 means to designate or constitute (Strong’s) and is in agreement with the teaching of Paul elsewhere as in Galatians 3:22, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin...” and Romans 11:32, “God hath concluded them all in unbelief...” This was done for the purpose of salvation “that he might have mercy on all” and “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

Also much emphasis is given to the 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin...” that we have reproduced an article elsewhere in this C.L. by the late A.H.Broughton dealing with this matter and would ask the editors of “Shofar” for their observations on our understanding so that we can report back in our next Circular Letter due to be published at the end of September.

Brother Russell Gregory

Wrested Scripture Straightened Out and Reset

“For he hath made him (to be) sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” - 2 Corinthians 5:21

This passage of Scripture is one of those which are so seriously wrested from their context and from their true sense and made to support an idea that is very God-dishonouring. Let us therefore consider this passage and let us do so in the following natural method, viz:

1. The vital word.
2. The verse itself.
3. The chapter in which it occurs.
4. Parallel Scriptures elsewhere.

1. The Vital Word. The important word is, of course, that which in the Authorised Version has been translated as “sin” (Greek *hamartia*). According to the Greek Lexicons this word *hamartia* may mean either “sin” or “sin-offering,” according to the sense required. It is found that when the Seventy Jewish Scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures into Greek they used that word *hamartia* to signify both “sin” and “sin-offering.” This explains much, for it was the Septuagint Translation which was in use in Paul’s day in Palestine.

Furthermore, we also find the same thing happens in the Hebrew, where several Hebrew words have each of those two separate meanings. And we must not forget that Paul, when writing to Corinth was writing to an assembly whose leaders were Jews, and an assembly which would appear from Acts 18 to be mainly Jewish. Those Jews would not misunderstand Paul’s use of that word *hamartia*.

Here, then, are the Hebrew words mentioned, each of which has the two meaning s:-

CHATAAH - rendered “sin” seven times, as “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin” - Exodus 32:31.
Rendered “Sin offering” once - “Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required” -
Psalm 40:6.

CHATTATH - rendered “sin” 169 times, as “pardon our iniquity and our sin” - Exodus 34:9.
Rendered “sin offering” 116 times, as “Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering?” -
Leviticus 10:7
Rendered “punishment”, etc, 7 times.

CHATA - rendered “sin” 165 times, as “In all this Job sinned not” - Job 1:22.
Rendered “offer for sin” twice, as “Slew it, and offered it for sin” - Leviticus 9:15.

CHATAAH - rendered “sin” twice, as “forgiving Iniquity... and sin” - Exodus 34:7.
Rendered “sin offering” once, “for a sin offering for all Israel” - Ezekiel 6:17.

ASHAM - rendered “sin” twice, as “fools make a mock at sin” - Proverbs 14:9-
Rendered “sin offering” once, “Make his soul an offering for sin” - Isaiah 53:10.
Rendered “trespass” 7 times, and rendered “trespass offering” 35 times.

ASHMAH - rendered “sin” 4 times, and “trespass” 11 times as “Amon trespassed more
and more” - 2 Chronicles 33:23.
Rendered “trespass offering” once, “in the day of his trespass offering” - Leviticus 6:5.

Consistently with this, the Diaglott thus renders the verse in question: “For him who knew no sin, he made a sin-offering on our behalf.”

2. The Verse. When we examine the verse itself we are confronted with this choice: either to abandon the Christadelphian idea or else to accept the doctrine of the personal pre-existence of Christ. For

the actual Greek word is, according to the interlinear Diaglott (and no Greek scholar will dispute the rendering here) “Him not having known sin.” The Lord Jesus Christ was made *hamartia* at a time when it could be said of Him that He had not known sin. If this was at His conception, then He evidently must have existed as a person before then. (And if one says here that at His conception it could have been said of Him that He had not known sin, well, the same could be said of every human being ever born).

The truth is clear and simple: the Lord Jesus Christ was made a sin offering for us at a time when it could be said of Him that He had never sinned.

3. The Chapter. About what does Paul discourse in this chapter? Is it “sin nature” or is it actual transgressions? Look at the verse itself: “who knew no sin” - what was that? “Sin nature”? Look at verse 19: “Not imputing their transgressions unto them.” Was that their “sin nature”? Look at verse 17: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” - is he “new” by having been released from his “sin nature” (as they speak), or by having been released from past sins? Surely this.

So, in this chapter, Paul likewise contrasts righteousness with sin, as two opposites. But righteousness is not the opposite of “sin nature” for according to Christadelphian belief Christ possessed both simultaneously.

4. Parallel Scripture. First we will take a parallel passage from Leviticus and then one from Isaiah.

Leviticus 6:26: “The priest that offereth it for sin (*chata*) shall eat it.”

We have seen some of the occurrences of this word *chata*. Let us note here that while it is sometimes rendered as “offer for sin” it is 29 times rendered as “to make sin” and frequently rendered as “cause to sin,” as “made Israel sin.” - 1 Kings 15:30.

Now supposing that the A.V. translators had translated this passage (Leviticus 6:26) according to words only, apart from sense, we should have read in our Bibles: “The priest that maketh it sin shall eat it” and the translators would have made a precisely similar mistake to the one they made in 2 Corinthians 5:21. (N.B. “to be” are in italics).

It is the work of the translators to give the sense and not merely to translate according to dictionary equivalents, literally, without regard to sense or idiom.

The translations of both passages should be uniform:-

Leviticus 6:26 - “The priest that offereth it for sin.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 - “Offered him for sin” or “made him a sin-offering.”

When we look at Isaiah 53 we find there a phrase similar to the one under consideration. The English words vary, it is true, but we shall see that they do not vary in the original. “Make his soul an offering for sin.” We know that “His soul” (Soul = Hebrew *nephesh*) can alternatively be rendered as “Him.” And we have seen that here the phrase “offering for sin” is *asham*, which elsewhere is translated as “sin” (as in the example previously quoted). So that a variant translation of Isaiah 53:10 would be: “Make him sin,” which are the words of 2 Corinthians 5:21.

But it is Isaiah 53 that gives the right translation and 2 Corinthians 5:21 should be made to conform to that method of translation, and not Isaiah made to conform to 2 Corinthians.

If there is any doubt concerning 2 Corinthians 5:21 as to whether it relates to Christ’s birth or crucifixion, there can be no doubt concerning Isaiah 53. There it is undoubtedly the crucifixion that is referred to.

Again, take a three-fold cord:-

- (i) Isaiah 53 - "it pleased The Lord to... make his soul... an offering for sin.. for our transgressions... he had done... no violence... nor deceit."
- (ii) 1 Peter 2:21 - "...Christ... suffered... for us... who did no sin..."
- (iii) 2 Corinthians 5:21 - "...He hath made him... sin (offering) for us... who knew no sin..."

In all these references the writers were referring to personal sins only and they teach that Christ was free from such transgressions. There is no mention anywhere in the Scriptures of any atonement for "physical-sin-nature," and these three writers agree in showing that Christ was put to death as a sacrifice for something of which He was quite free Himself.

I submit that this method of comparing obscure Scripture with plain Scripture is the only safe and only correct method of attaining to an understanding of it.

In the mercy of God we who circulate these articles have been freed from a grave error which we tenaciously held for years (amazed now that we should have so firmly held to a doctrine which is nowhere to be found in the words of God).

We therefore appeal to you with confidence, to search the Scriptures for your- selves concerning this.

A.H.Broughton.

Romans Chapter Seven

This chapter is much quoted in defence of the theory that Adam's nature was changed at the fall and unhappily, this is believed by most professing Christians. But if due regard is given to the context it should be seen that from verse 5 of this chapter a digression is made by Paul from the main theme of the previous chapter that the believer has been made free from the law of sin and death by faith and baptism; they have in symbol been crucified with Christ and raised to newness of life and been given a sure and certain hope of eternal life, having by faith in Christ's loving sacrifice escaped sin's wages of eternal oblivion.

In the first four verses of chapter seven Paul speaks to Jews like himself and uses the simile of their relation to the law of Moses as that of a wife to a husband, the death of whom would release the wife and give her freedom to marry another - in like manner they had become dead to the law by the death of Christ and were free to marry another, even the incorruptible risen Christ.

From verse 5, as in parenthesis, Paul recounts his own experiences and feelings as a Jew under the law and those of like position saying, "When we were in the flesh," which obviously does not mean their physical flesh, but an opposite position to that which they now had of being "in the spirit," or "in Christ" - when Saul (as he was previously) came to an understanding of the law of ordinances that it was indeed a ministration of condemnation and of death from which he sought vindication by a meticulous keeping of the 'letter,' he failed to see in the endless sacrifices of animals, whose blood could not take away sin, a type of one who could, the promised seed of the woman, who would fulfil all the types. And although he realised that the law was holy, just and good," it condemned him as a sinner to death from which there was no escape, therefore he found no real incentive to strive against sin and allowed his 'members' to perform things contrary to his better judgment, thus making him wretched, alluding to the law of Moses, which incorporated the Edenic law of sin and death, as a body of death from which he now thanked God that Christ had delivered him, when, in his fanatical zeal for the law he went in pursuit of Christ's followers to Damascus but was brought to a halt on the road by a vision of the risen Christ so bright in glory as to strike him blind for three days, during which time no doubt he was able to fit in all the missing pieces which a true knowledge of the sacrifice of Christ supplied (for he was no doubt well versed in his knowledge of the Scriptures, being a Pharisee brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, who was an eminent scholar but was blind as they were to the spirit of the law) so that after he was baptised he was able to preach the gospel to others.

The 8th chapter may now be seen to be a continuation of the 6th and 7th to verse 4, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The third verse is supposed to teach that sin is in the

flesh, and because Jesus was flesh He had to die to save Himself, and us as a representative man. This view is a complete violation of the truth, because, properly understood and in harmony with other Scripture concerning our Lord, this verse is a keynote to the Atonement.

Now all Scripture points to Christ “without blemish and without spot,” as a sacrifice for the sin of mankind just as the typical animals offered had to be perfect to be acceptable. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (being in the Adamic bondage) God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of Sin’s flesh (i.e. flesh belonging to sin) and (by an offering) for sin condemned sin (while He was) in the flesh,” “being made a little lower than the angels that He might taste death for every man.” The ransom price of our redemption, for Jesus Himself never needed redemption, not being generated by any man of Adam’s stock, but by the Holy Spirit power of God. Keeping in mind that the condemnation was not physical but legal it may be seen that Mary the mother of Jesus, being a Godly Jewess, believed in a coming Saviour, she was God’s redeemed handmaid as testified in what is now known as the ‘magnificat,’ how could any doubt her faith upon reading those wonderful words.

Usually there is no difficulty in seeing the federal principle regarding the ‘Body of Christ’ (one head with many members) into which body the believer enters by an act of faith, without any change of our physical nature, why then should it be so difficult for some to see that upon enlightenment, one is “in Adam” in a similar way?

The believer has now “put off the old man” (Adam) and “put on the new man” (Christ) by baptism and is typically clothed with a garment of righteousness, not our own, but that of Christ. We are now redeemed, or bought back from the dominion of sin – the tree has been made good and God looks for its fruit to be good - to fulfil the law of loving God first and our neighbour as ourselves, knowing that our High Priest is working as intercessor with the Father.

This proves that believers are being judged now, and if we repent of our sins we can be forgiven as we are assured in 1 John 1:9. We must expect chastening for our faults and as a test of faith, but if we have true faith and keep it to the end, eternal life will be ours and our standing at the judgment seat of Christ will be for rewards of works of faith, but eternal life is the free gift obtainable by faith only. How simple then, to see that the first resurrection is for those “in Christ’ who will be raised incorruptible and will not come into judgment (condemnation) reserved for the unbelievers and unfaithful at the end of the Millennium (if they have died before Christ comes - Revelation 20:5,6). But the living unfaithful and unrepentant will be dealt with at Christ’s advent, as many Scriptures predict.

The nation of Israel was a miniature or type of all who have knowledge of God’s law, therefore accountable or responsible. The Mosaic Law was their schoolmaster designed to bring them to a knowledge of Christ through the various types and ordinances. It was added to the Edenic law and the promises as a measure of educating and making known again the need of redemption by making the offence (of Eden) to abound (Romans 5:20) but when (the object of) faith came in the person of Jesus Christ they were no longer under a schoolmaster and could, by faith in His sacrifice, be made free from the law of sin and death.

It is clear that natural death, the result of a corruptible body, is not alluded to here. Animal sacrifices were slain, or put to death as Christ the Antitype was and Adam should have been in the day he sinned (Genesis 2:17), had not love and mercy prevailed. Paul could not have been speaking of himself as a Christian in Romans 7 using such terms as, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (verse 14), for he had been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ. It would have been a complete negation of all that he had said in the previous chapter and elsewhere- Paul, as a Christian, said “I can do all things through Christ that strengthened me,” also “Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ.” If Paul was a follower of Christ he would not be in the double-minded state as depicted in verses 14 to 23, for did not James say “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways”? - (James 1:8). Was Paul unstable? He said, “I keep under my body lest I who have preached to others should myself become a castaway.” (1 Corinthians 9:27). Even Dr. Thomas wrote that Paul in this chapter was “seeing himself as an unenlightened son of the flesh” so that any who think to excuse themselves on the strength of this chapter should think again.

Evelyn Linggood.

JESUS CHRIST - ALTAR, SACRIFICE AND PRIEST

The article which follows under the above heading was sent to me for publication but upon reading it through I thought it best to first write the following letter to the author, Brother Stanley Jelfs:-

“Dear Brother Stanley, Greetings with Love in Jesus Name.

Thank you for your treatise received about two weeks ago. I have now typed out the article ready for publication but felt it may be worthwhile contacting you beforehand in case you wish to make some changes.

Your argument that Jesus was an High Priest after the order of Melchizedec before and during His ministry will not be readily agreed to by anyone I know in the Nazarene Fellowship as I think you will perhaps already appreciate. The weakness I find is in the fact that you have failed to see or at least to accept that Jesus is nowhere considered to be the High Priest before His resurrection.

In Hebrews 7:24 we read: “But this man because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” This could not have been said of Jesus at His birth, nor at any time before His crucifixion. Again in verse 25 we read, “seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” - it was not until after His resurrection that Jesus could say He was ever living, and this is confirmed by Him in Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore.” And again, Jesus did not make intercession for the people during His ministry for He said, in John 16:24, within a day or two of His crucifixion “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive” (John 16:24).

Secondly Jesus gave Himself to be the sacrifice. He was the Lamb of God provided by God. Jesus gave Himself back to God as the offering for the people - all people – as God’s law required - “Without the shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus was the offering, not the Offerer. This is confirmed in Genesis where we read of Abraham, when on his way to slay Isaac, to whom he said, “God will provide Himself a Lamb for a burnt offering” - Genesis 22:8, this being prophetic of Jesus, and in Isaiah 9:6 also we read, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:”

We see the principle carried out in Eden - the sacrifice made in order to spare Adam and Eve was provided and offered by God, (or His angel as His representative). Likewise God provided and offered Jesus as the Great Antitype of the lamb slain in Eden. The contrast is that the animal sacrificed in Eden was not capable of giving itself as an offering but had its life taken anyway. Neither was its life of equal value for the purpose of a ransom and could not therefore be a true substitute. Jesus, on the other hand, could and did give His life for His brethren, showing His great love for them - His life in place of Adam’s life in order to redeem him and offer forgiveness to his offspring for their sins.

Again, in Job 42:8, we see Job was God’s representative when he had to accept the offering of seven bullocks and seven rams from Eliphaz and his two friends - “and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept.” Job as priest had to intercede between God and Eliphaz. The priests under the Law of Moses were also God’s representatives and required to carry out the sacrifices as per God’s law and to intercede for the people. We see then that the priests represented God to the people, not the people to God. Neither did the priests bear the guilt of the people’s sin; the offerings upon the altar were for this purpose and especially so with regard to Jesus as we read in Isaiah 53.

Again, I disagree that the altar represents God to the people. The altar is the meeting place between God and the faithful. On your first page you state. “He became an altar to us...” but I do not agree that Jesus ever became an altar. The altar became the meeting place between God and the people because of the sacrifice upon it. You quote Hebrews 13:10, but this verse does not say that Jesus was the altar. Jesus was the offering upon the altar of whom we partake in Spirit even as the priests under Moses ate of the offerings from their altars.

There is much of value in your treatise and a great deal of thought has obviously gone into preparing it, but in view of the above observations I am sure there will be much opposition to your article from other readers if your article is published in its present form.

In case you would like more time to consider what is the best thing to do I will wait until I hear from you.

Sincerely your brother in the Hope of Life for evermore through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Russell.”

In response to my letter I received the following:-

“Dear Brother Russell, Greetings to you also in the Name that is above every name. I know it is difficult. It hit me like a revelation one day when reading Hebrews 9 that Jesus was the fulfilment of those things of the tabernacle, in the greater and more perfect sense. He is the door, the veil, the priest and the sacrifice, yes, and the laver and the altar too, I believe, and passed through into the very holy of holies. And so I had to go back to chapter one and work my way through while the Spirit unfolds the whole subject and chapter 9 seems to put it in a nutshell but with mention only of the tabernacle, not Melchizedec, etc., because that had all been done. I had been guilty of reading superficially those profound truths and that sin lay in the old priesthood not in the sacrifice as the Christadelphians say. Guilty of glossing over the entire message about His priesthood, the perfect for the imperfect. Apparently there were two levels of His priesthood; the Melchizedec, bringing forth bread and wine (as he did to Abraham and his people) as Jesus was to do; the other level (not enacted) of Jesus interceding in heaven. Between these levels was the sacrifice mediating the New Covenant.

When I ask myself the difference between the two orders of priest the answer comes in chapter 7. One was ordained by blood sacrifice and was temporary, had a beginning and end. The other was clearly said to be “without beginning of days” and this is as important to us as the words “or end of life.” Because of course it was without blood and by oath previously given and this because of who Jesus was, as we know. It was derived from above. “They were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.” (Hebrews 7:23,24). He continues after death and resurrection because He began before. Had He not begun before - I mean been a priest before - He could not have continued it seems to me.

I do not reason from any institutionalised position and feel free of that as I think you will agree we have had enough of that.

The priests in the tabernacle were priests before ever a sacrifice was made. Hebrews 8:3, “Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices” and we know Jesus offered Himself. But then it goes on “If He were on earth He would not be a priest.” It would have been a little difficult for an orthodox Jew to have been told there was another priesthood while that old order was still standing tho’ “ready to vanish away.” So there is a certain amount of diplomacy here if I am not mistaken. Even in chapter 9 we are largely left to read between the lines.

Dear Russell, if you go ahead with the article, print this as well if you wish, if it will be of interest.

With sincere regards in the Lord Jesus, Stanley (Jelfs)”

Bearing in mind the above correspondence I felt it best to publish Brother Stanley’s article and I look forward to hearing the views of our readers with regard to it. - Russell.

* * *

Jesus Christ - Altar, Sacrifice and Priest

Why this Article?

Its purpose is to show the common theme of holiness (apartness from sin) between Altar, Priest and sacrifice, then to notice their application to, and fulfilment by, the Lord Jesus Christ. We can say that the Altar represents God to the people; the Priest, the people to God, bearing their guilt by the service they rendered. The offering being without defilement and faultless, would expiate sin by the shedding of its blood without polluting the Altar thereon, so that Satan did not cast out Satan. The flesh partaken of represents Christ: the way, the truth and the life. Only Christ from heaven, as He said, could satisfy all three requirements as the Son of God, bearing the honour of God among men, the Bread of Life, the Living Bread that came down from heaven.

Do we see Jesus Christ in the offerings of God's law given through Moses the mediator?

"...the law was our schoolmaster (NKJ - tutor) unto Christ (Galatians 3:24)... I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil (Matthew 5:17). For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things... Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." (Hebrews 10:1,9,23 also Hebrews 13:11 & 12).

The Altar

The altar obviously had a practical use, but what was its significance? While Moses came to be mediator in place of God, the altar was given to be God's ceremonial representation. It happened in the wilderness at Mount Sinai that the people were terrified of God, and even Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling." (Hebrews 12:21).

"Then they said to Moses, You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And God said: You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make to be with me gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. An altar of earth you shall make for me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings, your sheep and your oxen."

Because Jesus was the aim of the law; because He was the Son, and God was in Christ reconciling; because begotten by the Spirit, and the Word made flesh - He was the Immanuel, the manifestation of God, showing forth His glory. He had come in His Father's place (John 5:43) - in His name, through the Eternal Spirit, to be an offering for sins-

"But you are he who took me out of the womb; you made me trust while on my mother's breasts. I was cast upon you from birth. From my mother's womb you have been my God." (Psalm 22:9).

He became an Altar to us, from which to eat, as priests long ago ate the flesh as commanded: "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat" (Hebrews 13:10). He came to fulfil the law, and displaced it. The altar "sanctifies the gift;" the Father sanctified Jesus, who sanctifies His disciples (Matthew 23:18, John 10:36, Hebrews 2:11, 10:10).

Cruden described holiness as an "absolute purity and freedom from sin." The altar is described as "most holy." In Leviticus 19:2 Moses is instructed to say to the congregation: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy." Strict instructions were given on the making of an altar. At first they were to be made of natural earth or stone and in this state were unpolluted, undefiled, pure or holy, just as God is holy- But if made with tools as was done later, it would of necessity have to be cleansed. In Exodus 20:24,25 the command is:

“An altar of earth you shall make for me, and you shall sacrifice on it... and if you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.”

When it came to making an altar of wood and bronze, when tools were used the requirement was that because it stood in the place of God but had been handled by man:

“You shall cleanse the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it. Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and sanctify it. And the altar shall be most holy- Whatever touches the altar must be holy.” (Exodus 29:36,37).

It was repeated on the Day of Atonement once a year:

“And he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord, and make atonement for it... and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.” (Leviticus 16:18,19,29-34).

The altar was unmistakably about God, who is holy, receiving from man His due and bestowing His blessing. They must not approach Him directly but only in His way. They would sacrifice on His altar in the way He appoints. They could not face Him, but He would come to them. “In every place where I record my name I will come to you, and I will bless you.” (Exodus 20:24). Many appearances are recorded until He chose Jerusalem “to put His name for His dwelling place.” (Deuteronomy 12:5). It became the place of altars until the Saviour came and a vastly superior way of approach was instituted (John 5:43. Matthew 12:6, John 2:19). The altar, naturally, was accounted most holy as it stood in the place of God an altar to or for Him. He will be sanctified in those who approach Him and nothing must touch it but what was holy, set apart from sin without defilement or blemish.

“The altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy.” (Exodus 29:37).

Its only cleansing was from the handling with tools of the children of Israel because of their uncleanness (Exodus 20:25,29,36,37. Leviticus 16:18,19). Sin is atoned for by sacrifice. The sacrifice itself was un-atoned for; it had no impurity, defilement, uncleanness - no sin in itself inside or outside, it was to touch the altar most holy. The priesthood was a special case because of its weakness and imperfection. It was to be replaced by a High Priest from another tribe and of the order of Melchizedec.

The Sacrifice

Understanding the sacrifice and offering of the body is crucial. In itself it is sufficient to give us an understanding of Christ. As the altar was holy so would the sacrifice as parts of it were to come into contact with the altar and there is found to be consistency throughout. The whole body of the offering to be slain was clean not merely superficially but as a kind. Physically also unblemished, indicating the moral character or perfect obedience of Jesus to His Father, as is usually understood.

The sacrifice was a “type,” a prophetic term, and represents Jesus Christ. Clean and holy, unblemished meant sinless. We can only be clean if and because He was clean. “You are clean through the word I have spoken to you.” Jesus said (John 15:3) He was clean because related to God and His holiness, as we are related to Adam our father and his sin by descent, “confined under sin” as it is put in Galatians 3:22.

So then, this is what we find in the sacrifice, that it was not the destruction of an unholy, sinful body. It was in fact the sacrifice of a body that was both separated from sin and whose life was sinless. We are disfellowshipped for believing the example of Scripture. Let us take heed to the following:

“You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal... two each of every animal that is unclean... Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Genesis 7:2; 8:20). “Speak to the children of Israel and say to them; When any of you bring an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock - of the herd and the flock” (Leviticus 1:2).

No unclean kinds; these others were good as food, and were actually eaten by the priests in certain offerings:

“The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting. Every one who touches its flesh must be holy” (Leviticus 6:26,27). Verse 17 - “It shall not be baked with leaven... it is most holy, like the sin offering and the trespass offering.”

Leviticus 10:17,18 - “Why have you not eaten the sin offering in a holy place, since it is most holy, and God has given it to you to bear the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?”

This was prophetic of the Lord Jesus Christ who made atonement in His capacity as priest when He offered Himself a sacrifice for sin. Why are these examples ignored, disregarded?

But what of our nature? Our nature is of God and not of sin; can anyone show beyond doubt that it is otherwise? But is not flesh sinful in and of itself? No, because our Bible does not say so. Romans 8:3 calls it flesh of sin, or sin’s flesh, a phrase Dr. Thomas often used and yet clung to the orthodox “original sin” or sinful defiled nature. Sin is transgression of law in Romans 4:15; 1 John 3:4 (or lawlessness). We are responsible for our thoughts and deeds, and James 1:14 does not teach otherwise. In fact, we are told it was the Greeks, not the Jews who spawned the idea that all material things were evil. When people call flesh sinful they are using metonymy, a figure of speech. Jesus had no sinful thoughts. His body was not sin; He was not devil embodied as some have taught; He was not of the serpent’s seed. Yet He was flesh, as we are. Relationship is the difference - we are related to sin; He was not. If the Levitical law on sacrifice teaches a doctrine of substitution who are we to teach otherwise? Shall we not rather find the rest of Scripture to conform to that symbolic law? So, sinful or sin’s flesh is man under the power of sin in the unreconciled state and nothing more. The sacrifices were pure substitution!

Why Jesus had to be the Son of God

Had Jesus been the son of ordinary Adamic stock it would have meant a full relationship to sin’s flesh and death. He would have been under the curse and not “made a curse for us,” unclean, when a sinless clean offering was required. All in Adam die from sin, all in Christ shall live too (John 13:8; 14:16), and here is the reason they live; “In the beginning was the Word (Logos) and the Word was with God... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (“I am the light of the world” - John 8:12). This was characteristic of the Son when, as verse 14 reads,

“And the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

In John 7:16,17 in the precincts of the temple, Jesus begins to reveal what He calls “the doctrine:”

“My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority.”

Please read down to verse 39:

“Then at the top of His voice He cried out before them all as He taught in the temple saying, You both know me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of myself, but He who sent me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him for I am from Him, and He sent me.”

His priesthood stems from His origins rather than a carnal ordinance. But the Pharisees and chief priests did not want to believe. On the last day of the feast Jesus stands up to invite anyone who thirsts to believe and to come to Him. But on the next day He is in the thick of it with them again in the temple until the Jews are ready to stone Him. They have listened but do not really hear what He is saying concerning His being the Son of God, not even when in chapter 8 verses 31 to 36 He clarifies the mystery, and it has to do with freedom from sin because His is the Son.

This is the means by which He is able to give “the right to become children (sons and daughters) of God, to those who believe in (*eis*) His name” (*eis* is a word denoting movement to or into Him for the purpose of being united with or in Him) (John 1:12). The short passage in John chapter 8 amidst Jesus’ long encounter with the Jews at His last feast of tabernacles is one of the most, if not the most important teaching passage in His ministry.

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Free from what?

“Assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is the slave of sin” (vv 31-34)

This is the position of all those who are not free children of God by union with Him, the Son. They are pure sons of Adam and are not free but are servants or slaves because placed and sold under sin, condemned to fending for themselves they are under sin and do sin.

“And a slave does not abide in the house for ever, but a son abides ever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (vv. 35,36. See Exodus 21:2)

He was free from sin because He was the Son of God and not because He died. “Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?” This was the truth that He told about His Sonship, the authority behind the fact, the truth that makes one free (vv 32,46). This really makes nonsense of the falsity that He was bound by His own “sinful flesh” and was not free, was no more free than we are, but was Himself in need of sacrifice and could even offer for His own sin and for others at the same time which the High Priest in Israel was not permitted to do. He was permanently a member of the household of His Father and we have to apply for admission through faith in His Word

“Jesus said to them (v42) If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from Him, nor have I come of myself, but He sent me.”

This is how Matthew’s gospel leads into the subject - Matthew 3:17 is the announcement from heaven, repeated in the transfiguration because faith in it is vital and its fact essential to redemption. It is only the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, that cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). We all know Jesus was the only begotten Son but how many realise its significance for redemption? “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son does not have life.” (1 John 5:9-13,20). Matthew 8:28,34 - Here two demon-possessed men recognise the Sonship and the demons beg to be cast out into the heard of swine. They understood the fact and also that they were unclean and that Jesus was not, He was holy.

Matthew 16:16, Peter’s great confession highlights the whole question - why was it so important to know Jesus Christ was the Son of God - and why was He? To His question “Who” the answer is “Son of the living God.” Significant words.

Matthew 22:42. Jesus challenges the Pharisees on this important question, Whose Son is He? Why does He do this? They thought the Messiah would be simply a Son of David, but it was not enough. The fact that He was David’s Lord meant He was the Son of God and inherited the title direct from His Father who is Lord of all. He was David’s Son by His virgin mother, but not by His Father, the one far outweighed the other. He came as Son of God to save the world; He comes as Son of man and of David to judge and to rule.

Matthew 27:40-43- In their vengeful blindness He is reviled for the very truth that could have saved them. Ignoring His works and all the testimony they were offended at Him.

Matthew 14:33. The doubters believe, and Mark, in chapter 1 verse 1 begins His gospel “Good news of the Son of God.”

“That faith of the Son of God” - Galatians 2:20 (E. Diaglott) and meaning the truth concerning Him, of which He said “...And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32) which is the truth concerning His Sonship, the secret of His freedom and ultimately our own.

The testimony of the gospel of John to the Sonship of Jesus Christ. The witness in John 1:18, “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” indicates the closeness of relationship and harmony. See verses 19 to 34 – probably all after the event of His baptism by John the Baptist (v31).

“I did not know him; but that he should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptising with water (1 John 5:6-8). Verse 29 - The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him, (he knew Him now) and said. Behold the Lamb(!) of God who takes away the sin of the world. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

John saw, heard and testified. Not all believed John’s witness. Jesus’ birth of the virgin was in flesh (1 John 4:2,3), and to those who believed He became “Rabbi” (Teacher) from then onwards. But it is the Sonship that made propitiation possible because He alone was Lamb of God free from all sin and condemnation (1 John 4:9,10).

John 3:16-18 those who do not believe are condemned already. But we should also understand the reason: “because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” which is to realise His freedom and ability to confer it upon those who are bound (cp. Matthew 16:19; Isaiah 61:1).

John 5:17-23. Here Jesus confesses His dependence but claimed, despite the Jew’s accusation, equal honour. To confess His freedom is to honour the Son.

John 8:35. A son abides forever in his father’s household, the servant does not, and for the servant of sin there is no hope. Verses 31-36 explain the reason and are some of the most important verses in Scripture. This is the kernel of the truth about Jesus, one of the two keys that unlock the door to the prison of the children of Adam who lost their freedom in him.

John 9:35. The question again (Matthew 16:13,15). Do you believe in the Son of God? Why did it matter?

John 10:31-39. These Jews knew their law, that inheritances are obtained from fathers (Proverbs 19:14) and could justify their enmity if His claim were not true. He barely escaped out of their hands but by His power. We should be careful not to gloss over the teaching in verse 36: the Father/Son relationship sanctified Him.

John 11:24-27. Jesus was, in Himself, the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this? He asks Martha who seems to have understood the issue in question, for she replies: “Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

There were always two things to the atonement: the offering of the body, clean, unblemished; and the blood, for the atonement.

Dear brother or sister, did you realise why Jesus wanted people to know that He was the very Son of God? Being free of all debt to sin He was free to lay down His life as a ransom. No one else could do it.

A High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek

In Leviticus chapters 1 to 4 there is an alteration in the description of the offerings so that we can distinguish between what the priest has to do and what the offerer himself does. The work of the priest was to make atonement at the altar or in the tabernacle on behalf of the offerer. The offerer did not atone for himself (except in the case of a priest’s own sin), the priest did this for him. The offerer was not holy; both altar and priest were holy, the priest hallowed to make him so (Exodus 29:1). The atoning work of the priest

is referred to in Leviticus 4:26,31 & 35: “The priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.” We should therefore find that the Lord Jesus Christ served as a priest who made atonement and was holy, set apart from all sin.

The Priesthood in Hebrews

Hebrews is the book of the priests, of Melchizedec, of Aaron; lastly of the great High Priest, the Son of God. Melchizedec was an original. He followed on from no one and as far as we know was succeeded by no one. He was in the line of great ones such as Abel, Enoch and Noah who spanned the early centuries before the days of Israel.

Probably older and at the time greater than Abraham. Like his even greater Antitype, Jesus, he grew up into the priesthood apparently, though we know nothing of his ancestry or by what means he became priest of the Most High, God being his guide. Jesus, his great Antitype, was marked out by oath before birth to be High Priest because He was the Son of the Most High God. At the time of Melchizedec and Abraham the iniquity of the Hamitic Amorites was not yet full (Genesis 10:15,16) and there were still amongst them righteous people like Abimelech, in Genesis 20:3,4.

Chapter 1

The first chapter introduces Christ at once in the words “God... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things...” In the grandest and most exalted tones, up to verse 14, concluding that even angels are ministering spirits who serve saints of Christ.

Chapter 2

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed” to the things God is saying otherwise how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation (v.3) going on to say (v. 5) how great a responsibility is placed upon man. Then in v.6 “what is man that you are mindful of him, or the Son of man that you visit him?” Usually quoted in a derogatory sense in the meetings yet actually, despite His apparent lowly insignificance before God

“You have crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet. For in that He hath put all things under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under Him.”

That being the intention

“We see Jesus, who 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, might taste death for everyone.” (v.9).

Seeing man now in subjection to good and evil, sin and suffering, it was appropriate to put on His spotless Son the whole burden of the suffering of sin and death, on behalf of mankind, and to come through to perfection and glory. “For it was fitting for Him in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.” (v10).

Verse 14 has always been a needless bone of contention - is flesh the devil? Let us say that “devil” stands for all the evil tempting man to sin. James 1:14 teaches, in God’s view, man’s lust is what leads to sin, not flesh but failure to overcome “his own lust.” Those under sin are “sin’s flesh” (Romans 8:3) not sinful flesh; they belong to Sin. This is the Bible view. Verse 14 has much the same teaching as verses 9 and 10 going on to 15 to 18. It is not to destroy flesh but “him who had the power of death,” and finally death itself.

Chapter 3

There now begins the careful consideration of the subject with the words:

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; Christ Jesus... counted worthy of more glory than Moses...”

Jesus relationship as Son of God had removed Him from implied sin and condemnation. He was “free,” as He said. (John 8:31-36).

“...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” (Hebrews 3:6).

This rejoicing is based on the realisation of the truth that concerns Him. Our need today, as much as theirs, is to admit this. This final exhortation here is “Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

Chapter 4

This chapter is full of exhortation. Under Joshua Israel received the land and had rest. Joshua 21:43-45 - “so the LORD gave to Israel all the land... The LORD gave them rest all around... Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.” But it was not the final rest we read about in verses 14 to 16:

“A great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God... who was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

It was not the rest provided by the throne of grace through the atoning High Priest and sacrifice (v9-13).

Chapter 5

Aaron who was not begotten by God, was therefore taken from among men. He is appointed for men in things pertaining to God. At verse 3 we read:

“Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself to offer for sins.”

Officially he was made holy in a ritualistic sense. But he must, as a sinner, offer for himself first. This kind of priesthood was imperfect; the situation called for a priest who could inherit the holiness of God because He was the Son of God and not taken from among ordinary men.

“Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from (literally, out of) death, and was heard because of His godly fear...” (v7).

Thus, as a man, the pains of death came upon Him He was delivered and raised up out of death (Romans 8:11); Psalm 116:3; Acts 2:24). Just as there was nothing bad to be said about the body of the offerings, but only good, so it was with the Son. Verse 9 continues “... He became the author of eternal salvation... called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, of who, we have much to say, and hard to explain...” and this is done in chapter 7.

Chapter 6

Urging them not to concentrate on the continual discussion of elementary principles, they were to go on to perfection. This means in context with this epistle, understanding the similarities and differences between the old covenant priesthood and the New Covenant, the one temporary and passing, the other permanent. But some may have fallen away into Judaism. These had a problem realising God had a Son and with the works of the Law (Galatians 2:18,19), also understanding why there was now a new High Priest, problems now being addressed. Perhaps some would not respond to this advice, and so the caution is given:

“And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible... if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance... For the earth... receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.” (v.3-8).

Confidence is expressed that “God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love... And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence and full assurance of hope until the end...” (v.9-13).

“Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

This is where attention is now focused in verses 13-18:

“For when God made promise to Abraham because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself... determining to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel confirmed it by oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”

This is one of two great promises confirmed by oaths of God (the other in chapter 7) which stand as two great pillars of the faith, promises spread over the chapters in Genesis 12 to 28:15. “Fled for refuge, that is, from the curse of the law, Christ being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). The promises are made certain by God’s own unchanging nature and His oath for confirmation. Finally drawing attention to the only One Jesus by whom the promise could be fulfilled:

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

The promise was of a Land, Descendants, and a Seed who is Christ.

Chapter 7

In chapter 2 verse 17 Jesus is so far seen as a fully prepared High Priest. In chapter 3:1-6 He is seen as a Son over His own house, who is Apostle and High Priest of our confession, a greater than Moses. In 4:15 He is a High Priest who was tempted, yet without sin (or uncleanness), and is “the throne of grace.” In chapter 5 He is described as “My Son... a priest forever according to the order of Mechizedek” (v.5,6) In verse 10 this name is again used adding the words “of whom we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” In chapter 6 verse 20 Christ is “the forerunner... having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” This name has occurred three time in chapter 6, and in chapter 7 six times. The discourse reaches a climax in a description of this otherwise obscure but none the less important figure and there is a comparison with the priests of the Law of Moses. This comparison or rather contrast is in chapter 7 verses 1 to 10. Abraham received the promises but could not personally receive their fulfilment until one greater than he arose, typified by Melchizedek (see Hebrews 11:13,39,40). Genesis 14 reads:

“Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine: he was the priest of God Most High, and blessed Abraham...”

We may recognise the symbols of the New Covenant here. Hebrews 7 verses 1 and 2 add the words: “who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. To whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated king of righteousness and then also, king of Salem, meaning king of peace.” Again we may recognise the shadow of Christ: see Hebrews 1:8; Isaiah 2:1-5; 9:7. The promises preceding the meeting with Melchizedek are in Genesis 12 and 13. As yet Abram had no son, as he tells God in a vision. God answers him favourably and adds another promise in chapter 15 verses 1 to 21. This is the chapter of the Covenant (v. 18-21). The sign of the Covenant - every male to be circumcised, reinforces this covenant. Abram was not a young man and in chapter 15 had been promised a son. He had reached ninety-nine and still no son had arrived. Yet a further promise is given, he was to become a father of many nations, his name is changed to Abraham and Sarai’s to Sarah, the covenant is renewed and the sign of circumcision given as their side of the “bargain” (Chapter 17). There is a blessing here too: “She shall be a mother of

nations; kings of peoples shall be from her” (17:16). “My covenant I will establish with Isaac” (v.21). Chapter 18:10-15 is where Sarah laughs in disbelief in her old age and is rebuked: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” When Isaac was grown God tested Abraham on Moriah.

“Then the angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself I have sworn... because you have done this thing, and not withheld your son, your only son... blessing I will bless you” v. 15-17. Verse 16: “In the mount of the Lord it shall be provided...”

He had not withheld his only son, and God would not withhold His.

Melchizedek lived during the latter days of the post-flood era (Genesis 10 and 11). With Abraham began the NEW Era of Israel. After this, the times of the Gentile nations - see Luke 21:20-24. Then the final deliverance of Israel and fulfilment of the sworn oath of the covenant. This is the promise guaranteed by oath recorded in Genesis 22:16 recalled in Hebrews 6:16-18. It is for all who are included in the covenant (Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:12-22). Hebrews 7:20-22 recalls another great oath concerning the new order of High Priest. That these two orders of priest were different is explained in chapter 7 verses 2 and 3 and following.

1. Abraham honoured him with tithes, a tenth of all the spoils of war.
2. “...without father, without mother, without genealogy.” It was not hereditary.
3. “having neither beginning of days nor end of life,” no specified ordination or succession.
4. v.4 “how great this man was...”
5. v.9 “Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham... for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”

Verse 3 comments, “having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.”

In complete contrast to the Aaronic priests they were encouraged to

“Consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils” (v.4).

“If perfection were through the Levitical priesthood... what further need was there that another priest should arise according to the order of Melchizedek...”

Made priest by an oath (the only initiation), evidently born for priesthood but then made more evident -

“And yet it is far more evident if in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life... For the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.”

Finally, “He was not made priest without an oath” (v.20) “and an oath for confirmation is an end of all dispute” (6:16); “by so much more Jesus has become surety of a better covenant” (v.22). “But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood” (v.24). So He continues after His atoning role, after becoming Mediator of the Covenant, to be an interceding High Priest, since He has become higher than the heavens (vv. 24-26). The weakness referred to in v.28 - for the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness - is the weakness referred to in v.18, is the weakness of a law, which could not give life (Galatians 3:21,22). As High Priest He was perfect though in nature flesh not spirit “but the word of the oath, which came after the law appoints the Son who has been perfected for ever.” In Hebrews 7:3 the word “remains” (AV -abideth), *diekenes*, means ‘carried through.’ Hebrews 7:23,24 describes the way the former priests

were prevented by death from continuing in office. Jesus however (v.24) continues forever,' *meno*: to stay,' 'endure,' 'remain.' Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

The Levitical priest began his days as a priest with the lengthy ceremony of consecration. The whole of Leviticus 8 describes this seven days and chapter 9, the commencement of his ministry when on "the eighth day" he made sacrificial atonement for himself and after for the people. The Melchizedek high priest had no need for this ritual for He was a priest in his own right, as it were, and needed only that the fact be declared as indeed it was by the oath of God.

There is a huge difference in significance between the two priesthoods, the one by sacrificial blood, the other guaranteed simply by God in the words of verses 20 to 22, "not without an oath" etc. For, as we saw earlier in John 8:31 to 36 He was the free-born Son, separate, sanctified by His relationship to the Father, High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Sadly, when we read this chapter with preconception and of one who had sinful flesh, defiled nature, believing that flesh is sinful in itself, it makes little or no impression on us.

The concluding verses of the chapter describe the qualities that were fitting for such a High Priest who is the subject of the whole epistle. He can "save to the uttermost" only because He was different and did not share any of the penalty and shame that is laid upon the captive children of Adam. It was afterwards that He became "higher than the heavens" (v.26).

Chapter 8

We find in chapter 7 verse 3 "continue" is *diekenes*: 'carried through.' In verse 24 the word *meno*: "to stay," "remain," "endure." It is of this High Priest who first comes and then continues in perpetuity that we read in chapter 8. In verse 2 He is a minister of the sanctuary (lit. holies) or of the two sections, the holy and the most holy, of the true tabernacle, which the Lord erected and not man. Chapter 9 speaks of the "first tabernacle which was symbolic of the true or spiritual tabernacle. In chapter 8 verse 3 (and having once offered Himself), because He is High Priest He must still "also have something to offer." This was to be the Mediator of the New Covenant which is the service offered both to individuals and also later to both houses of His people, Israel and Judah, in the words of verse 6: "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which is established on better promises." See verses 6 to 13. His former ministry as priest was not made public but done in secret therefore did not clash with the public ministry referred to in verse 4. He is therefore priest in heaven of the New Covenant and was so while there continued to be priests who offered "gifts according to the law."

Chapter 9

The first five verses list the contents of the "earthly sanctuary" and verses 6 to 10 describe the duties of the priests. These:

"Always went into the first part... but into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance."

The law was only a shadow and could not purify the consciousness of sins, "but in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year" (10:1-4). Verses 9 and 10 of chapter 9 say the same thing. The high priest offered for himself once a year as a fixed arrangement. On 364 days he offered for others and not for himself. The Day of Atonement was a reminder that sins were not taken away under the old covenant. What about the rest of the year, was it not symbolic of the New Covenant and of the High Priest who had no need to offer for Himself? It was indeed "symbolic for the present time" as verse 9 states. It was symbolic of the good things to come, as stated in verse 11:

"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle (see 3:6) not made with hands, that is, not of this creation" (the first tabernacle).

Christ of our nature yet a new creation. Melchizedek had come without the old covenant but with the bread and wine symbols of the new. Christ came with the symbols of the new, made High Priest by oath recorded in Psalm 110:4 and without consecration by blood. See chapter 7 verse 21. "Christ came as High priest," being in a certain sense "without beginning of days" (7:3). AV. "being come" Greek *paraginomai*: "to become near," i.e. 'approach,' 'have arrived' according to Strong. He was a priest when He came, a necessity since He was the Altar representing God to the people and had to be sprinkled with blood; He was priest who had to administer it; and the Sacrifice whose blood was shed for the people. This was the preliminary phase; the final phase in the words "nor end of life" was to follow.

He came not with but through (*dia*) "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" having entered by the door as the shepherd of the sheep (John 10:2) He progressed through doing His works and preaching until He reached the Veil and His blood was sprinkled, having been the Light of Life and the Bread from heaven. Being the Son of God He had entered by the door, for His Father was the door and also the doorkeeper. He had brought forth His Son and would hold His hand and keep Him in the words of Isaiah 42:6, "Yahweh... will hold your hand; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people..." until He Himself became "the door of the sheep." This we read in verses 13 to 15:

"Christ came as High Priest... not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy place once for all" (Greek *epaphax* - on one occasion).

"With" is "through" in the original Greek.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience..."

We have traced the Beloved Son of God through the ancient order of Melchizedek. We have seen that unlike the Levitical, His priesthood was without beginning, being announced as recorded in Psalm 110:4 by the unchangeable oath, i.e. without the lengthy process with blood sacrifice of those priests. All this because He was of the Holy Spirit and His High Priesthood was to continue, according to type, without end, or replacement.

Why then does this chapter take us back in time by describing the first tabernacle and its contents also its priestly ministration? Why, but to lead us to a contemplation of a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, but spiritual? A tabernacle, the chief cornerstone of which was the Lord Jesus Christ, who ministered therein as the Light of the world, full of priestly knowledge (Malachi 2:7) gathering about Him other "living stones." (1 Peter 2:5).

Finally the time came for Him to pass through the veil from the Holy into the Most Holy, but this was to be by the priestly offering of Himself, one sacrifice for sins for ever. This we are told in verses 11 to 15, "the iniquity of us all" that was laid upon Him, as Isaiah 53 says, was cleansed by His blood because He was clean from sin and condemnation, unlike the high priest who needed to offer first to cleanse himself. The crown of thorns laid upon Him by sinful men corresponds, in my view, to what we read in Leviticus 1:4 except that they didn't have the same intention. For was He not God's clean Lamb without spot or blemish, bearing no sign of defilement in itself, but bearing the iniquity on behalf of those for whom it was sacrificed?

Who can or dare deny it? Surely there is cause for reform.

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