

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 231

May/June 2008

In this Issue:

Page 1	Editorial	Sister Helen Brady
Page 2	Be Ready Always to Give an Answer to every Man that Asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is Within you with Meekness and Fear.	Brother Phil Parry
Page 2	A Greater Than John The Baptist	A.H.
Page 4	A Peculiar People	Brother J. Chamberlain
Page 5	The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God – Is There a Difference between the Two?	Brother Phil Parry
Page 6	Cooperation without Compromise	Brother W. Laing
Page 7	Smite the Shepherd and The Sheep shall be scattered and I will lay my hand upon the little ones	Brother Phil Parry
Page 8	Back to Front	'The Light' Magazine – 1956
Page 9	What Think ye of Christ?	Brother Phil Parry
Page 10	Letter in reply to Website enquiry	Brother Russell Gregory
Page 11	The Bible Magazine	Brother Phil Parry
Page 12	Awaiting the Big One	The Jerusalem Post
Page 13	The Foundation of Christadelphia	Brother Phil Parry
Page 15	From Internet Forum – “What is the Gospel?”	
Page 23	Truth?	Brother Paul Watson
Page 24	Some News Items from The Middle East	
Page 27	God Our Help	Brother Leo Dreifuss

Editorial

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends, Loving greetings,

Jacob belongs to the patriarchal, pastoral society from which the Hebrew people originated two thousand years ago. Like his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac, Jacob was a tent-dwelling nomad who moved slowly in search of grazing and water, with his wives and concubines, his many children, his servants, flocks and herds.

There are contradictions in Jacob's character that by the standards of our age are hard to explain. In his youth he outwitted his brother, his father and his uncle for his own gain. But the ancient chroniclers of the Old Testament made no attempt to idealize their forefathers. For them the deviousness of the young Jacob did not detract from his stature or his many virtues.

The Bible calls Jacob an “ish tam” - a plain or quiet man. Indeed in all his long life and he lived for 147 years, he was peaceable and never resorted to violence, but he was often fearful lest his aggrieved and more turbulent brother Esau might attack him.

Jacob was certainly adept at outwitting his relatives but he met a similar situation himself when Laban substituted Leah for Rachel, however Jacob submitted and agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. His diligence and skill in tending his father-in-law's flocks greatly increased their numbers and value. To his wives and children Jacob was kind and affectionate with an especially tender love for Rachel and for Joseph and Benjamin, the two sons she bore him in old age. He was deeply displeased when his sons Simeon and Levi killed all the males belonging to the clan from which Hamor came after he had seduced their sister Dinah.

But above all Jacob inherited from Abraham and Isaac their intimate relationship and communion with God and he believed in the promise that Canaan would belong to their seed. Jacob is one of the characters in the Bible who are recognizably human and he is real to us nearly four thousand years on, because of his virtues and flaws and we are told that God loved him and did so despite his failings. To know this is a great comfort, for we too can feel secure in God's love even when we fail.

“The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. Psalm 18.46.”

Love to all. Helen Brady.

“Be Ready Always to Give an Answer to Every Man that Asketh You a Reason of the Hope that is in You with Meekness and Fear.” - 1 Peter 3:15

If you can do so then you can answer the following questions:

1. If you believe in Jesus and on Him that sent Him, you have passed from death to life. This is in the Present Tense. What death have you passed from? Please note, I will not accept the term “prospectively.”

The Apostle John said “We know that we have passed from death to life.” This is also in the Present Tense.

By physical law Adam was already subject to death at creation, so how could the same death pass upon him as a penalty for his sin?

Paul says, “By the offence of one many be dead.” Yet they were alive, otherwise they could not pass from death to life while alive naturally.

2. In the teaching of the inspired word of God there is more meaning to the term ‘death’ than some people realise. How otherwise could St John say, “He that loveth not his brother abides in death.” What death does he abide in? Apparently there is a choice.

St Paul said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, for the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death”, and Paul did not die a natural death for this purpose. What are your answers?

Brother Phil Parry.

A Greater than John The Baptist

The statement contained in Matthew 11:11, seems to be but badly understood, by many, otherwise well acquainted with the teachings of the Spirit.

I do not attach the same importance to a proper solution of this passage as I would do to having a correct appreciation of the Nature and Mission of the Christ, or to being well instructed in the doctrine of the Resurrection, or the like.

Nevertheless, as “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is useful” in some particular way, I believe it is impossible for the Scripture student to derive the proper benefit from a passage he does not

comprehend the meaning of, and thus I shall briefly state what I believe to be the proper solution to the passage referred to.

Jesus says, “Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.”

The most popular idea seems to be that the least in the Kingdom will be immortals, and as John was then but mortal, this would account for the difference. But this does not seem good reasoning.

The passage seems to refer to parties then living, and the prophets of bygone years, “He that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven IS greater than he.”

In either case, if mortality or immortality was meant at that time or now, everyone alike is mortal; and in the Kingdom every approved one will be alike immortal.

Jesus was accrediting all honour to John, but, in so doing He spoke of a greater, and if among those born of women, there has not risen a greater than John, with that one exception, the exception is easily found.

John had sent his disciples to enquire of Jesus if He really was the Christ. Then, as on many other occasions, the answer of Christ was not direct. He gave them certain things to judge from and decide for themselves. Then He addressed Himself to the multitudes to whom He had been preaching the Gospel, some of whom had received it. Not, certainly, that they were in actual possession of the Kingdom preached; but their acceptance constituted them heirs.

But, in general, the people would not give the attention to the message of the great Salvation, and Jesus shows them how they had slighted both Himself and John, and showed their culpability in refusing the greatest that ever appeared in human form.

In Matthew 12:41,42, Jesus says, “the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here. The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

They despised John the Baptist, and also a greater than John the Baptist is here – The Only Begotten Son of God.

But it might be asked, why could He be called the least in the Kingdom of God? I answer, the kingdom was only preached, and accepted or rejected, (not certainly set up); but among the few whom He had specially chosen as some of its aristocracy, He says (Luke 22:25-27), “The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so, but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as one that serveth.”

We have the idea well brought out in Philippians 2:7-11 where it is said, “He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is, above every name; that at the name of Jesus every, knee shall bow, of those in heaven and on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

John and all the prophets were born of woman and through Adam as their father were heirs of sin and death.

Jesus was also born of a woman but having God as His Father was “without sin,” and although “making Himself of no reputation,” and “becoming obedient unto death,” yet it was through His death that John, or the greatest of the prophets, could attain to life everlasting.

“He was rejected, and despised of men,” yet, although He was the stone rejected by the builders, was nevertheless, the foundation and chief corner stone of the House of God.

Much more might be added, but I think this will be sufficient to shew my meaning.

If anyone thinks he has sufficient reasons for dissent from my theory, these remarks may lead him to give others the benefit of his discovery; in the meantime, and until the contrary is proved, I will believe that the meaning of the passage in plain language would be, “Among them that are born of woman, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; and, behold, a greater than John the Baptist is here,” as in the case of versos 41 and 42 of chapter 12 already referred to.

A.H.

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

Few of the professedly religious people of our day sufficiently recognise the important fact that in carrying out His purpose upon this earth, the Deity has worked through and by means of a specially separated and peculiar people. To the children of Israel it was said “The Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth,” and again at another time, “Ye shall be a peculiar people unto me, above all people.”

From an insufficient attention to this fact, we find a total want of understanding of such distinct promises as the following: - “I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and will bring them into their own land . . . and they shall dwell in the land which I have given to Jacob, my servant . . . and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.”

Just as in time past the Deity manifested Himself in a chosen race, so in our own time we find His servants are likewise spoken of as being a “peculiar people.” This apostolic expression is, without doubt, true of the children of God in all periods, and it is well for us to appreciate in what way the children of light are, and should be, peculiar. This is explained by the context of the words themselves, for we are told that Christ “gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;” and again, “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar (or purchased) people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” We see therefore that our peculiarity does not depend upon our own personality or natural attributes, but upon the fact that we have been purchased and set apart in the purpose of God for an exalted work. It has nothing to do with oddity of speech, or strangeness of attire, nor has it anything in common with the advocacy of unusual methods in medicinal, or heterodox ideas upon scientific or other subjects. All such things are characteristic of weak, incapable, or narrow minds, and are quite excluded by an earnest and intelligent knowledge of the truth. We do well when we endeavour to sacrifice all our own individual peculiarities, which tend to bring the truth into odium and sham, and to differ from our intelligent fellowmen in one thing only, which is to us the most important of all things, and our only legitimate peculiarity, that we are people purchased by Christ, purified unto Himself, and zealous of all good works.

Brother J. Chamberlain.

Brother Phil Parry was asked if there was a difference between “The Kingdom of God” and “The Kingdom of Heaven.” Here are his observations:

The Kingdom of Heaven and The Kingdom of God – Is There a Difference Between the Two?

Seeing God is the supreme Creator of heaven and earth this is difficult to define, for all things are of God.

When Israel came out of Egypt through the blood of the lamb, God was in charge; God was their King until they desired a king like the other nations, and He gave them Saul, saying to Samuel, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7).

Prior to Saul, Israel was to become a Kingdom of a heavenly nature; a chosen people and a holy people of faith; but they turned to idolatry and vain traditions and eventually their wicked rulers rejected the Messiah whom God sent, and they caused Him to be crucified.

But God raised the Messiah from the dead and set Him at His right hand in Heaven as a King and Priest over His own household. It is recorded in Matthew 28, “The eleven disciples departed into Galilee and into a mountain Jesus had appointed them,” verse 18. “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Here then we have Jesus reigning from Heaven over them who are teaching and preaching the Gospel of Salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first then also to the Gentile. This then is an active work, a work that Jesus in His parable likens unto the Kingdom of Heaven in its progressive stage while He reigns from Heaven. The parables are examples of this. The good seed of the Word of truth being sown and bearing fruit. The leaven of the word of truth in the meal leavening the whole. The mustard seed in like manner. Also the giving of the talents. Then we have in Matthew 25, Jesus on the throne of His glory judging the nations and dividing the good from the rejected. The glorious consummation when He will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” This is now the Kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul says of Adam, he was the figure of Him that was to come, so that Adam and Jesus were styled “man” whom God put under man’s feet but of the former the writer to Hebrews says, “But now we see not yet all things put under him. But 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 should taste death for every man.” But mark this, the Apostle speaks here of an important subject – THE FEDERAL PRINCIPLE the life of Jesus given as the price of redemption for all in Adam. Our teaching on this subject is widespread and greatly ignored, yet Dr Thomas taught it in Eureka to his own community.

It seems preaching the true gospel will not convert the world to the will of God and the establishment of His Kingdom. The prayer Jesus taught His disciples was “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,” His will being at that time fulfilled by the angels, the ministering Spirits sent forth to those heirs of Salvation and are still active for that purpose and other acts which will require force by the Power of God.

And so will be brought to pass the scripture where it is proclaimed “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever

Please note: “The Kingdom of Heaven” and “The Kingdom of God” appear to be interchangeable, and my comments are not to be accepted as dogmatic.

Brother Phil Parry

Co-operation Without Compromise

For many years there has been an unhappy separation among those who in truth have believed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and who, so believing, have been baptised into Jesus Christ.

Into the causes of this estrangement it is not my purpose at present enter. I wish rather to excite interest in the inquiry, whether, now that the lapse of so many years may be expected to have removed the excitement of personal feeling, regarding these causes of division - and to have made all concerned wiser by experience - whether the amount of truth we hold in common is not sufficient to warrant a hearty co-operation in disseminating the knowledge of those grand truths of the Gospel which we believe, and which are so much lost sight of by the community at large? The question is surely an important one, and demands an earnest and deliberate consideration.

In the course of these years a considerable number have been added to the several churches, who were not at all concerned in the divisions; and are in many cases, ignorant alike of the circumstances which led to the separation, and if the amount of agreement in matters of faith and hope that really exists amongst those who are "out of fellowship" with each other. It is therefore necessary in their case, and may be beneficial to all concerned, to have a clear statement of the matters wherein we are agreed, and wherein we differ. This statement I shall endeavour to give as fairly and concisely as I can.

Well then, we are agreed:

That the One God - the Almighty Creator of all, will establish a kingdom upon earth, which shall destroy and supersede all other kingdoms, and shall be universal in extent and everlasting in duration.

That this divine, universal, and eternal kingdom shall be given to Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the living God; and be exercised by Him, as the absolute monarch of all the earth.

That the throne of His divine administration shall be established on Mount Zion; and that the city of Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the world.

That the twelve tribes of Israel, now scattered abroad throughout the world shall be gathered again, and placed by God in the territory promised to Abraham, and that thus gathered and established, they shall be made the chief nation in the Kingdom of God.

That the throne of the Lord to be established on Mount Zion is "the throne of David," (announced to Mary as the inheritance of His Son Jesus; and that it is in consequence of His being anointed for this throne that He is called "The Christ.")

That the humiliation and death of the Christ were appointed by His Father to be a sacrifice for sin, and perfect Him for being our High Priest and the Captain of our salvation.

That the race of man is absolutely mortal by nature; and, in consequence of sin, under the sentence of death; and that God, in His great love, has appointed that those alone who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, shall live for ever.

That in order to the obtaining of this salvation, God requires of those who thus believe in His Son that they be immersed in water into Christ, and submit to Him in all things as their Lord.

That all who thus believe in Jesus as Lord and Christ, and are immersed in His name, are accounted by God as the seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made; and are joint partakers with Him of His eternal power and glory.

That God bestows these favours on believers because of the death of His Son Jesus the Christ. That the resurrection and glorification of the faithful in Christ Jesus, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God

shall take place at the return of the Lord from the heavens; and this return of the Lord should be expected and waited for by the faithful in Christ Jesus.

We are agreed that all these things are embraced, in the gospel announced to Abraham, and appointed to be preached among all nations to be believed for salvation.

In all these matters we are at one; yet we are in a state of division.

It is proper that the points on which we differ shall also be fairly noted. I find I cannot do this without also noticing still further points of argument. Thus we differ as to whether "The Word" that became flesh, was personal being, separate from the Father, and existing with God in the beginning before all other created beings - or whether the phrase "The Word" simply denotes an attribute, of the purpose of God: but we are agreed that He who was born of Mary in Bethlehem, and died on the cross for our sins is indeed the Son of God, and the seed of David of whom Moses and the prophets did write - the Messiah of Israel, and the Saviour and Judge of this world, and Lord of all.

Again, we differ as to whether "the resurrection of the just and the unjust" shall be simultaneous, or whether an interval shall lapse between "the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation;" but we are agreed that there shall be "a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."

We are agreed that the faithful who are asleep in Jesus shall, at His coming, be made "incorruptible;" but we differ as to whether "this incorruptibility takes place in the act of resurrection, or subsequently, after appearing at the judgment seat.

We are agreed that

"We must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ" to receive according to our works, whether good or bad: but we differ as to whether all appear at the same point of time, or whether those who receive the rewards "appear at the Judgment seat" at a different time from those who receive punishment. And we differ as to who or what "the devil" or "Satan" of Scripture is: but we are agreed that whoever or whatever the devil be, he or it is doomed to utter destruction; that all sin, and everything opposed to God and His Christ, shall be destroyed without remedy.

Having thus fully, frankly, and fairly stated the main points of agreement and difference between us, I earnestly commend the careful consideration of the enquiry stated at the outset, and shall anxiously await the issue, leaving further comment in the meantime.

Brother W. Laing.

Matthew 18:10. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

**"Smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep shall be scattered; and
I will lay my hands upon the little ones."**

Zechariah 13:7. (American Standard Version).

Jesus was the true Shepherd and the sheep heard His voice. But after His crucifixion they fled from Jerusalem because of persecution for their belief in Christ as the Messiah, and were of the twelve tribes. Of them were added to the body of Christ daily totalling hundreds such as should be saved (Acts 1; 1 Peter 1; 1 James 1:1; Acts 26 6,7).

Would the sheep that were scattered consist of the 144 thousand mentioned in Revelation all of the twelve tribes of Israel but who follow the Lamb of God the Shepherd of Israel? "And I will lay my hand

upon the little ones.” Does this sound like a correction from God or does it mean “the laying on of hands” in the name of God and His Son after baptism into the death of Christ?

The Apostles baptised no one unless a true understanding of the Gospel of Salvation was expressed by the believer therefore he or she could not say “I am of Paul,” “I of Apollos,” “I of Cephas,” as Paul declared it was Jesus who was crucified for them. Therefore the authority of God was represented in the laying on of the hands of the person who was satisfied the candidate understood the Atonement.

See 2 Timothy 1:1-10. Please note in verse 10 Paul is not referring to natural death; Paul referred to legal death by sin; we still experience natural death.

A final thought on “The little ones” – consider:

Matthew 18:3, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Galatians 4:19, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” 1 John 2: 1. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” 1 John 2:28, “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” 1 John 3:18. My little children let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. 3 John 1:4, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Brother Phil Parry

Back to Front

The “orthodox” believer blames a supernatural devil for his follies and sins. The B.A.S.F. Christadelphian blames his “inherited sin nature.” This is what is called in modern parlance “passing the buck.” But the Scriptures teach “by their fruits, ye shall know men.” All sin and wickedness is due to lack of self-control, and so when we do wrong and commit sin let us blame ourselves, our mental condition, “the carnal mind.” “As a man thinketh (and does) so is he.”

Let us think less of our physical make up, which God has made “very good” – “fearfully and wonderfully” - and more of our mental condition and will-power. Where the mind is conditioned by spiritual things and becomes the mind of the spirit, it will then reflect the mind of Christ, and that is what we are striving for.

Let us see what this “new” theory of redemption from “the law of condemnation,” “inherited sin,” “physical defilement hereditarily” has upon the interpretation of the Scriptures. You will find it places every vital truth “back to front” thus:-

1. Where the Scriptures state that Christ is “undefiled,” it makes Christ “defiled.”
2. Where the Scriptures state that Christ is not “accursed,” it “curses” Christ.
3. Where the Scriptures states that Christ is sinless, it makes Christ “sinful.”
4. Where the Scriptures state that Christ is a “clean” sacrifice, it makes Him “unclean.”
5. Where the Scriptures states that Christ is the exemplar of God’s obedient children, it makes Him represent the “disobedient.”
6. Where the Scriptures state that God’s righteousness was declared in the ascension of Christ, it says that God’s righteousness was declared in His crucifixion which was murder by “wicked hands.”

7. Where the Scriptures state that Christ was “once offered to bear the sins of many,” its exponents say that He “offered” “first for His own sin.”
8. Where the Scriptures state that Christ died for “our sins,” “our offences,” and “our iniquities,” it maintains that Christ died for His “own sin.”
9. Where the Scriptures state that we obtain redemption through the forgiveness of sins, its exponents teach redemption for “inherited sin nature” from “sinful flesh.”
10. Where the Scriptures state that “the law of sin and death” is that death for personal, individual transgression - “the wages of sin is death” – “the hurt of the second death” - it maintains that the “law of sin and death” is “the law of condemnation in Adam,” or what is called “the common death of all men.”
11. Where the Scriptures state that the barrier between God and man is personal transgression, it says that the barrier is human nature “hereditarily” defiled by “the sentence.”
12. Where the Scriptures state that “the law of condemnation” is not abrogated; it states that it is abrogated.
13. Where the Scriptures state that Christ obtained title to His ascension (glorification) by perfect obedience, it states that he obtained title to resurrection by His perfect obedience. If that is so, why are the “unjust” raised? What “title” have they to resurrection?
14. Where the Scriptures state that Christ was “a new creation” – “the second man,” “the last Adam” in flesh and blood, it states that, He was “the old man.”
15. Where the Scriptures states that there was “no sin” in the flesh of Christ, it states that there was “sin” in His flesh.
16. Where the Scriptures state that there can only be “one body” in Christ, it “divides” the body into sects and heresies.
17. Where the Scriptures state that sins are forgiven when confessed and over-come, it says that sins shall be “remembered” again at the judgment seat.
18. Where the Scriptures state that the New Covenant is in force now, it states that it is not until Christ comes.

I'd better stop. Enough has been said. Is what you believe BACK TO FRONT?

(Editor, “LIGHT” Magazine, January-March issue, 1956).

What Think Ye of Christ, Whose Son is He?

In the genealogies of both Joseph and Mary the male line of begetting and descent is predominantly male, so in calling Himself the Son of Man and yet of no earthly father the title could only refer to His physical flesh like Adam's at creation but begotten, not created yet the second Son of God. Some people have tried to make Jesus a Son of Adam through genealogy but to do this they must go as far back as Cain the first son of Adam, but Cain is excluded and Abel had no progeny so there must be a reason why Seth is preferred to Cain. Personally I think it was through faith and predestination on account of the foreknowledge of God in the conduct of the male line and their wives.

It should be noted that Joseph the husband of Mary was the son of Jacob, and through Mary he was the son in law of Heli. Luke 3 and Matthew 1. In the 1940's when I was a Christadelphian I heard Psalm 80

quoted as referring to Jesus as the Son of Mary whom God made strong for Himself, but I do not think it was a reference to Jesus and was only used in an effort to prove that God strengthened Jesus to be obedient where other men would fail on account of sinful flesh being weak. This is unscriptural nonsense. The law was weak, not the flesh.

Jesus was the True Vine of the Lord's planting and was a type of the true Israel of God which has been made free from the bondage of the Law of Sin and Death and He fulfilled God's word "Out of Egypt have I called my son," but He was never a slave but was made strong through His virgin birth of Mary; strong for God in that He was a fit sacrifice for the life of the world.

The words of Jesus to His disciples has a great bearing on the matter of the Vine if John chapter 15 is read effectively as it proves a complete absence of sin in the flesh of Jesus and of others. I ask you, who would want to abide in "sinful flesh"? In verse 22 Jesus refers to the Jews "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin." In effect they had no sin in their flesh but did commit sin by responsibility to the words of Jesus, therefore it is character that matters.

I believe this is so in the female line of descent which Paul proves in Galatians chapter 4 in regard to Sarah and Hagar, the latter as in bondage and the other a free woman whose son was born after the Spirit by promise on account that she was barren. We are reminded here that the present day Jerusalem is in bondage of the old covenant whereas Jesus who never married has more children than the married. The lesson we can learn from this is found in Eden when God pierced Adam's side after putting him to sleep and produced a bride as a helpmeet for him.

The side of Jesus was also pierced with a spear but unlike Adam He suffered terrible pain for the production of His bride and now in Heaven He is beholding the travail of His soul and will be satisfied (Isaiah 33). We can learn much from Paul's epistle to Ephesians chapter 3 from verse 23 for example and predestination shows the certainty of God's calling not a Judgment Seat of doubt. Read it please.

Brother Phil Parry.

It is pleasing to report we are having an increasing number of e-mails from our website. Sometimes fairly lengthy letters follow and below is a small part of such correspondence where Mary (not her real name) asks...

"Another question - if Adam's nature and that of his posterity was not defiled, then why are we so weak? How is it that ALL sin, and how is it that Christ was able to overcome this weakness that the rest of us all succumb to?"

And if Christ was free of the Edenic and Mosaic curse, does it then follow that He was entirely free of having to keep the Law of Moses? That would seem to be indicated from some of the things He did and said. Was whatever He chose to go along with just that, merely His choice?

Sorry, more than one question in there!! I'm finding this all really fascinating.

Kind regards, Mary."

In reply I wrote:

Dear Mary,

I think we ought to approach our temptations from another angle. We cannot be tempted without law. God gave us His law in order to test our faithfulness. If we keep His laws, or commandments, then we are showing that we respect and love Him. There is no other way in

which we can do this, and there is no law or command that God has given us that we cannot keep perfectly. The fact that we don't keep them perfectly is our fault and nothing to do with the way God made us. God has never given a commandment that cannot be kept.

Jesus didn't fail because He was very determined not to, and besides, He did far more than keep His father's commandments; He 'went the extra mile, turned the other cheek and gave His cloak also.' These sort of actions were not required by the law and I feel sure this is what He meant when He said "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I have loved you" (John 13:34). This is surely our supreme exhortation.

If we put insufficient effort into keeping the commandments we have only ourselves to blame when we fail and to say it is because we were made weak is an excuse which passes the blame onto our Creator.

In saying these things I must stress that I fail miserably and must trust, as we all have to, in the grace of God as did the publican – "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

You ask, "And if Christ was free of the Edenic and Mosaic curse, does it then follow that He was entirely free of having to keep the Law of Moses?"

But Paul says in Galatians 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." So He took the curse upon Himself. He was not under any curse until He offered Himself to His Father as the sacrifice for the sin of the world.

Regarding Jesus keeping the Law, in Galatians 4:4, Paul says, "God sent forth His Son... made under the law to redeem them that were under the law." Jesus Himself says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matthew 5:17). Jesus kept the Law of Moses perfectly (and it is interesting to note there is no reference to Him ever joining in the offerings required of others under the Law, yet He made His one great offering of Himself as the Lamb of God).

I am afraid these are very brief answers but I hope they are satisfactory in expressing scriptural teaching.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

“The Bible Magazine”

In our last issue we published a letter to Paul Billington, editor of "The Bible Magazine" in which he was asked to answer two questions according to the Scriptures. We have not heard from Paul yet but I understand that at the time of writing this, he is visiting the U.K. and so probably has not had time to give the matter the necessary attention.

We hope to hear from you, Paul, and wonder if you are yet ready to face the challenge in the two questions asked of you, viz., 1. Is flesh full of sin?, and 2, Was Jesus under Adam's sentence of death? We know this is Christadelphian teaching, but can you show it to be true Bible teaching? Until you can, how can you be sure you are worshipping God in spirit and in truth as He asks of us all?

In the meantime, here are some observations from Brother Phil Parry who, after reading your editorial writes: -

A Few Comments on “The Bible Magazine” editorial published in our last C.L.

It is antichrist to affirm that Jesus came in sinful flesh, and it is antichrist to affirm that Jesus was not in the very good flesh in which Adam was created. To deny this is to affirm that St Paul was wrong in calling Jesus the second man a living soul like Adam. See 1 Corinthians 15:45-48 - “And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.”

And let the objectors refrain from calling human nature “sinful flesh” when the correct translation should read in the positive case - “Sin’s flesh” as St Paul said before his conversion to his new owner Jesus, “I am carnal, sold under sin.” See Galatians 3:22 “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

Though as Paul says the Law was Holy just and good, yet in Romans 5:20 Paul says “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

This means freedom from sin through the belief and faith through the purchasing blood of Christ which was never under pledge to any law. He was free to serve His Father. “Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do Thy will O God.” (Hebrews 10:7).

Amen, He did it for all who come unto God by Him.

Brother P. Parry.

Awaiting the Big One **Editorial in The Jerusalem Post**

Our hearts go out to the people of China and Myanmar during this difficult period, and to their expatriates now working here in Israel. Natural disasters of mammoth proportions and their catastrophic consequences, like the devastating cyclone that ravaged large stretches of Myanmar (Burma) and the earthquake that brought tragedy to Sichuan province in China, inevitably inspire reflection about humanity’s hubris.

Images of devastation, displacement and desolation sear our souls. Yet, occasionally, compassion and empathy are confounded by inexplicable official heartlessness.

In Myanmar the regime’s hold on absolute power overrides the desperate plight of its own stricken people. That country’s junta continues to callously hold up foreign aid and expertise - only minimal outside assistance has so far been allowed in - despite the fact that millions of lives are at risk.

The UN estimates that the death toll could be more than 60,000. Some professionals have been admitted individually, but their inability to function in unison diminishes their effectiveness.

Israeli teams with medical equipment and supplies were turned away. But we are gratified that an American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee staffer is on the ground in Myanmar.

The situation in China is more intricate. The confirmed death toll is 19,500, but there are fears those numbers could climb much higher. China welcomes help and assistance from the international community. It is also a major power and its army is engaged in earnest rescue efforts.

Chinese leaders have been uncharacteristically candid and accessible in the face of this crisis. Despite its dismal civil liberties record, China isn't as closed off as Myanmar and grassroots grumblings of discontent do trickle out, most particularly about the shoddy construction of schoolhouses. Some of these collapsed and buried entire crammed classrooms.

Yet misfortunes exacerbated by a given society's idiosyncratic circumstances mustn't breed smugness here. If anything, the two Asian disasters ought to remind us that we face menaces of our own which are, by and large, being routinely ignored.

Perhaps it's natural to dwell on pressing crises and put off considering vague doomsday scenarios. It's the norm for governments to emphasize the immediate and spend their finite resources on the here and now. Indeed, the taxpayer expects administrative thrift - a clear disincentive for spending on unseen dangers.

In Israel, however, frugality is not a friend of prudence. We are situated astride the Syrian-African Rift, where two tectonic plates rub against each other. The Dead Sea and Jordan valley are the physical manifestations of that rift.

Geologists warn us to expect a major quake (above 7 on the Richter Scale) sometime within the next 50 years. It could happen any day and - if it were particularly destructive in magnitude - no part of the country would be safe.

Committees aplenty have been set up and detailed recommendations compiled on how to shore up existing structures. The last significant quake occurred in 1927 (though it wasn't the "big one" predicted).

The government must survey all existing older buildings and suggest to residents what can feasibly be done to quakeproof them. Individuals need to hear what steps they can take to prepare for the quake to come.

But talk shouldn't be confused with action. And new building codes aren't enough, especially without guarantees they are being enforced. Neither is it any use to tell the public that structures built before the mid-'70s are most at risk. Government incentives to both householders and contractors - such as the new "Master Plan 38" (National Planning for Reinforcing Existing Housing Against Earthquakes) - deserve pushing ahead if they are doable.

Even unavoidable calamities can be mitigated.

Predictably, they tend to be worst where least care has been taken beforehand.

Even dispensing practical advice and educational material costs money - to say nothing of retrofitting old structures. But it would probably be money well spent.

Major quakes are approximately a once-in-a-millennium phenomenon here, and experts judge we are due one soon. We are now far more densely populated than in 1033, when the last major earthquake struck this country. That makes us far more vulnerable, our hi-tech lifestyle notwithstanding.

Let's not pretend we have all the time in the world. Let's take our safety seriously.

In "The Christadelphian" for August 1885, page 319, Robert Roberts published a letter in which the correspondent wrote, "The Lord seems to have given Brother Roberts to have the vision he showed Paul of paradise, and the unutterable things, the good things to come."

Of this comment, Brother J.J.Hadley wrote "For my part, I say, none of this rubbish and semi-blasphemous assumption for me."

The Foundation of Christadelphia

On what then is the foundation of Christadelphia laid?

Answer: Dr John Thomas and Robert Roberts.

But what saith the inspired Apostle Paul?

Answer: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ."

If you build on this foundation anything that will not endure the fire it is useless

The B.A.S.F. is without this foundation in many of its clauses.

Clause 4 is scripturally correct, but **Clause 5** contradicts Clause 4 and adds what is not in the Genesis account nor is it the sentence and penalty for Adam's sin. Adam was capable of death when created. Why add to his nature what was already a fact whether he sinned or did not sin?

Clause 6. It is nonsense to say God could conceive a plan of restoration and not set aside by some means "The Law of Sin and Death." So the debt of natural life in the blood must be paid but not with anything under condemnation as taught in the B.A.S.F.

Clause 7. "God made promises to Adam" – I see no reference to this in Genesis.

Clause 8. I see nothing in the scriptures in reference to Jesus Christ being raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David nor of any of them being of a condemned nature. Condemnation was by imputation as a result of Adam's sin as righteousness was imputed to Abraham by his faith. And how could Jesus abrogate a law of condemnation of Himself by suffering its penalty?

Was Robert Roberts the supreme grammarian in his day of writing this? That every word was yet established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Where is THE TRUTH that Christadelphians speak of and use as an expression of their foundation?

Clause 9. This again is misleading. Does it mean that Jesus was born of a woman in order to possess condemned nature and carry it to the cross to put sinful flesh to death under God's condemnation of it being in Him by virtue of His having no choice of birth? Yes, Jesus did suffer the death that passed upon all men by the righteousness of God but that was by the shedding of blood without which there was no remission of sin. Natural death by decay was not the penalty for sin. Jesus did not die naturally but by infliction and was not suffered to return to dust but remained a man of flesh and bones, and rose in flesh and bones in spirit nature incorruptible.

Clause 10 is covered as above.

Clause 11 is a half truth and **Clause 12** is mainly a lie.

Clause 11. This needs more clarification in regard to the Kingdom of God being a Kingdom of Israel restored. The Kingdom of Israel under Saul replaced the kingdom of God and became divided and idolatrous. Is this what you think of the Kingdom of God? Who would want to restore that system of rule?

Study Clause 21 again in this context. It is the kingdoms of this world that will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Son. Abraham was styled heir of the world; the promise will no doubt commence fulfilment in the promised land but when Christ's Kingdom is delivered up to His Father, God will be all in all.

How could Jesus offer the equivalent of the life which was lost in Eden if His body contained sin and was not even an antitype of the lamb's chosen for the Passover, legally clean without spot and blemish on body?

The Apostle Paul exhorts the believers to offer up their bodies as a living sacrifice wholly and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. How could they offer up what Christadelphians style condemned and defiled sinful flesh?

Clause 12: The body of Jesus. Jesus offered Himself to God without spot, without sin, a living sacrifice, so that God could offer Him up freely for us all. Romans 8:32.

To do the opposite God would violate His own Law.

Clause 12 does not state that God offered His Son for us but that He used the Jews and Romans to put Christ to death because He had sin in His body of flesh.

Can you ignore all these comments for your good unto salvation? All ye that pass by, to you is it nothing that Jesus should die?

If Jesus died for Himself then He was not a sacrifice at all. This is the Truth of the matter.

Brother P. Parry.

Internet Forum discussion on What is The Gospel?

Julian writes: The gospel is the 'good news;' that is what Gospel means.

It is indeed good news for many, not good news for others. How so? Because the good news is the news that God will establish His Kingdom here on earth some time in the future. That is good news for those of us who look forward to that day, but bad news for those who reject it.

Those who reject God, and His Son Jesus Christ have nothing to look forward to, only death.

We will be looking at the Gospel here on this forum, and hope that those interested will see that God's plan and purpose with His creation, through His Son Jesus, is most certainly Good news.

Love to all, Julian

James writes: Following on from what Julian has said, we could ask ourselves what are the benefits of understanding the gospel and, why did Jesus instruct his disciples to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" - *Mark 16:15*.

In the Greek, this passage is translated as "Go ye into all the world and proclaim the glad tidings to the whole creation." Any good Greek dictionary will give us the true meaning of the word "gospel" which is the good news or the glad tidings of something.

One of the benefits of understanding the gospel is the realisation that Jesus is going to return to this earth and establish an everlasting kingdom. Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus "came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" - *Mark 1:15*. Luke, records the same event in this way, "He (Jesus) went throughout every city and village preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" - *Luke 8:1*.

So from the Bible itself we see that the gospel that Jesus taught involved the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God to be ruled over by him and the saints who are to be appointed upon his return to the earth. So far that kingdom has not come and so we still await the fulfilment of this promise.

The Gospel and Baptism.

So how can we be included in God's kingdom? We read the following verse from Acts 8:12: "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."

From the above verse, we learn that it was the gospel message associated with Jesus that caused people to believe in that gospel and be baptised. This is not a new gospel but one which has been preached to Abraham.

Galatians 3:8 - "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, **preached before the gospel unto Abraham**, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed"

In the same chapter at verse 14 Paul then writes: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; **that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**"

And then in verse 27: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

So Paul makes it clear to us that those who, via baptism, "put on Christ" become part of Abraham's seed and therefore heirs to the promises made to him. These promises assure us that we may have eternal life in God's kingdom when Jesus returns. It is at that time when immortality will be given.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death; **but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**"

Julian writes: Beware that we are not deceived. Galatians 1:3-7 - "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father - - to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. I marvel that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel; and there isn't another gospel. Only there are some who trouble you, and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ."

Only one gospel, only one way to the Kingdom of God.

Love in Jesus, Julian

Russell writes: My question is this - How do we know which "gospel" to believe when every church and chapel is preaching something different? Most seem to say all we need is to do good and try to be like Jesus; but Jesus said, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:23,24.

It is surely very important that we do this.

With love in Jesus. Russell

Julian writes: There is only one truth, there cannot be two or more. However, the Gospel is one part of the whole. The Gospel is the Good News concerning the coming Kingdom of God. Those who believe in this, do believe in the true Gospel. As an elderly Brother said to me once... "it won't be good news for all... in fact it will be very bad news for many." He was right, because those who reject Christ and continue to behave wickedly will indeed find his return to be bad news for them. Those who do love the appearing of Christ, why will they fear? If it's going to be full knowledge that saves us, I reckon we are all lost. It's more than this, surely?

As far as the fullness of the truth, concerning all matters, well, some things we are all unclear about; they are mysteries, to be made known to us only when we are in the Kingdom. Those clear truths, that we are told about, are to be reasoned out and meditated upon.

What is essential knowledge for us?

Some have different ideas about this, but surely we can consider that to love God, that we know Him as who He is, not a fake... in other words the true God Yahweh, not any God we choose to serve.

To then love all, as we would love our own self. In fact to wish to do more for others than we would have ourselves.

To flee wickedness, to resist temptation to sin... to look for righteousness, to avoid unrighteousness. To walk after the spirit, not after the flesh, and to produce fruits thereof.

Other Theology is useful, but is it essential?

If we are being led down a road that leads to error, we need to see that, of course. For example to say Jesus is God, well that obviously leads to blasphemy. To understand that Jesus represented God fully, and has all authority given to him by God, ah well that's the truth, plain and simple (and demonstrable from correct use of the Word).

There are truths easy to prove, others not so easy. For me, I will not judge anyone who in my opinion has not found the fullness of the truth (as I understand that fullness to be).

Let God judge the hearts and minds of others, and let us look to our own walk, let us deal with our own conscience.

Love in Jesus, Julian

Inquirer writes: A very good and positive post Julian, the type I love to see from you. I agree with you, judge not others, they have their judge, the words that our Lord spoke. Not all receive the same, where much is given, much is required, therefore if not so much is received, less will be required, whatever is received it needs to be acted on to the very best of ones ability.

Julian writes: Hi Inquirer. Yes, I totally agree.

Love in Jesus, Julian

Inquirer writes: Julian -- The same thing shines through in the parable of the pounds - Luke 19:16-26, "Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds). For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him."

Those that worked with what they had received reward, He that did not work with it, lost out - both that gained did not reach the same level of attainment but were still accepted for what they had done.

Julian writes: Excellent. Yes, we must use what we have been given, to the fullest extent. It will be no good us moaning that we were not blessed with any gifts, if we don't use the ones God has indeed given to us.

Russell writes: Dear all, There is of course so much more to this question of ‘what is the Gospel?’ if we are to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Perhaps we could start by quoting from Hebrews 11:6, “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

That is to say that we must know that God is the Creator and have faith in His reward for our diligent seeking. Our reward for diligently seeking God is eternal life. This is the Good News - or Gospel of Salvation. This salvation is for those who diligently seek God and we can only learn of this in the Bible.

In Isaiah 1:18 God says, “Come now and let us reason together.” This is a great privilege and we must take it seriously. So what is it we are asked to reason about? Read on – “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool...”

When we first learn about the Gospel we realise, and are told that we are forgiven our sins through Jesus and indeed Jesus tells us so in the Lord’s Prayer – “And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” Luke 11: 4.

So far everything is straight forward but when we start to reason out on what basis our sins are forgiven, and what forgiveness has to do with Jesus’ crucifixion, and who is forgiven and why, then we find that every denomination on earth has a different story to tell, and every one claims theirs is the truth!

Before we go any further let us decide here and now that we are not going to allow ourselves to get into painful disputes; it’s just not worthwhile and so easily leads to unchristian behaviour.

Every step of our reasoning must be sensible and without leaps of fantasy. Primarily our reasoning is with God and we can only do this through prayer and Bible reading. We must also be aware we tend to hold on to preconceived ideas, or things we were once told and accepted without question. After all, we expect others to tell us the truth, but let us see for ourselves that it is the truth – we may be in for some surprises.

If all are willing then I suggest we take this very slowly and see how far we can go while staying in agreement and harmony, and please may I say that prayer is needful all the way for without it we are quickly lost.

Would someone like to suggest a starting point for further discussion?

With Love in Jesus. Russell

Inquirer writes: A Starter - Why is it that the Gospel or Good news which Jesus taught and sent His disciples out teaching had nothing to do with His death?

A little of that GOOD News:- Matthew 4:23, “And He was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every kind of sickness among the people.”

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 9:35, “And Yeshua went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.” Matthew 10:7, “And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Matthew 24:14, “And this good news of the Kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end shall come. Mark 4:11, “And He was saying to them, To you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables,” Luke 4:43, “But He said to them, I must proclaim the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this mission.” Luke 8:1, “And it came about soon afterwards, that He was travelling through from one city and village to another, proclaiming and announcing good news about the Kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him,” Luke

9:2, "And He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal." Luke 11:2, "And He said to them, When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come..." Luke 12:31, "But, seek for His Kingdom, and these things shall be added to you." Luke 18:17, "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God shall not enter into it." John 3:3, "Yeshua answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he does not have the power to see the Kingdom of God." Acts 28:31, "proclaiming the Kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Yeshua the Messiah with all openness and without hindrance." 2Timothy 4:1, "I solemnly testify to you before God and Messiah Yeshua, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His Kingdom," James 2:5, "Listen, my beloved brethren: has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" Revelation 5:10, "And You have made them a Kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the Earth."

Russell writes: Dear Inquirer, You ask, "Why is it that the Gospel or Good news which Jesus taught and sent His disciples out teaching had nothing to do with His death?"

I would ask why was it that John the Baptist declared that Jesus came to take away the sin of the world? Jesus hadn't taken away the sin of the world at this time for this was done when He allowed Himself to be crucified. Jesus preached the forgiveness of sins through Him, knowing full well that He had come to do His Father's will and offer Himself in sacrifice as the Lamb of God.

In preaching the gospel the Apostles taught the need for baptism to all who would come to Jesus for salvation. It was Paul who said, in Romans 6:3, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into his death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

And in John 5:24, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

The Apostle John confirmed this in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life."

This passing from death unto everlasting life is for those who have been baptised into the death of Jesus. We see then that far from the Good News which Jesus taught and sent His disciples out teaching having nothing to do with His death, it had, in fact, everything to do with His death.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Inquirer writes: Russell the starter Question was - A Starter - Why is it that the Gospel or Good news which Jesus taught and sent His disciples out teaching had nothing to do with His death?

Baptism is another subject.

Why were the disciples so taken back when He told them he would be taken and killed, if that had been part of the Good News they had taken out, or had heard Jesus the Christ teaching others about?

Russell writes: Dear Inquirer, In Matthew 10:5 we see that Jesus sent his disciples out to preach that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They could not preach the Gospel we know at that time because the way of salvation through the sacrificial death of Jesus was not yet open. This was a transitional period.

The occasion on which the disciples were taken aback at the saying of Jesus that He must be killed is recorded in Matthew 16:21. The disciples had no understanding that Jesus sacrifice was necessary for salvation and it was not until in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus explained to them that this was necessary. Matthew 26:53,54 - "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

The Gospel of salvation as is taught in the New Testament could not be preached until after the sacrificial

death of Jesus, and it was then that the disciples, i.e. followers, were called apostles, i.e. teachers. Without the sacrificial death of Jesus there could be no Gospel to preach.

Once the disciples became apostles they taught the sacrificial death of Jesus as an essential part of preaching the Gospel as it had everything to do with His sacrifice - Mark 16:15, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."

The point I wish to emphasize here is that disciples are baptised into Jesus death as Paul explains in Romans 6:3.

Again, Luke 24:44-48, "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and he said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." The point I wish to make here is that remission of sins can only be through Jesus after His sacrifice.

With Love in Jesus. Russell

Inquirer writes: What then of those that died believing in the Coming Kingdom before his sacrifice?

Russell writes: Dear Inquirer, They too come under the same Gospel as it was understood by Abraham. All the faithful come into relationship with God through whatever covenant is in force at the time. All these earlier covenants were ratified by Jesus Christ.

In Acts 13:38, we read of Paul preaching at Antioch - "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

The people were not justified under the provisions of the Law of Moses because the sin-offerings under the Law of Moses did not take away sin. While the offerers were forgiven their sins, it was on a provisional basis; their sins were covered over, as it were, waiting the time when Jesus would take away their sins by His one supreme offering.

Isaiah 53 is no doubt referring to Jesus where we read, "The Lord hath laid in him the iniquity of us all... for the transgression of my people was he smitten... when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin... He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The writer to the Hebrews explains (chapter 9, verse 15) "and for this cause he (Jesus) is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant (law of Moses)." This is confirmation of the retrospective aspect of Jesus' sacrifice.

Again Hebrews 7:19, "For the law (of Moses) made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which means we draw nigh unto God." The reason being that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). Yet without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:21). Therefore it is evident that forgiveness of sins ever since Adam and Eve has been dependant upon Jesus willingness to lay down His life in sacrifice.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Inquirer writes: Russell thank you for your kind reply, I will look into the matter.

Russell writes: Dear Inquirer, There is quite a lot to think about here and it is not easy to put everything in its right place. Neither is it always easy to keep things in their right place when we see matters from a different aspect. This is an ongoing concern during life and which I think the writer to the Hebrews had in mind when he wrote that God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6). Diligence has to be encouraged.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Corn-in-Egypt writes: Russell, God knowing the end from the very beginning, and also knowing them, that are His, knows now who those are that with diligence do seek Him. For no-one can come to Christ unless they are drawn of the Father, and yet no-one can truly know the Father unless the Son, Jesus the Christ reveal Him.

Russell writes: Dear Corn in Egypt, What you say is very true of course. God knows who they are - but we don't. So James wrote, “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19). And in verse 16, he wrote, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Corn-in-Egypt writes: This is true Russell, but James is not speaking of converting outsiders, he is speaking of those who have been called and ‘do err’ Paul puts it very well that it is God that does the calling in Romans chapter 9: 9 - 33.

Returning to the Subject of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, I find that there are 30 chapters of Gospel preaching from Jesus in which the death & resurrection is not even mentioned, I agree that this the death & resurrection of our Lord is part of the Gospel, but it is far from being THE Gospel.

Julian writes: Just a quick thought... Surely the Gospel is about the coming Kingdom of God? Now, that we be IN that Kingdom is dependent upon the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, right? By Gods grace, we will be acceptable because of Jesus. For our part, we do need to repent and walk in newness of life.

Love in Jesus, Julian

Russell writes in reply to Corn-in-Egypt: Yes, but when Jesus returns there will be many who say to Him, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” And what will Jesus say to these? - “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:2-23).

These no doubt will say they have repented and are now walking in newness of life. My question is, are they worshipping God in spirit and in truth?

Matthew 21:31-32, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him.”

Again - Luke 18:10, Jesus said, “Two men went into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Next time you are in church, listen to those around you and see how many are proud of their faith, believing they hold the truth or even that they are custodians of the truth.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God...”

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Corn-in-Egypt writes: Russell, you write, I think to me – “Next time you are in church, listen to those around you and see how many are proud of their faith, believing they hold the truth or even that they are custodians of the truth.” Sorry to say Russell, I have not been in Church for well over 40 years. You also use – “Yes, but when Jesus returns there will be many who say to Him, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” And what will Jesus say to these? - “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:2-23).

Could not this even apply to some who say I have given out hundreds of booklets about you and shouted out on Forums?

Inquirer writes: Dear Russell, I have been reading many of the Works you have posted on the Forums. You have posted above – “My question is, are they worshipping God in spirit and in truth?”

My question has to be, are you sure that you are doing so? The works I have read - could well be true, but they do not appear spiritual, they read like the law, very legalistic.

Russell writes: Dear Corn in Egypt, The death and resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Gospel. Adam sinned and in effect “sold” himself and all his descendants to ‘Sin’ as their master - we are all “sold under sin” as Paul explains in Romans 7:14. Jesus was never in this predicament. He was free and undefiled. The Gospel message is that we too can become free - “if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” - John 8:36. When Jesus preached the Gospel He had not been crucified, but in John 16:12 He told His disciples, I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” Perhaps this explains why Jesus did not say much to the people beforehand as it was given to the Apostles to preach a more complete Gospel message.

The point I made about listening to others in church was not aimed at anyone in particular. It is my own personal observation.

Of course the lesson of Jesus about doing many mighty works is for everyone to take to heart and I do not exclude myself. Every one should examine their own conscience in this regard.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Russell writes: Dear Inquirer, If anyone feels I may not be preaching the truth as regards any Bible teaching I would consider it a favour if they should show me where I may be wrong. I am never happier than to find my errors and put them right. An academic knowledge of the Bible is never enough; prayerful study is essential as we are taught of God.

I am sorry if the works I have posted “do not appear spiritual, but read like the law, very legalistic.” However, “the law (of Moses) is spiritual” as Paul tells us in Romans 7:14.

We cannot get away from the legal aspect of salvation. Christian religion is based on law. “Sin is transgression of law” (1 John 3:4) and therefore forgiveness of sin has to be a matter of law also. When we read that we are “dead to the law” we have to see what law is referred to. It is “the law of sin and death” that is done away for us by Jesus’ death. This again is the gospel. Jesus voluntarily suffered the penalty of the law of sin and death in order to forgive us our sins.

When God invited us to reason with Him it was about sin and its forgiveness - these are legal matters.

Salvation is by grace. Adam was spared by the grace of God and did not suffer the death he was warned of for transgressing the law given him in Eden. I believe Jesus suffered that death in his stead.

Law and grace work together. "By grace are we saved" but that does not free us from the law of obedience to the commands of Jesus - "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). "I lay down my life for my friends."

I hope, Inquirer, this goes some way to explain my lack of "spiritual" conversation.

With Love in Jesus. Russell

The following article sent by Paul Watson

Truth ?

A short time ago, whilst writing letters to the local newspaper, I came across a man and his family who claimed to totally believe in the biblical writings. In as much that he believed that the Earth was created in 4004 BC and was stationary in space with the Sun, Planets and Universe circulating around it every twenty-four hours. Naturally he took a lot of derision from the readers of his letters. I for one came to his rescue and supported most of his beliefs, but with the exception of his stationary Earth. As I have a son who works as an engineer with one of this world's largest satellite and robot surveyor manufacturers. It was easy for me to get the necessary documented information on the orbits of communication satellites and rocket probes which conflicted with the stationary Earth theory.

At this stage I discovered that this man had a Doctorate in Physics and was busy attempting to rewrite all I had learned whilst working as an Electro-mechanical Engineer. He claimed that the Space Program was a huge conspiracy and that, as Heaven was the dwelling place of the Almighty, no man or machine could leave the Earth. Going to great lengths to explain that the Universe was a fraction of the size claimed by Astronomers and that the space probes were a means of gaining money for military purposes. I even suggested to him that such a conspiracy could not possibly remain a secret with the amount of "leaked" information in the daily news. But to no avail; which made me rethink my own and others beliefs. As a Christadelphian, I had accepted what was called "The Truth" and the basic rules accepted by the community. Here there was an element of discord, with some members following a firm acceptance of the rules, whilst others tended to have a more enlightened approach which accepted the Earth's geological age and even a form of evolution. The Nazarene Fellowship, being an offshoot of the writings of John Thomas, followed a parallel teaching to the Christadelphians.

At this point I asked myself "What is the Truth?" My first answer was that Truth is like unto Beauty. For whilst Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so Truth is in the ear of the listener. Thus considering the political nature of Man, which of the Biblical writings have not been corrupted, so as to suit some person's particular religious belief? Can I shake off my own complacent approach to a Brother's beliefs? Can I start again at my beginnings *and never breathe a word about my loss?*

Some thirty or so years ago, whilst attending a Christadelphian assembly at Birmingham Town Hall, I joined a conversation about a particularly interesting lecture from a visiting speaker. Within the group of friends was an elderly lady who was heard to say "How can I even dare to assume that I will be able to enter our Lord's Kingdom for I cannot understand most of that which is being talked about?"

She then suddenly remembered, that in the interest of the moment she had forgotten her other friend; who being wheelchair bound, was expecting to be helped onto a bus. As she disappeared in the direction of the entrance doors, the wife of a friend standing beside me muttered "There goes a true Christian."

From this moment a better understanding of the passage in Mathew 18 became more apparent. *'Yeshua called a child to him, stood him among them, (disciples) and said, "Yes! I tell that unless you*

change and become like little children, you won't even enter the Kingdom of Heaven! So the greatest in the Kingdom is whosoever makes himself as humble as this child. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me; and whoever ensnares one of these little ones who trust me, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the open sea! Woe to the world because of snares! For there must be snares, but woe to the person who sets the snare!

I have raised this statement many times during my conversations with the more verbally endowed members of Christian communities, resulting in being accused of being childish. It has become only too obvious that the childlike acceptance of the scripture is an insult to the intellectually minded. Who would travel to a lecture given by one who was timid of the audience and had difficulty in expressing their opinions? Who would read a document containing simple words such as can be heard from any Sunday School teacher, whilst teaching his class of ten year olds?

My experiences with the various Christian groups, appear to show that the need to make a complicated interpretation of the in-depth meaning of many passages, most of which can have subtle changes due to differences in translation, has led to most of the splits and schisms that now plague today's churches. My own associates being an obvious example of the need to rewrite most of their literature. For they continually present, much like an advertisement, that which was written many years ago without modification. They will not allow the obvious changes which experience, science, history and geology have made; it would appear they appear to fear to be accusing their forebears to be the holders of mistaken beliefs. Above all these things there is an inbuilt block in our capacity to admit that a lifetimes understanding and subsequent beliefs are wrong, further more, to admit this to others would not only be unthinkable but might involve us in excommunication which might prove to be unbearable. Whilst our Lord gave us a commandment to love one another, I see very little love in the various exchanges between so called brethren. For this reason, having attempted reconciliation; I have placed a distance between myself and those I would have loved had they allowed it. Now I await the Lord's pleasure having no care for tomorrow, but finding it difficult to temper my words lest I judge - which is difficult to avoid when attempting to rationalise others thoughts and observations.

Brother Paul Watson.

Some Middle East News Items

Zechariah 12:1-3.

“The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”

Dividing Jerusalem. In April the Centre for Strategic Studies in Israel commissioned a poll about the negotiations over dividing Jerusalem. Fifty-nine percent of Israelis believe that Jerusalem's fate was currently being negotiated, despite the government's denials, while 71% of Israelis are unwilling to give up control of the Old City and the Temple Mount to Muslim authority, even supposing it would give Israel peace. Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert said “There is no important issue that we are not ready to discuss; no one can teach me or the Kadima ministers about the importance and the symbolism of Jerusalem for the people of Israel.” Yet there are those in the government who advocate the city be divided.

The Mind-set of Hamas - Self-harm strategy. On April 19 Hamas carried out the most ambitious attack since 2005 when Israel relinquished control of the Gaza strip. A lorry carrying 20 tons of explosive was driven towards the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza with the intention of causing mayhem and abducting Israeli soldiers. This was a well planned attack but foiled by Israeli soldiers quick response

who blew up the truck before it came close enough to do much damage. Following vehicles, which it is believed were for taking back captured Israelis, turned back.

While Hamas failed in their immediate objective of taking prisoners, they caused the crossing to be closed for several days for repair work to be carried out. Hamas had staged a series of attacks on Israeli frontier terminals in the previous weeks even though, or perhaps because, the crossings are used to deliver humanitarian aid and basic supplies to Gaza. Militant hard-liners view the crossings as symbols of Israel's economic blockade and attack the crossings to try to derail peace efforts

Another time Hamas militia fired on fuel trucks in the Gaza Strip headed toward the Nahal Oz border crossing into Israel. The fuel was supposed to go to the UN Relief and Works Agency [UNRWA] in the Gaza Strip. An agreement had been reached for UNRWA to receive 250,000 litres of fuel from Israel in order to supply hospitals and distribute food. On other occasions Hamas has confiscated fuel once it crosses into Gaza for their own use or for selling on the black market.

And again, IDF was forced to halt deliveries through the Karni crossing after vehicles came under Palestinian mortar fire while attempting to deliver food and fuel to Gazans.

This has caused a fuel crisis that has brought transportation in Gaza to a virtual standstill with inevitable hardship for all Gazans. However, Israel continues to pump supplies and millions of litres do get through to power stations in Gaza.

This strategy of self-harm is used by terrorist organisations who by their very nature are opposed to solutions that might remedy any injustice. Any reform or improvement threatens their very existence. So anything short of total destruction of their state is acceptable in their eyes.

Hamas will agree that a cease-fire is a good thing and will agree in principle to certain terms, but will then use the time of the cease-fire to regroup and re-arm and so strengthen themselves for the next stage of their campaign.

The real problem, however, is that Hamas's aim is not to reach a lasting resolution to the conflict, but precisely to worsen - to weaken the Israeli adversary and foster the illusion that the next set of concessions will be the last.

Reasonable people are in an impossible position when confronting regimes dedicated to the tragic philosophy of self-harm.

Egyptian Intelligence Minister, Omar Suleiman, is trying to broker peace between Hamas and Israel. Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, has to decide whether he will agree to a truce with the terrorists.

Egyptian officials are concerned that if quiet is not obtained in Gaza, Hamas would try to blow up the border wall in Rafah as it did on January 23.

Defence officials said Hamas was likely to accept the offer since a truce in Gaza would allow the group to rehabilitate its military wing and increase the weapons smuggling into the Strip.

Israel, however, was conditioning approval of the offer on an Egyptian commitment to increase efforts to curb the arms smuggling under the Philadelphi Corridor from Egypt into Gaza.

“We don't need words about a cease-fire, but actions on the ground,” the official said. “Israel harbours no illusions about Hamas or the nature of its leaders, and saw no indication of any change within the organization.” One senior government source said Israel was sceptical that anything had been worked out between Hamas and Egypt, and that there were sharp divisions within Hamas itself about whether a cease-fire was desirable.

The West Bank – Abbas and Olmert. April/May.

The Israeli Prime Minister is under investigation regarding possible corruption and misuse of funds. There are calls for his resignation and this is possible in the present climate though nothing has yet been proved against him.

The Opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu has said if he is elected prime minister, he won't carry out any peace deal with the Palestinians reached by current Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Netanyahu said that he would regard the election as a referendum on any such accord. If Olmert doesn't win, he said, "then you cannot cynically and manipulatively force upon the people a move they do not want."

The Palestinian President in the West Bank, Mahmoud Abbas, has said he prefers to see a framework agreement set up rather than a non-binding declaration of principles between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. "If we fail to reach such an agreement before the end of Bush's term in office, the situation in the region will deteriorate. When the people see there is no hope of agreement then they will turn to Hamas . . . If we don't reach an agreement, the Israelis and Americans will have to deal with Hamas in the future."

President Abbas has also demanded that the US intensify its pressure on Israel to halt construction in West Bank settlements and Jewish neighbourhoods in the eastern part of Jerusalem. Israel has done little to improve the living conditions of the Palestinians in the West Bank since the Annapolis peace conference five months ago. Abbas also warned against missing the "window of opportunities" for reaching an agreement. "If the year ends without agreement, we will face hard times," he said.

US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, held talks with both Israeli and Palestinian leaders, but it is generally feared that there can be no real progress in talks while the Israeli Prime Minister is under investigation.

Abbas told reporters that the Arab League peace initiative and US President George W. Bush's vision for peace in the Middle East formed the basis for solving all the final-status issues, ending the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital alongside Israel.

However, there is unlikely to be any progress in Israeli-Palestinian talks until the political uncertainty created by the latest investigation of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is cleared up even if the Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, takes over from Olmert if he had to temporarily step down.

Hizbullah and Lebanon

The prospect of civil war again in Lebanon has resulted in sudden changes which surely could not have been foreseen only a few weeks ago.

A few days previously the coalition government attempted to close down Hizbullah's private telecommunications systems believing them to be using it for reasons subversive to the national interests. They also sacked Beirut airport security chief who was allegedly allowing arms from Iran to flow through straight into the hands of Hizbullah. This resulted in Hizbullah militia entering Beirut in force, setting fire to a Press office, closing down the T.V. station, and taking up strategic positions through much of the city and threatening violence and firing at anything they saw as possible opposition. Cars were stopped and searched and tensions ran high. The Lebanese army withdrew out of sight and left Hizbullah in complete charge for six days.

Hizbullah demanded that the telecommunications remain intact and that the airport security chief be reinstated. Only then did the Hizbullah forces withdraw and allow the Lebanese army back onto the streets.

Hizbullah succeed in extracting concessions getting the Prime Minister, Saad Saniora, and his supporters to award them enough ministers in the Lebanese cabinet to grant Nasrallah, head of Hizbullah, veto power over any significant governmental decisions, also a favourable realignment of electoral districts in Beirut.

In return, the government received Hizbullah's consent to appoint Lebanese army chief Gen. Michel Suleiman as the new president - a concession Nasrallah can now easily swallow since it was Suleiman who gave the order to his troops to stand down when challenged by Hizbullah's fighters.

This also comes along with a undertaking by the militia that they will not again use their formidable arms on the domestic battleground, a consideration that can easily be overlooked by Hizbullah simply declaring any move by the government it finds displeasing to be a "provocation" in violation of the understandings that were reached.

Even back in March, long before the above events, Hizbullah gunmen chased away United Nations inspectors in South Lebanon. The UNIFIL inspectors had identified a truck carrying arms belonging to the guerrilla group. This was in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701; the resolution, which enforced the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbullah after the Second Lebanon War, calls on the terror group to disarm and also forbids its members from operating south of the river in the south-eastern part of Lebanon.

Hizbullah is currently expanding its fighting capability sending thousands of young men to training camps in Syria and Iran in preparation for war with Israel.

In effect, Hizbullah is now the only authority in Lebanon.

Israel's 60th anniversary. On the May 5 Israel paused to mourn its fallen soldiers as the nation marked Remembrance Day. Here are a few extracts from speeches:

Shimon Peres, President of Israel: "For sixty years we have been having what previous generations of Jews never had - a national home. These soldiers have wrought a miracle in human history. During six wars they fought, and Israel won. They helped make this country a peace-seeking, just state . . . We want to end wars and continue the Zionist movement's vision. We want to shake our neighbours' hands, but we know, when necessary, to pull the trigger."

Chief of Staff Lt Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi: "Before we enter our seventh decade, we can be proud of our freedom, our strength and equal opportunity for all. Our soldiers serve out of a vocation and a need to contribute." "We must continue teaching of the fallen soldiers' bravery, the heroes whose blood soaks the earth of Israel," he continued. "The IDF will not fear any obstacle and will continue to be the shield that defends Israel."

Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik: "There are nations that are richer than the state of Israel, there are nations that are quieter than the State of Israel, and there are nations that are bigger than the State of Israel, but there is no nation in the world like the State of Israel."

A conference marking the anniversary followed which was attended by US President George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Henry Kissinger, Mikhail Gorbachev, Rupert Murdoch and the founders of Google and Facebook.

GOD OUR HELP

All mankind's history is full of war, war and war again. What is often forgotten is that, in the end, it is not soldiers, not armaments, but God who decides the outcome of battles. He does not necessarily intervene in any spectacular manner - He rarely does - but from the human point of view little seemingly trivial things, such as a hail or a thunderstorm, or even the glare of the sun blazing into the soldiers eye and thus putting them into a disadvantage against their opponents, these apparently minor events often have decided the battle.

Let us consider a few instances where God, by His intervention, won decisive battles for His people, the children of Israel. There are two good examples found in the book of Joshua. Now the Israelites were just about to enter the holy land. They were to be a forerunner of the Kingdom of God and had they kept to the covenant made under Moses, the world's history might have been a very different one. So it will be readily understood how essential it was that these battles which, remember were God's battles, should be really decisively won, once and for all. They were forerunners of the yet future battles when the Lord Jesus Christ, with His saints, will conquer the kingdoms of this world.

The first example was the fall of Jericho when her walls just fell down flat. What conquest could have been simpler? It was probably an earthquake, but whatever it was it is not ours to ask how God brings about a thing. And this was soon followed by another even more decisive battle against a whole confederacy of opposing armies: the time when the sun and the moon stood still for a whole day. First the Lord cast great hailstones on the armies opposing Joshua. Then it was that that unique miracle happened to give Joshua time to do the mopping up operations before they could re-array themselves.

Another case of God using the forces of nature. These were the only recorded miracles where God actually intervened in the courses of the heavenly bodies. It is the cause of much speculation among scientists who do not recognise that the beginning of wisdom is to know God. Nobody knows how God does it; all we need to know is that He did it. However, astronomical records confirm that if we add the time of Joshua's 'long day' as it is now referred to, to the time delay at King Hezekiah's time when the sun dial of Ahaz went backwards, these two delays just about add up to a twenty-four hour day. A good example to show God's power and prerogative to intervene with the laws of nature to fulfil His supreme purpose.

We next come to what we read early on in the first book of Samuel. The Israelites had just suffered a major defeat when the ark was taken. This by itself was the result of their sinful living. The ark, however, was not to the Philistines benefit. They suffered all kinds of plagues and misfortunes and were only too glad to get rid of it. Then we read how Samuel gathered the children of Israel together at Mizpeh, and after sincere prayer and admission of their guilt by the Israelites, there was a battle where God decisively intervened by means of a great thunderstorm. From this time forward, not all at once, there were still setbacks, but Israel gradually gained the upper hand over the Philistines.

Finally, we move forward to the reign of Hezekiah. The king of Assyria had just taken captive the ten tribes of Israel - again the result of their own sins - and conquered some cities of Juda. Everybody expected Jerusalem to fall next. But man's thoughts are not God's thoughts. And did the children of Israel need to fight? No! They lost not one single man. God did it all for them; when they looked in the morning, they were all dead men.

Before we conclude let us consider an example of our own time. We all remember the disaster of Dunkirk when the British expeditionary force was trapped and a large part of it got out, though many did not make it. Now from the human point this was due in part to Hitler's folly. There were plenty of tanks ready to wipe out the entire British force, but Hitler, in his madness, insisted that the air-force should do it. However, because of prevailing cloud conditions, the air-force had to stay grounded while the tanks had to stand there inactive, not allowed to move. How many realise the hand of God in this, by means no more complicated but a cloudy sky?

And what about us? Do not the angels of the Lord encamp around all that fear Him? And this includes us. Not by spectacular miracle during this age before the return of the Lord, but nevertheless, we can be sure that in difficult situations, when we trust in the Lord, there are invincible powers helping us and keeping us from sinning, at the same time giving us the necessary wisdom to deal with the situation.

Let us close with the closing by Jude:-

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

Brother Leo Dreifuss.