

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 91

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Reader Friends, Warm Greetings in the name of Jesus.

We have been pleased during the past month to receive your letters and messages of love and hope. We have had no further news of Bro. Phillips but trust he is getting on well with his eye treatment and we hear that Bro. Albert Woodhouse is doing well after his eye operation.

During the past month (May) the Jewish Congress was held in a Communist state for the first time. In a recent 'Mount Zion Reporter' it was stated that when Iran has defeated Iraq her mind and aim will be directed to freeing Jerusalem from Israeli hands, and maybe the whole of modern Israel.

It is now the Jewish season of Pentecost (which falls about the same time as the Orthodox Christian Whitsuntide) 50 days after the Passover, it is known as the feast of weeks, and celebrates the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The exhortation in this issue by Bro. Leo Dreifuss will be seen to be appropriate, and we have the last instalment of 'Jesus at the Bar'. An article by Bro. Phil Parry which is a commentary on an article from "The Commentator", a publication of the foundation for Biblical Research, which can be borrowed by any who would be interested to read the original article which is on "The One Baptism".

We pray for the welfare of all our readers, with Sincere Love in the Masters Service.

Harvey and Evelyn Linggood.

WORSHIP THE LORD

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness
Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim;
With gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
Kneel and adore Him, the Lord is His Name

Fear not to enter His courts in the slenderness
Of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine;
Truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness -
These are the offerings to lay on His shrine.

Low at His feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
High on His heart He will bear it for thee,
Comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
Guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

These, though we bring them in trembling and tearfulness,
He will accept for the Name that is dear;
Mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
Trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.

“The One Baptism”

by Ken Fischer.

We have had sent to us by one of our Fellowship, Vol.13, N0.4 of a pamphlet entitled “The foundation Commentator” in which Ken Fischer writes on the above subject and which culminates, I am regretful to say, in a mixture of truth and error and an outright rejection that Paul’s water-Baptism was into the sacrificial-death of Christ. He fails to expound the fact that true water-baptism is a result of believing and knowing why Christ died, that it is not a washing away of the outward filth of literal flesh, but the answer and witness of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ - having entered into the true Ark of God’s provision even into symbolic death with Christ in water-Baptism and rising in a “likeness” of his resurrection which has nothing to do with the “Angelic-Nature with which Christ rose, but a change of ownership and relationship in a legal and moral sense – Sons of God by adoption and grace I Peter 3: 20 and 21. I Peter 4: 1 and 2.

Though risen with Christ, Peter speaks of the believer living the rest of his time in flesh and blood nature to the will of God and not to the will of men. Though Peter was converted by a realisation of the meaning of Christ’s death and the fact of his resurrection and glory, he had to demonstrate his recognition of this in the waters of Baptism and I would venture to say, (not dogmatically), that Paul received the Holy Spirit after rising from the water. How then can Ken Fischer say, “Water baptism cannot crucify us with Christ, nor bury us together with him nor carry the believer out of the grave into glory to be seated with him in the heavenlies. But the “one death Baptism” can do all this and it does”?

Doubtless he is confusing the Baptism of which Paul speaks in Romans chapter 6, emphasising the word “Likeness”; with a Baptism of his own invention which ignores Pauls’ definition and makes it a physical operation whereby people have a physical share in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Such a theory is not only false but robs Christ of the absolute sacrifice he made of a life free from Adamic alienation and personal sin, the just for the unjust to bring us to God. Paul was baptised in water by Ananias and he declares to the Roman believers, “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? - - And if we have been planted together in the “likeness” of his death, we shall be also in the “likeness” of his resurrection: “Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him that the body belonging to sin might be destroyed’, that henceforth we should not serve Sin”. Christ’s death was physical, ours is not, as I shall prove later on. Paul in Galatians chapter 2 vs. 20, affirms, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”. Jesus did this before ever He knew Paul and also for the many who had not then been born. How then can Ken Fischer say that when Christ died on the cross those who now believe, also died?

The fact is that when Christ died they were reckoned to be alive. As Paul said, “For if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”. This fact is understood in the case of Adam who incurred Judicial death by blood shedding as a result of sin, but was spared in the offering of a substitute and the covering of skins through the life taken. Otherwise, if Adam had died the death due for sin, his posterity would not have existed. In other words all owe their existence to Jesus the antitypical lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world while they were yet alienated from God by Adamic sin, being in the loins of Adam and “constituted-sinners”, though not actual sinners. These are the two stages of reconciliation spoken of by Paul, the former being justification through the Love, Mercy and Grace of God without works; and the latter, justification through individual faith in the Sacrificial-death of Christ by identification and association therewith in the waters of Baptism, rising to a newness of life or relationship with God and transformed by the renewing of the mind and cultivating the fruits of the Spirit through the example of Jesus, and the efficacy of His Life as a Priest for ever at the Right Hand of God in order to salvation - saved by His life. Ken Fischer is saying that true believers are in the same position

as Jesus after His resurrection, but if this were true they would not need a High Priest to make intercession for their failures.

Believers are, by recognition and faith in the Sacrifice of Christ, in the very position denied them by Adam's sin had its penalty been carried out. Jesus was a Son of God by birth, He was never astray from God, He died unto Sin as our Master, not to sin committed, we die (in Baptism) to Sin as our Master, not to committed-sin, and by the likeness of His resurrection we are in newness of life, reconciled to God and on probation for eternal life in His Kingdom to be established on the earth. I apologise for this lengthy discourse, but it is necessitated by the terminology used by Ken Fischer, i.e. "The resurrection life of Christ", as also being applicable to those believers who have participated in His "death Baptism", and he implies that they are of the same Angelic incorruptible nature as He had when He rose from the dead. This is the only way Ken's terminology can be understood, it cannot refer to character because life does not qualify character, conduct does. Believers who rise from the waters of baptism in understanding of why Christ died are not in his "resurrection life, they are still flesh and blood nature, Jesus was flesh and bones energised by Spirit. Believers therefore are in the legal and moral relationship Jesus always had with His Father; they have become Sons of God by adoption and grace, therefore the Apostle John could say, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". To be sons of God does not necessitate them having the glorified nature Jesus had when he emerged from the tomb, but they can strive to make their calling and election sure by emulating his character and following the example he set from birth to death, in this sense they are sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, but they are not with Him in heaven itself, at the right hand of God, to say so is a violation of scriptural Truth.

I must emphasise that it is a change of ownership which has taken place for a truly baptised believer, not a change of nature. Ken Fischer quotes authoritative scriptures for this but continually confuses his readers by his own misinterpretation rather than comparing scripture with scripture and rightly dividing the word of God, and thus discrediting water-Baptism as of no account or importance. Certainly the Baptism of John was for Jews only and for repentance and remission of sins which were committed under the Mosaic covenant which had not yet been superseded in the death of Christ, sacrifices under the Law still being offered. Nevertheless it was a baptism to fulfil all righteousness, for it was from Heaven and ordained to make known to John the identity of the Messiah of Israel and prepare the way for Him. Jesus said to John, "Suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us (you John and myself) to fulfil all righteousness". The descent of the Holy Spirit of God in the form of a dove upon Jesus and the voice of God declaring His Pleasure in Christ His Son, was something John declared Jesus would do eventually for the believers of His Gospel in which would be recognition also of His sacrificial death for both Jew and Gentile. It is this fact I must draw attention to now as recorded in Acts chapter 8 verse 5. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them", - verse 12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women".

We are told in chapter 8 verse 17 that Peter and John confirmed this baptism in the name of Jesus by laying their hands on them, after prayer, and they received the Holy Spirit. We note then, that Philip's was the voice of authority in preaching the Gospel but that the Gentiles had not yet been brought into the Jewish fold by means of the Gospel and baptism into Christ but it was already operative on Jews. Philip was instructed by the Spirit of Christ to join himself in conversation with the Eunuch of Ethiopia who was reading from chapter 53 of the prophet Isaiah and Philip asked him, "Understandest what thou readest? The Eunuch replied, "How can I except some man should show me? The result was that Philip expounded from the same scripture the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ which involved the central theme of the Gospel – the supreme substitutionary - sacrifice of Jesus in taking away the Sin (singular) of the world, the Adamic Sin whereby Adam and all concluded under it might be redeemed and no longer be held under the deferred sentence of death reigning or hanging over them as Sin's Bondservants. The way was open to all enlightened persons through faith and belief, it was to the Jew first but after Christ's death, it was to both Jew and Gentile. Philip showed the Eunuch from

Isaiah 53 how at the age of 33½ years God had laid upon Jesus the sin of the world and in his suffering the death incurred by Adamic Sin and under which God placed all Adam's posterity (though not actual sinners), the one sacrificial and inflicted death of Jesus Christ could be operative on all on a Federal principle and the faith of the individual in associating with that death in the symbol of water Baptism. Thus dying unto Sin (The Bondmaster) and rising to newness of life in a legal and moral relationship but not in the glorious nature of Christ's "resurrection life" for this was Angelic nature. There is no physical change involved and never will be until the Trumpet sounds at the set time appointed by God. I Cor. 15:51-54. Daniel 12:1 and 2.

Even then it will be every man in his own order, Christ the firstfruits and afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming when he will reign till he has put all enemies under his feet, the last enemy destroyed being death, then will be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory". Ken Fischer's statement of people dying at various times before Christ's second advent and immediately being changed to Angelic Nature, is something upon which the Holy Scriptures are silent including Jesus' teaching and that of Paul, and if he is capable of this false theory he is also capable of distorting other scriptures to suit his own purpose. The letter to Hebrews chapter 11 discounts this false theory when the writer speaks of those who obtained a good report through Faith, "These all died in faith not having received the Promise - God having provided some better thing for us that they without us should not be made perfect". I Cor. 15:20-23 I have already drawn attention to, - "They that are Christ's at his coming ". For Ken Fischer to say that Paul's Gospel was different from Peter's and more glorious, is nothing more than assumption and ignorance of scriptural facts. It was Peter who received from Jesus Christ the keys of the Kingdom and the authority of his name (the foundation Rock) whereon his church should be built, and it was Peter who was first authorised by Jesus and the Father, to convert the Gentiles, as for example Cornelius who with many other Gentiles who believed the words spoken by Peter, received the Holy Spirit in confirmation of their faith in Christ and as witness to the Jews that God had accepted them into the same fold.

But was this sufficient? Evidently not, for Peter declared "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? Acts chapter 10:42-48. The true significance of water-baptism was not to be ignored, and true believers do not engage in any other unscriptural ritual such as baby-sprinkling, confirmation and various other inventions of the Apostacy which have replaced the true introduction of adult believers into Christ. There is little doubt that Paul was speaking for Peter and all who were commissioned of Jesus Christ to preach his Gospel, when he said to some of the Galatian converts who had been deceived by a perverted Gospel which would exclude the sacrifice of Christ by a return to the ritual and works of the Law which that sacrifice had fulfilled and superseded, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. Galatians chapter 1 vs 6-8".

Three years after being ordained of Jesus Christ to preach the gospel of salvation Paul went to Jerusalem to see Peter and there could not have been any disagreement between them as to the one body of Christ and its members in unity, - One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all - in fact no difference of preaching whatsoever but absolute harmony, and confirmed in the news that the churches of Judea had heard of Paul, "That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed". That very Faith and Gospel which Peter had always preached which was no more an earthly Kingdom than the one preached by Paul, in fact the same Kingdom was said by both to be future and to be established on the earth with Jesus as its King in Jerusalem and afterwards when complete, to be handed over to God even the Father and God would be all in all. The fact that it is called the Kingdom of Heaven does not mean that it is not on earth but that it is operative on the basis of righteous laws and Divine principles and will last for ever, being constituted of incorruptible beings like the Angels, to die no more and who have cultivated in their probationary life time the fruits of the Spirit; Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance: against which there is no law. Galatians chapter 5.

Ken Fischer may be sincere but in effect he is preaching another gospel which is a perversion of the true. We can accept his view (page 1) that Jesus on the cross was the sin-bearer, but when he says foot of page 1 and on page 2 “When Jesus died. God considered James and John, the rest of the disciples, and all true believers as dying with Christ on the cross “, it is not strictly true and is a contradiction of Romans chapter 6 verses 3 and 4 to which he makes reference, for it is here in the recognition of why Christ died and association by Baptism into that mode of death that the above mentioned acknowledge themselves as symbolically dying unto Sin and rising as new creatures sin newness of life in relation to God - a changed relationship not a changed nature - a legal and moral position through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is to be noted that when Christ died, God considered he was dying for those who were without strength, constituted sinners by Adam’s transgression and sold under Sin - the ungodly. God commended His Love toward us in that while we were yet sinners (not even born) (not even believers) Christ died for the ungodly, - for us; and until we recognise this by belief and faith in the waters of Baptism, God has not considered us to have died symbolically with Christ when he was crucified, or to have risen in the “likeness” of his resurrection which Paul indeed regards as a legal and moral relationship as adopted sons of God but not incorruptible sons of power as Jesus at his resurrection, this will take place at the glorious manifestation of the sons of God for which the whole creation groans and waits. It is noticeable that Ken Fischer wrests II Cor. 5:14 out of context in his statement that when Jesus died for all, all died. This is not what Paul said but in fact the opposite,- “That all were already dead by one man’s sin (Adam), their lives having been forfeited in him. This is already explained in Paul’s letter to the Romans chapter 5 verse 15, “For if by the fall of the one (Adam), many died, even that gracious gift by the one man Jesus Christ, abounded to the many”.

If Ken Fischer’s interpretation that when Jesus died on the cross all believers died in God’s consideration, then there would be no need of water Baptism, but this is far from being the case. God concluded all under the one sin of Adam so that by the one righteousness of Jesus he could have mercy upon all, but only by enlightenment and faith, there must be recognition of His demands and His Love, Mercy and Justice, for without faith it is impossible to please him. It is therefore in the recognition that Christ’s death was for all whose lives were forfeited by Adam’s sin and therefore “legally dead” - that to be restored to the justification of life and favour with God, they must associate themselves in and with the substitutionary death of Christ through Baptism in water, thus dying unto Sin as a Bondmaster, being made free from his service through symbolic death and becoming God’s servants having been bought with a price even the precious “Life-in-the-blood” of Christ.

It is symbolic death and a symbolic resurrection, there is no change of physical nature, only of ownership and relationship. It is this lack of appreciation of Law which has been the cause of the grievous error into which many people have been drawn through false premises and the false interpretations of those who seek to be teachers and preachers but are wise beyond what is written and are perverting the Gospel of Christ by confounding legal matters with physical. I am afraid Ken Fischer is among this class of people especially considering his remarks about Lazarus and the other believers who incidentally, had passed from death to life before Christ’s crucifixion so that his reference to this passing from death to life of which Jesus spoke, could not have been incorruptible Angelic nature, but a passing from under a “legal-state” of death into a “legal-state” of life in relationship and service to God (no change of nature), the latter would come at the hour of Christ’s Archangel voice and the Trump of God to those who are worthy and theirs will be a resurrection of Life incorruptible when with Daniel and others of like faith (Jew and Gentile) they stand in their lot of inheritance with the saints. The two bodily resurrections of Daniel chapter 12 verses 1-4 and v. 13 of which Jesus speaks in John 5:28 and 29 harmonise, and do not refer to a simultaneous rising of just and unjust, but these two classes are indeed separated by a period of around one thousand years. The resurrection of Jesus was a bodily one energised by Spirit not blood. If faithful, our resurrection will be exactly the same a “spiritual body”, which definitely it is not at present. The life we now live in the flesh, as Paul said of himself, is by faith - it is by the power of the Son of God in a legal and moral sense, and by letting Christ reign as King in our mortal body instead of our previous master Sin, because having died with Christ unto Sin as a master he has no more hold or dominion, the price of release having been paid in the unforfeited life of Christ who was never in that bondage. How then can Ken Fischer say that those who have associated with Christ’s Death Baptism are of the same nature as his “resurrection-life”, (which was the nature of

Angels) when Paul describes the”) as mortal and capable of the unlawful lusts relative to servants of Sin? Paul exhorts them as members of Christ’s Body to use those members as instruments of righteousness in service to God - reckoning themselves to be dead to sin and alive to God through faith and association with Christ’s sacrificial death, even like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of whom Jesus said, “They live unto God”. God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all in Christ live unto Him in the sense that their resurrection at Christ’s coming is sure and God speaks of those things that are not as though they are. The writer in Hebrews chapter 11 states of these and others who all obtained a good report through faith, received not the Promise that they without us should not be made perfect.

Where does this place Ken Fischer’s unscriptural theory that those who die natural deaths before the second advent of Christ will immediately be changed by a transformation to an immortal body, page 3? He goes on to say, “Paul’s view in II Cor. 5:1-10, if you read it carefully, is that this change to an immortal spiritual body will take place at the time of physical death. Is there a contradiction? I don’t believe so. Paul invariably taught the immediate glorification of the body at death, never a resurrection of the dead body at Christ’s coming “. There is certainly a very grave and false accusation against Paul on the part of Ken Fischer, have I not already quoted Paul’s statement from I Thess. chapter 4, that at the coming of the Lord the dead-in-Christ rise first, that is, immediately before the living faithful in Christ are changed to identical, incorruptible bodies the former are raised with? “Raised Incorruptible”? Is not this the first and only time they meet the Lord? Paul’s view in II Cor. chapter 5 if read carefully is not of those who are dead or asleep in-Christ but of those who are alive in him in bodies capable of decay and death earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with a house from heaven which in effect is the nature of Angels. There was no desire to be unclothed, this would not be necessary for those alive and remaining unto the coming of the Lord, their bodies would be transformed and identical to the glorious bodies of those who preceded them by resurrection. Where now are those people who have died naturally and been immediately transformed of which Ken Fischer speaks?

They cannot be in the dust of the earth; they cannot be in their graves. Is he wiser than the Prophets of Israel? Is he wiser than Jesus the Greater Prophet and Son of God? Are not all God’s servants who have died, awaiting a set time to be raised from their sleep of death? Did not Job the servant of God speak of this very event? “So man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me in secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shall call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands”. Job ch. 14 verses 12-15. This same Job speaking of the Living God his redeemer said,” I know that my redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, my reins within me are consumed with earnest desire (for that day) Job 19:25-27. Let us hear another prophet of the Lord on this very theme, Isaiah Ch. 26 verse 19 “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast out the dead”. This also is speaking of an appointed or set time, and discriminate reading of all the relative scriptures will prove that the resurrection of God’s servants is concerned with bodies of Angelic nature emerging from the dust of the earth in like manner as Jesus emerged from the tomb to die no more. Why should Paul be wrongly accused of not teaching a bodily resurrection when in fact he is in harmony with Job, Isaiah, David and Jesus? Does not Paul answer the question of the doubters of his day “How are the dead raised up and with what body do they come forth”? “Does he not say of the person who dies a natural death but is in Christ, it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body”. I Cor. 15:44. And does he not follow on to explain the difference between an earthy or natural body of life and a body of flesh and bones energised by the Spirit instead of blood ? Does he not say that the dead in Christ “raised incorruptible” are bodies like Jesus rose with and are raised at the precise time that those in Christ who are alive at his coming are to be changed in a twinkling of an eye?

If Paul does not teach a resurrection of the body then Christ did not rise. If Jesus did not mean the resurrection of the body in John 6:40 and 44 words have no meaning, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day". When Jesus said to Martha the sister of Lazarus who had died, "Thy brother shall rise again", she replied, "I know that he will rise again at the resurrection at the last day". Jesus did not dispute this fact for she had obviously learned it from him, and this last day meant an appointed time when the dead in Christ would be raised as the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb and the faithful in-Christ changed. These firstfruits are those who have in their hearts and minds the incorruptible seed of the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever and being thus spiritually fertile will answer to the will and voice of him that calls them from the ground, even as Paul likens it in Botanical terms with the fruits of the earth whose seeds germinate and become plant bodies as it has pleased the Creator, every seed his own body. Can Paul explain the resurrection any better than he does in I Cor. 15: 55-58? Of his own theory page 3 Ken Fischer says "All this may sound shocking to many but a careful study will show this to be true". He is speaking of his own theory that when natural death takes place the person is immediately transformed into an immortal body in violation of the Holy Scriptures that, "all are of the dust and all turn to dust again" (with the exception of Jesus and those alive at his coming). He goes on to say, "if you realise it or not you are getting a glimpse into the "State of the dead". I fail to see how it is possible to get a glimpse of the "State of the dead" without exhuming what is left of them, because if they have been immortalized at death then they should no longer be in a "dead state", and what, may I ask Ken Fischer, have those people, relatives and such , been disposing of in the coffins? Is he now trying to introduce another explanation of the false theory held by Christendom of the immortality of the soul? From what he says on the last column of page 5 this is exactly what he is doing and I exhort him to get back to the scriptural facts and the importance of Law in God's dealings with man, and of the federal principle taught both by Jesus and by Paul in Romans chapter 5.

I repeat in conclusion that Ken Fischer is confusing and mixing the legal with the physical and by so doing he is wresting the scriptures to the confusion and destruction this can only bring to those who are likewise deceived. Does he want to be likened unto Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already? This is what Paul accused them of, not in reference to symbolic resurrection through baptism, but physical bodily resurrection at the last day. By saying that resurrection occurs at physical death, Ken Fischer is saying that resurrection is happening at all times and therefore in the case of most it is past already. I say to him. "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth". II Tim. chapter 2. There was no confusion nor perversion in the Gospel Paul preached but there is both confusion and perversion in the theories of Ken Fischer, his sincerity will not make them any the less opposed to the true Gospel.

Brother Phil Parry

"THE NAZARENE FELLOWSHIP"
"FOR THE HONOUR OF GOD HIS SON AND HIS WORD"

Thoughts On The Book Of Ruth And Peter's Sermon On The Day Of Pentecost.

God is at work all the time. Not always in a spectacular way, not always a miracle or vision or revelation, but just by silently directing men's actions and decisions. This we shall see as we consider the book of Ruth. An Israelite emigrated at a time of famine, with his family (a wife and two sons) to the country of Moab. While he was away he and his sons died, his wife was left with her two daughters-in-law for their sons had taken them wives of the women of Moab. Meanwhile the famine at home had ceased, and Naomi set off to return. One of her two daughters-in-law followed her for part of the way, but eventually went back to her native country, her people and her gods. But Ruth clave to her most

faithfully. She accepted the God of Israel, while Orpah returned. Ruth having returned with her mother-in-law gathered some corn at harvest - she happened to glean on the field of her next of kin. According to the law of Moses then in force, this next of kin married her, and his great grandson was David and Ruth thus was an ancestress of Mary.

The important part of the history of this book is that a stranger to Israel, Ruth the Moabitess, accepted God and became a Jewess, and that from this converted stranger descended David and eventually Christ. So far the actual history. But this book contains two thoughts which I would like to pass on:-

1). If shows the hand of God in human affairs. What to us seems quite a chance coincidence, has in fact been brought about through the working of the Spirit of God. Ruth did not realise at the time she was gathering those ears of corn for herself and her mother what purpose and plans God had for her. This is how God often works with us, if we let Him, and prayerfully submit ourselves to His will. There were times in ancient Israel and during the ministry of Christ and the apostles, when God intervened more drastically. But when we read so much about these spectacular miracles, we are apt to forget that God far more often guides his children invisibly, by what seems quite every day natural means; what the unconverted of the world call just pure chance. As in the case of Ruth gathering corn on her relations field. Yes things don't happen just by chance as we often think. We have our decisions to make, but God directs us and guides us for our good even if we have moments when everything seems to go against us.

2). God is no respecter of persons. There was a complete stranger recognising God. And what better reward can she have than the honour of being the great grandmother of king David. The man after God's own heart, and of Mary the mother of the Saviour. What a joy that will be for Ruth when at the resurrection she finds herself the mother of these two key personalities of the Bible, of God's whole plan of salvation. A stranger who accepted God finds herself accepted, saved, and indeed an important personality. But the opposite must not be forgotten. The children of Israel forsook God, and we know the terrible consequences: God forsook them, and only now is there a sign of their returning to their land after centuries of captivity. "... unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required ...". We also were once complete strangers to God and his people. But now that we know him, we must cleave to Him. We who have accepted the Lord have the responsibility to follow him wherever he leads. Let us trust him. We have the sure promise that He will never forsake us.

I now wish to have a few words concerning Peter's address on the Day of Pentecost. This is the season of Pentecost. It is a season full of meaning. To us Christians it is the anniversary of the first open manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the anniversary of the day when Peter preached that important sermon of salvation in the risen Christ. But in the days of ancient Israel the day was important. It was the time when a thank offering for the first fruits was brought. It is usual practice among Jews even to this day in their synagogues to read to read the Book of Ruth. So far the meaning of Pentecost for Israel before Christ. What does it mean to us? It is the anniversary of the beginning of the Church. On this day the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples and a miracle occurs which made it manifest to the people that the Apostles were God's chosen messengers, God's instruments to carry forth the Divine message of the gospel. God never left people in the dark about who were his ministers. During the ministry of the prophets, and that of Christ, God manifested by signs and wonders who was his messenger and now that Christ was risen, to be in heaven until His still awaited return the ministry of the apostles is about to begin, and God once more makes it openly manifest to all that the apostles are his chosen messengers. They find themselves enabled to speak in foreign languages, and so to preach the gospel to all people present. Let us remember that it was man's wickedness that brought about the separation of languages in the first place. It was the result of God's intervention when men tried to build the tower of Babel. Man wanted a tower to reach up to heaven. Man left to himself always wants to exalt himself. Also, they did not want to be scattered all over the earth. This was just contrary to God's will, whose aim it was to people the earth. Before Christ, there was only the nation of Israel who had direct dealings with God. But now the time had come for the gospel of salvation to be preached to people of all nations. It was no

longer exclusively for the Jews. And so God himself removes this language barrier, in this first miracle by giving the apostles this power to speak in languages unknown to themselves. And what does Peter preach in this first and all important sermon? He is laying down the first fundamentals of the Christian faith.

1. Christ risen.
2. Salvation in the risen Christ.
5. The resurrection of the dead.
4. Acceptance of Christ by belief in His Name and Baptism.

He first tells his fellow Jews that the very Christ whom they have handed over to be crucified is the one whom God has raised, and that He is the Messiah whom their own prophets foretold. Then he mentions David's Psalm 16 in particular. There we read: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption". . Then he goes on to say that David does not say that of himself, but is speaking here of Christ's resurrection which took place prior to this. Christ appeared to them, they were the witnesses who have seen the risen Christ, and who actually saw him finally being taken up to heaven until his promised return. But, Peter goes on, David is not ascended into the heavens - no, neither Abraham or any of the old prophets -- Paul tells us they are all asleep in the grave awaiting the resurrection of the just which will 'take place at Christ's return as we read in that grand chapter on faith in Hebrews 11 (v. 13) "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth". Then when Peter had impressed upon them their sin in betraying Christ to be crucified, they asked "Men and brethren, what shall we do"? The same question was asked by the Philippian jailor, and Peter and Paul gave both the same answer, and their answer is as true today for all who believe in Christ and have come to realize their personal need of the Saviour: "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". This was the gist of the first sermon, and it remains the fundamental of Christian belief to this day. Christ risen. Salvation in no other. Resurrection of the dead in Christ. Acceptance of Him by belief and baptism, after repenting of past sins. And then the all-important need to abide in Him and to walk worthy of this supreme love that God has shown for us when He gave His only begotten Son. Let us then abide in Him. Let us show forth in our lives what His resurrection means to us. Let us make God our guide. There are no prophets in our days. We have His Word that has been preserved for us, if we will only make it our own by studying it.

G.L. Dreifuss.

Jesus At The Bar.

continued from May '87

Pious, canting hypocrisy finds in 'Sinful flesh' a grateful refuge but while the natural sense of right condemns this doctrine, the contemptibleness of it becomes more and more manifest by analytical examination. What is it we are compelled to do which is bad, and what is it we cannot perform which is good? Cannot a man refuse to swear, drink, commit adultery, 'speak evil, backbite, be extravagant, a glutton a brawler? In all matters of which our laws take cognisance, nobody is ridiculous enough to contend that what is right cannot be adhered to. It is only when we enter the domain of piety that this inborn helplessness is thought to be discovered. Well, what is it man can and cannot do? Can he not read his Bible; understand and obey its first principles? Does anything hinder the practice of devotion? Is it impossible to increase in knowledge, refrain from being hasty, and practise patience? Does anything hinder prayer; is there one single command of God that this poor 'poisoned' creature cannot to? Reader, to discover such thy search will be in vain. This idea of helpless 'Sinful flesh' cannot be too vigorously opposed, and emphatically denounced; it produces, as nearly as possible, what we may imagine the reality would be: it cripples all energy, paralyses all effort; it blasphemes the goodness of God, impugns His wisdom and turns. His mercy into gall; it changes the creature of His hand to a prone puppet, who is lashed for his inevitable movements.

The impression magnetises the man into the very obliquity he deplures, and invokes the tears and lamentations of a hypocrite, and is the strongest of all delusions".(Late Bro. Edward Turney's view). We consider the above well told, in view of the Master's words: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have only done that which was our duty to do". The root of the error is traceable to the garden of Eden by their supposing Adam to be a semi-angel (physically), a theory on a par with the old Lady's "Immaculate conception". Paul says: Adam was made earthy, animal, (as the Greek words mean) natural, and therefore as capable of dying before transgression as he was after. On the hypothesis of Adam's obedience, then, would Jehovah there and then have immortalised Adam, or addressed him in some such terms as those to the beloved Daniel? viz. "Go thou thy way till- the end be; thou shall rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days". The probability is the latter, and we find nothing in the records adverse to this thought. Adam's unfaithfulness, however, ends all speculation, and the problem for solution is. "What death did he incur? The records are emphatic that death "by execution" is the penalty for the violation of Jehovah's laws. Otherwise it was monstrously unjust that Jesus should endure the cross for their redemption. The records are explicit: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die" (Gen. ii. 17). "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom.vi.23). "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy; how much sorer punishment", etc. (Heb. x. 29). "On the day thou passes! over the brook Kedron thou shall surely die, thy blood shall be upon thine own head"(I Kings ii. 37). "When I say to the wicked: thou shall surely die, and thou pi vest him not warning, I will require his blood at thy hand" (Ezek. iii. 18-21). On the authority of the above, we say that the penalty Adam incurred was death by 'Execution'; and that his redemption was imperative to the continuation of the human race. Had sin been pardoned and its guilt cancelled by the exercise of Sovereign will, or by an act of mere power, it might have been doubted whether the Almighty were indeed infinite in moral rectitude; or whether He would not, at some future time, re-impose the doom; but no such injurious apprehensions can be entertained. "His ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace ". The first man, having sinned, could have had no posterity had not the penalty of violated law been arrested by the Divine promise (Gen. iii. 14). God requires no extraneous motive to induce Him to pity; it is a question of law; and God's infinite, eternal and unchangeable love in "the sinner's redemption". Thus the love of Almighty God began in the very Garden of Eden. He did not allow the execution of the law to overtake Adam, and consequently, 'blot out the human race'; but He provided a substitute for Adam (Job. xxxiii. 24, Rev. xiii. 8). Hence the slaying of animals at once became significant. Thus the Sacrifice of Christ, though 'central' in human history, had its effects, though obscure, as really upon preceding ages, as it has its manifest effect upon succeeding ages. While therefore, we find such terms as "Jealous, Furious, Wrath, Vengeance, Indignation, and Consuming Fire" applied to God, we are not warranted to understand such as indicative of any actual change "in God", any more than we should of the term Hope, Fear, Wishes, Disappointment, or Regret; this is His condescension to human infirmity, and to the state of mental culture in the infancy of the human race. The "Change" by which a guilty sinner becomes free is not "in God", but in the "relation" under which the sinner stands before God.

Whoso reads this and concludes that our object has been "to hew Agag to pieces", reads in vain: while we have shown no sympathy for "Dragon", our object has been to convert the sinner from the error of his way, and save a soul from death; and we conclude by stating briefly:- That we do not say, had Jesus perished in the massacre of the innocents, that He had then been a sufficient sacrifice for sin. An heir differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all, "till the time appointed of the Father". Even the flesh, as flesh profits nothing; a higher "relation" must be generated and developed, to result in a "Higher Sonship", which shall reflect the glory of God throughout the length and breadth of the earth (Num. xiv. 21). Nevertheless, "The Basis" of the Great Master Builder's Scheme of Redemption was laid in the Blessed Infant Jesus. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah ix. 6). Does this mean merely that a child had been born of kingly descent? Pitiably deduction. The records are emphatic that His relation and destiny are diverse from those of any other human soul. "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son ". This was to be "Jehovah's" sign. Do not the Josephites laugh the "Sign "to scorn? "That which is conceived in her if of the Holy Spirit; therefore, also that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called Son of God". How pronounced! Has this fact, isolated in the history of the world, no significance? Well, what is that significance? This fact is vital to us. God was the Father of Jesus;

therefore His life, the price of ransom, was not derived from “the criminal source”. “Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners”. “The Son abideth ever”. “Then are the children free”. Could any other human soul venture the audacity of appropriating these terms to himself? Ponder the language regarding this “Gift” to the world. “Thou art He who took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me to hope when I was upon my mother’s breast”.

Again: “I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother’s belly”. How consoling to watch the development of this “Plant of Renown”, upon which we “wild olives” have been engrafted. The Spirit of the Lord makes Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, while He grows in wisdom, and in stature and in the favour of God and man. Thus at the age of twelve we behold Him “about His Father’s business”. Touched with the feelings of our infirmities, He surrenders His “own will” to the will of Him who sent Him, and is tried in all points like we are. He learns obedience by the things which He suffers; and, if He endure unto perfection, He justifies the title commanded to be given Him: “Jesus, He shall save”. All depends on this, shall “He” fail, or shall He conquer? Thanks be to God, and thanks be to Jesus also, the fact that “The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed” is attested by no less authority than that of the God of Heaven: “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him”. Let us then, by all means “hear Him”. At this point He declares: “The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified“. But what of the redemption of man? Hear Him again: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”. Thus, for the redemption of man, He must yet, by the grace of His Father, taste death for every man”. Wherefore God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not “Perish”. God is the Redeemer! It is all of God; God is Love! Did the innocent one consider Himself “wronged”? By no means: “No man taketh My life from Me; I lay it down of Myself.” “If it may not pass except I drink it, Thy Will Be Done”. Thus innocent from the great transgression (Psalm xix. 13), He became obedient unto death; even the death of a cross, by which He “restored that which He took not away”.

Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. Jesus my Substitute, separate art Thou, and undefiled, and therefore, “Clear at the Bar”. To speak therefore of a condemned one undergoing his own execution as being “Obedient unto death “is a paradox - a delusion. Shall we blot the record of Heaven - shall we allow Him to learn obedience by the things which He suffered, and then mock Him with the bars of death? May all be spared this awful reflection on the justice of Almighty God.

A. L. Wilson - THE AUTHOR.

Comments Relating To The Serpent In Genesis Chapter 3.

The role played by the serpent recorded in the above scripture has always been a subject for speculation as to whether it was literal or allegorical? There are difficulties with either of these two extremes in harmonising with other relative scriptures. If the literal view is taken we are faced with the unlikely phenomena of a ‘beast of the field’ (verse 1) with apparent equal intelligence in conversation with the woman, but even if it were so, verse 6 intimates that the human pair were together at the time so why did it not address them both? We know that the lower animals have varying degrees of intelligence and some are able to mimic various spoken words but, they are normally ‘dumb’, and ‘devoid’ of the reasoning powers invested in God’s highest creation (man), they are not moral responsible creatures. Paul’s reference in I Cor. ch. 11 verse 3 lends no real credence to the literal view of the case, because ‘subtlety’ is not limited to speech, it is a characteristic which can be manifested in actions and ways which is only possible in the case of dumb creatures, nevertheless the presence of a literal serpent cannot be ruled out if any sense is to be made out of Eve’s excuse ‘the serpent beguiled me’ etc., could she not have been deceived by what she saw the serpent do? It is quite common in countries where snakes abound to see them in trees where they have a vantage point in catching their prey, some also eat the

vegetation, it is quite likely that our first parents had been tempted by the forbidden trees fruit before that fateful day, because, to the natural mind that which is prohibited appears more attractive and arouses the curiosity more than that which is allowed. I therefore submit as a possible explanation that the serpent was in the tree 'touching it' (verse 3) and probably eating of its fruit, and the woman, noticing that no harm came to it by so doing, might she not have been emboldened to do likewise? , the seeming conversation with the beast was nothing more than the reasonings of her tempted mind, it would be (as though) the serpent had said "thou shall not surely die etc." although its part in the event was entirely passive, it was only doing that which came naturally to its kind, no outside tempter was necessary to cause the first sin, the testimony of the Apostle James was as true then as now (James ch. 1 verses 13-15), 'enticement' comes in various ways -- by what we see, hear, feel etc. We do not take the 'conversation' between the Devil (or Satan) and Christ in the Wilderness temptation to be literal so why in the case of Eve?, it was evidently auto-suggestion in both cases, though some may still favour the idea of a speaking serpent on the grounds that God caused Balaam's Ass to speak (Numbers chapter 22), but that was most certainly a miracle for the sole purpose of preventing the madness of the Prophet 'who had been hired to curse Israel', the only record in Old Testament Scripture and confirmed in the New Testament (II Peter ch. 2 verses 15 and 16), of a dumb creature speaking with Man's voice. I Timothy chapter 2 verse 14 states that " Adam was not deceived (presumably by the serpent) but the woman, being deceived was in the transgression", a possible reason why Eve was deceived could be her failure to take into account that the 'Tree' forbidden on pain of death, applied only to them as morally responsible and not other creatures, and so it follows that the subsequent curse on the serpent recorded in Genesis chapter 5 verse 14 must be understood in a figurative sense only, as the following verse is predictive and concerns mankind not a literal serpent and its seed obviously. To sum up then we may say that because the literal serpent was involved (however unwittingly) in the temptation and fall of man. God made it to be symbolic of sin and death, the 'enemy' destined to be finally destroyed. As can be seen in I Corinthians chapter 15.

Sister E. Linggood.

Since the above was written the following extract from a thesis on Adam by Dr. Kitto the English Biblical scholar has come to our notice : -

"The instrument of the temptation was a serpent, whether it spoke in an articulate voice like the human or expressed the sentiments attributed to it by a succession of remarkable and significant actions may be a subject of reasonable question, the latter is possible and it seems the preferable hypothesis as without a miraculous intervention the mouth and throat of no serpent could form a vocal utterance of words and we cannot attribute to any wicked spirit the power of working miracles ... they (Adam and Eve) allowed the thought of disobedience to form itself into a disposition and then a purpose "

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