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In This Issue:

| | | |
|---------|---|-------------------------|
| Page 1 | Editorial | Brother Russell Gregory |
| Page 3 | Father Forgive Them For They Know Not What They Do | Author unknown |
| Page 4 | Love -- Serve -- Tell | Poem |
| Page 4 | Heirs According To Promise | Brother Leo Dreifuss |
| Page 6 | "Instead of" | Compiled |
| Page 8 | Letter from | Sister E. Houlston |
| Page 10 | A Reason For The Hope That Is In Us | The Nazarene Fellowship |

Editorial

Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters, Greetings in Jesus' Name.

The article below is an Editorial taken from a magazine called "The ÆON" and was written 135 years ago. It is an example of how each generation has expected Jesus Christ to return in their own lifetime and lists all the worlds' troubles and woes. How could the world possibly continue much longer? How could things get worse? Here is what the Editor, Joseph Chamberlain, had to say of his day and age in his magazine for November, 1884...

The ÆON

FRIDAY, 28TH NOVEMBER, 1884.

"One of the world's teachers has said that events are the best calendars. When we are returning home by an "express" from a long journey it is easier to judge of the distance from our destination by observing the familiar landmarks as we rush past farm and field, wood and stream, than by a careful calculation of the speed with which the train is running, compared with the total mileage, and the time already elapsed. "We shall soon be at home now," we say, "for yonder is the old mill near which we were born." And so better than all carefully calculated chronology that depends on the number of suns that have risen and set is that calendar of events which marks most surely where we are in time's great day. It is quite Scriptural to view the subject in this way. Said Jesus, when referring to the signs of the times which should precede the desolation of Jerusalem, "now learn a parable of the fig tree: when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves; ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Accepting this method of ascertainment and looking round us, what do we see? Well, one thing we are sure of is that wherever the world is rushing to, it is going there at its utmost speed. If it is going to "heaven" it will soon get there; if it is going to destruction it can't take long at the present speed to find it out. It looks as though it is doing the last "lap" of the running.

Now we think (whether reasonably or not our readers must judge) that this is one of the signs of the end. It was Louis XIV who, remembering his own unparalleled extravagance and licentiousness, said, "After me the deluge!" He knew that he was hurrying fast along the last stage of the road to ruin. The reign of Terror was the necessary sequel. And it seems to us that

the "deluge" is not far off for the world. Society is rotten to a great extent. Of course, it must have some virtue left, or it could not, as Carlyle remarks of the French nation, "hold together." There is very little saline substance, however, in the diseased mass. Politics are verging on socialistic anarchy. Religion has descended to the mockery and masquerade of the "Salvation Army." Business is being carried on, on cut-throat and suicidal principles. Art is growing more depraved and lewd. Science is joining hands with a polite atheism, and literature panders to an increasing impatience and frivolity. Let us "learn a parable" of the vortex: when we behold its rings whirling so rapidly that the eye can hardly follow them, and drawing nearer and nearer to the central pool, then we know that the fatal suction is nigh. That this vortex is a fit symbol of the gyrations of modern society we think few will deny. Certainly changes were never so rapid as now.

It is so in everything the mind stays to consider. The entire machinery of life is adapted to the greatest speed. Everything is sacrificed to speed. To increase this seems impossible without breaking down the machinery. There are calculable limits to the tensiveness of the human brain. In our generation those limits have surely been reached. But what is this maximum of speed making for? The answer we are compelled to give is - class interests and personal ends. All the movements of mankind revolve round these central purposes, which purposes will prove the fatal whirlpool of the world. It is a social law as true as any rule in mathematics, that given a community where selfishness rules, the members of that community will at last exterminate each other. It is simply a question of time, and to us the time seems near where, at more points than one in the social fabric, the flames may be expected to burst out which would effect this mutual destruction. Labour and politics are the points where things are readiest for combustion. Theories of human right, as regards both liberty and wealth, which once were only crude thinkings in a few ill-starred and ignorant thinkers, are now finding a luminous exposition from philosophic minds. If things then were permitted to run on human lines much longer, here would be the point where the rising waters would burst the dam and make a general deluge.

We ourselves do not fear that such will actually happen, because we believe there are other things in God's programme for the earth and man which will forestall it. But we call attention to these things as significant signs, which he who runs may read, and which do not depend upon, though agreeing with, careful chronological calculations. When several lines of evidence bring us to the same conclusion, we are more perfectly satisfied than one order of proof could make us.

Brother Joseph Chamberlain.

Looking back like this no doubt makes us smile. If only they could see how knowledge has increased and inventions developed beyond anything they could have dreamed of. Yet there were indications in the Bible of many modern innovations.

In Daniel 12:4, we read of modern travel and increased knowledge - "even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." So today we see a vast increase in knowledge and understanding together with the ability to make all forms of even faster transport, whether it is by road, rail, sea or by air.

Is flying mentioned in the Scriptures? Read Isaiah 60:8 & 9, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" How better could they write about modern air transport 2,600 years ago - even before the time of the Medo-Persian empire; they could hardly have imagined such a concept?

Isaiah 60 goes on to tell us, "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee." All this referring to when Jesus Christ returns.

As for the thought of being able to destroy all of mankind such a thing would have been impossible before the Atomic bomb was invented, but Matthew 24:21 to 24, reads, “for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved:” “No flesh be saved”? Yes, there are already enough atomic bombs in the world today to wipe out all forms of life on this earth if they were to be detonated in a short space of time; so let’s read on – “but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” From this we see that God will intervene before the otherwise inevitable self-destruction of mankind.

How about television? Was that ever foretold? Revelation 1:7, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” How could anyone understand this prophecy in 1884, or indeed at any earlier time? I remember my father, on seeing his first television set saying, “This invention is to fulfil the Revelation prophecy - “every eye shall see him.” But how this was to develop into modern computers and cell phones my father never saw or envisaged, and today, there are many billions of such devices - with their ability to cover events in all parts of the world and project them within seconds, so when Jesus does come many billions of people will be able to see Him.

Increased knowledge has brought us so many things in recent years it is perhaps impossible to keep pace with developments in all walks of life, and none more so than in the sphere of warfare and this is yet to develop even further – Luke 21: 25 to 28, “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Jesus Christ’s next work will be to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth reigning from Jerusalem the Capital city of the whole world, and to rule it in righteousness and peace.

May we all be there to enjoy it. With love to all and blessings in Jesus Christ,

Brother Russell Gregory

**THEN SAID JESUS,
“FATHER FORGIVE THEM,
FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO”
Luke 23:34**

Because this saying of Jesus is omitted in some MSS., can we say, like some, that God did not forgive those murderers? We were talking to a brother on the great theme of God’s forgiveness and this saying was the subject, and the conclusion of the one in conversation. I said there was not a sin today that could not be forgiven if repented and confessed from the heart to God through Jesus. While there is some truth in this statement it is not all the truth -- discrimination must be used. If any repented they were forgiven, if they did not, then there was no forgiveness. Jesus said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven -- but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven.” John said, that there was “a sin not unto death,” and that “There is a sin unto death” (I John 5:16). Are these two quotes referring to the Holy Spirit in the days of the Apostles, and can this apply today? I think that the only sin today that is unto death is the continued rejection of Jesus. We are told, “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” (James 5:20). If it is true that Jesus never said it, there is no reason against the forgiveness of sins, as there are plenty of other scriptures which teach it, neither do all the MSS. omit it. While we know God will not forgive another for our asking, we know that He said, “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of My book” (Exodus 52:55), this was an answer to Moses who showed great mercy. We have to recognise that God knows the heart, and vengeance belongs to Him, not to us. Anyone knowing the history of the Jews and the continuance of God’s calling to repentance, cannot fail to see that in the worst cases His hand was outstretched still. Will anyone say under Law was better than being under Grace? But let none think we advocate the idea of so called “Confession” is the right and true repentance when one continues doing as before. If Moses and Paul and others can teach forgiveness, would we say Jesus lacked this great attribute? “Lord lay not this sin to their charge” is Stephen’s desire (Acts 7:60). Paul in like manner concerning Alexander (II Timothy 4:14-16). So it is quite reasonable from all angles that it is better to accept it from some of the MSS. and not reject it because some omit it.

Writer not known..

LOVE - SERVE - TELL **(Matthew 5.16) (Luke 22.26) (I Corinthians 15.15)**

Three people met to do God’s will, They sought to do it well.
They planned that each should do one thing, One, Love; One, Serve; One, Tell.
They all went forth and with great zeal; One loved. One served. One told.
They met again to check results, and see God’s plan unfold.
The one who loved, reported first, and found with great dismay:
“I could not love until I served; God has no other way.”
The one who served, then bared his heart, “I must confess ‘tis true
I could not serve until I loved; so I did both things too.”
The one whose aim was to proclaim, with wisdom did agree.
You cannot separate each one, for God combines all three.”
“I tried to tell, but no one heard, until God’s love showed through
And both of you proclaim with deeds. All three we each must do.”

selected from the Mount Zion Reporter.

Heirs According To Promise

As an introduction let us read two portions of scripture, 1st, Galatians 3:26-29,

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise;”

and 2nd, Galatians 4:21-31,

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the

mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

"For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ... and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." So we are to inherit something that God promised to Abraham. Our faith cannot be complete without some knowledge of what these promises are. This we are given details of in Genesis chapter 12. There we read how God commanded Abraham to get out of his country (Ur of the Chaldees). He says: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And a little later "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." (Genesis 15:15). So God promises him great blessings, to make a nation of him, and give him and his seed the land of Palestine (then called Canaan).

But these promises did not apply to that time. They are for the future, after the resurrection. During his lifetime Abraham sojourned as a pilgrim in the land of promise. He did not own even an inch of it. He even had to buy the ground to bury his wife in. Stephen tells us, "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." We are told in Heb. ch. 11, that supreme chapter on faith, at v. 15, "These all died in faith not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Among the Jews, Christian Jews as well as the others, to whom the epistle to the Hebrews and Stephen's speech were addressed, it was well understood that these promises had to do with the life after the resurrection. The resurrection was, and is to this day, the promised hope. This hope formed the central part of the Jewish and Christian religion of that time, and so it should be for us. The promises God made to Abraham are: - Resurrection from the dead, followed by an eternal possession in the Holy Land for him and his heirs, and that includes us, if we are in Christ. It was preached by Christ Himself. On one occasion, when somebody of the sect of the Sadducees (who deny the resurrection), asked Him a mocking question about it, Christ said this: - (Luke 20:57), "Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." When He said this He looked forward to the resurrection.

So much we learn from Paul's epistle to Romans (ch. 4 v 17), "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Again we read that Abraham had two sons: Ishmael of Hagar - the bondwoman, - and Isaac by Sarah - the free woman. We are told that these two sons symbolise two covenants. The first, of Mount Sinai, was restricted to the natural children of Abraham. The second was made by the blood of Christ on Calvary, who through His mother Mary is included among Abraham's seed and is thus in the line of Isaac, the son of the free woman. This division between the two covenants does not end here. It is noticeable throughout scripture. There, people are always divided into two classes: - people who kept God's commandments, and those who did not. Those who remain faithful will have their inheritance among the children of Isaac, the son of the free woman. The rest have nothing above what rewards this present life has to offer. The distinction between these two classes is with us today. There are the people of the world, out of Christ, symbolised by the son of the bondwoman, and there are the true followers of Christ, symbolised by the son of the free, and every single one of us belongs to the one or the other. Either we are in Christ, or out of Christ: There is no in-between. If we are out of Christ,

then death is the end of us. We are then without God in the world, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” We may rise to a high position in this world, but it will be of no avail in the eternal silence of the grave. But if we are in Christ, death is nothing more than a long sleep. In this case we shall rise gloriously and inherit, not the sort of position and honour that the world can give us, but what God will give us: eternal life and a possession of our own in the Holy Land.

Let us just give some thought to that supreme test when Abraham was commanded to offer up Isaac and to the readiness with which he obeyed. How many of us under similar circumstances would have tried to find some excuse to wriggle out of it? This act was symbolic of the sacrifice of Christ. But in Isaac’s case God intervened at the very last moment and provided a ram caught by his horns among some bushes. So God fulfilled what Abraham told his son only shortly before: “God will provide himself a lamb.” This was no doubt not merely for that moment, but prophetic of Jesus, the Lamb of God. But in Jesus’ case God did not intervene at the last moment. Christ went through with it to the very end, and that entirely for us, for whomsoever will accept him and devote his life to him. Let us all endeavour to live worthy of this act of love. Let us make sure we remain in Christ, children of the free woman, children of the second covenant. This is something in which we must take the first step, and afterwards we must abide in Him. Mere lip service to God is not enough. (Mark 16:16), Let us obey this call and ensure our position in the covenant of promise by remaining faithful and not drawing back.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

“Instead of”

From all the evidence provided for us in the Old Testament it is obvious that in the sacrifices for sin the animal slain died in the place of, or instead of, the sinner. Regarding this Dr Edersheim, a Jew who converted to Christianity wrote,

“As the Old Testament and Jewish tradition taught that the object of a sacrifice was its substitution for the offender, so Scripture and the Jewish fathers also teach that the substitute to whom all these types pointed was none other than the Messiah.

It has been well remarked, that the difficulties of modern interpreters of the Messianic prophecies arise chiefly from their not perceiving the unity of the Old Testament in its progressive unfolding of the plan of salvation. Moses must not be read independently of the Psalms, nor yet the Psalms independently of the Prophets. Theirs are not so many unconnected writings of different people and in different ages, only held together by the boards of one volume; they form integral parts of one whole, the object of which is to point to the goal of all revelation in the appearing of the Christ. Accordingly, we recognise in the prophetic word, not a change nor a difference, but three well-marked progressive stages, leading up to the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah. In the Proto-Evangel, as Genesis 3:15 has been called, and in what follows it, we have as yet only the grand general outlines of the figure. Thus we see a Person in the Seed of the woman; suffering, in the prediction that His heel would be bruised; and victory, in that He would bruise the serpent’s head. These merely general outlines are wonderfully filled up in the Book of Psalms. The “Person” is now “the Son of David;” while alike the sufferings and the victory are sketched in vivid detail in such Psalms as 22, 35, 69, and 102; or else in Psalms 2, 72, 89, 105, and 118 - not to speak of other almost innumerable allusions.

One element only was still wanting - that this Son of David, this Sufferer and Conqueror, should be shown to be our Substitute, to whom also the sacrificial types had pointed. This is added in the writings of the prophets, especially in those of Isaiah, culminating, as it were, in Isaiah 53, around which the details furnished by the other prophets naturally group themselves. The picture is now completed, and so true to the original that, when compared with the reality in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can have no difficulty in recognising it; and this not so much from one or

other outline in prophecy or type, as from their combination and progressive development throughout the Scriptures of the Old Testament, considered as a connected whole. Christ Our Substitute.”

Yet in spite of this Old Testament teaching it is claimed by some that it would be unjust for God to punish Jesus instead of sinners, and besides this, how can the death of one person be a substitute for many thousands of people? So it has been taught since the early days of the Christadelphians that Jesus died by crucifixion as a man of sinful flesh in order to show what sinful flesh deserved - that sinful flesh was so abhorrent to God that it deserved to be cruelly destroyed.

There is a grammatical point some refer to in the Greek words “*huper*” which means “on behalf of” and “*anti*” which means “instead of” and we now look at these. For this I quote from the booklet “Thinking it Over” by Brother Ernest Brady as he expresses it so well;

“Jesus said that He was “to give His life a ransom for many” and we want to know what He intended us to understand by “ransom for many.” Did He mean to say that He was dying as one who “stands for all” - as a representative - who shares men's nature and who must ultimately die on men's behalf? Or did He mean something quite different? We get our Young's Concordance and we write down every example of the use of the word “*anti*” – “for”:-

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| Matthew 5:38 | “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” |
| Matthew 17:27 | “take, and give unto them for me and thee.” |
| Matthew 20:28 | “and to give his life a ransom for many” |
| Mark 10:45 | “and to give his life a ransom for many” |
| Luke 11:11 | “will he for a fish give him a serpent?” |
| John 1:16 | “have all we received, and grace for grace.” |
| Romans 12:17 | “Recompense to no man evil for evil.” |
| 1 Corinthians 11:15 | “her hair is given her for a covering.” |
| 1 Thessalonians 5:15 | “See that none render evil for evil.” |
| Hebrews 12:2 | “Who for the joy that was set before him” |
| Hebrews 12:16 | “Who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.” |
| James 4:15 | “For that ye ought to say “If the Lord will.” |
| 1 Peter 3:9 | “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing.” |

It will be seen that in every instance this word “*anti*” translated “for” means to put one thing in place of another - it is not by any means the same as “for” used as a simple preposition in a sentence like “Member of Parliament for Liverpool,” which is generally (but not always) the meaning of “*huper*.” ...in its context “*huper*” also can mean “in place of” as well as “on behalf of.” But when we find that Jesus used the special “*anti*” instead of the common “*huper*” in His statement “His life a ransom for many” it was without doubt because His life is set against the many as an equivalent, like one eye for another, like a fish instead of a serpent, like hair for a covering or one morsel of meat instead of a birthright, and so on.

If this were not conclusive enough there is one even more telling text. The same word “*anti*” also occurs in Matthew 2:22; “But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither.” The four words “in the room of” are a correct translation of the single word “*anti*.” If the scholars who made the A.V. had been as casual as those who made the N.E.B. they could have rendered it “Archelaus reigned in Judea for his father Herod” but they knew this would not be a correct translation because he reigned in the place of or instead of Herod - therefore they translated “*anti*” by giving its radical meaning “in the room of.” We think therefore that when Jesus used this word “*anti*” in His own explanation of the reason for His death - to give His life a ransom for many, it was because He knew that in the Divine plan of salvation it was necessary for someone to pay the debt incurred by Sin, otherwise humanity would have perished.”

Compiled

Letter from Sister Houlston: -

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Sincere Greetings in the Name of Jesus the Christ:

In penning this letter, I wish firstly to say how greatly I appreciated the testimony set forth in the pages of Brother Edward Turney's book "The Two Sons Of God." Whilst studying the same I was deeply impressed by its loving persuasion, by the note of supreme confidence in the truths which he expressed, and also by its kindly restraint from any personal judgment or condemnation of others, whilst so gravely refuting that God dishonouring dogma concerning the nature of our Lord's flesh still so widely preached and published by the Christadelphians. There could be no more perfect a solution of our Heavenly Fathers wisdom in the way He provided for the birth of His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, than that given to us on page 26 of Brother Turney's book. Truly a most glorious solution.

Though our Brother's work is a gold mine of the Truth as revealed in the Scriptures, I think he was slightly mistaken when dealing with that section of 'The Two Goats' on page 19, where he wrote:

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'Although the goat bore the sins of the whole nation on his head, he was allowed to escape alive. Death followed at once on the first goat which fore-shadowed the death of the Great Sin Bearer; He also, like the scape-goat, took away the sins of the people into a land of separation,' That is, the grave, which effectually separates the living from the dead'. But this is not strictly true. The body of our Lord was borne to the grave by the hand of a fit man - even Joseph of, Arimathea, to sleep for a while the sleep of death in which there is no remembrance of anything whatsoever. Now, as both goats had to be without spot or blemish, and as both "were presented before the Lord," it is certain that both goats represented Christ: the Lord's lot in His death and the Scapegoat in His resurrection. It is here worthy of note that after the death of the first goat, the live goat was again presented before the Lord. Then, when the sins and iniquities of the people, for which the first goat had been slain, were transferred to the head of the scapegoat it was the Living Goat which bore them away into the "wilderness of forgetfulness;" into a land uninhabited by "any remembrance" of the same, and there is no mention of the death of the scapegoat.

Hence, the gracious and glorious parallel.

If, after having been buried with Christ in Baptism, we continue to walk in newness of life, then our past sins will be forgotten and will not be had in remembrance against us by that One Who was made the Scapegoat for our offences, but who still lives to make intercession to God for us. Because, though we may not sin wilfully, the frailty of Human Nature still leaves us subject to faults and failings. For, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8 and 9). Paul reminds us that the carcasses of the animals slain were conveyed outside the camp and utterly burnt. True; but this was not all. The consumption of the Lord's lot by fire was to show that the sacrifice was complete; that God's own dear Lamb would only be slain (or smitten) ONCE, after which there would be no more sacrifice for sin. This is where Moses failed when leading the Israelites through the wilderness. When the people had pitched in Rephidim there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, what shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go, behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may Drink." (Exodus 17:1-6).

Here was typified the Shadow of the Cross, that our Saviour would be smitten for the sins of the people and not for Himself. Now the Apostle reminds us saying: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the

sea... and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ.” (I Cor. 1:4). But when the people thirsted and complained again, “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth the water... and Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must WE fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice; and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believed me not, to sanctify (glorify) me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” (Numbers 20:1 - 12).

Moses truly spake unadvisedly with his lips when he attributed to him-self that power which belonged to God only, a presumption God would not overlook, for, “I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another.” (Isaiah 42:8). Thus when Moses afterwards pleaded with God and said, “I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond, Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me. Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of that matter; get thee up into the top of Pisgah... and behold it with thine eyes; for thou shall not go over this Jordan.”

As all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, this should remind us of Paul’s warning: “Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:8). This should also deter us from proclaiming our own judgment or condemnation of others in any unseemly way which might be displeasing to our Heavenly Father, whose name is Love. Lest, like Moses, we forfeit the honour of bringing those whom we may denounce as rebels into the Promised Land.

There was also a “shadow of things to come” in the smiting of the Rock a second time by Moses. There would be those who, having already partaken of the water of life, would deny that Christ, our Passover, was smitten for US; that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and by this denial would crucify their Lord afresh. But please understand I am in no way inferring that so faithful a servant of God, as Moses undoubtedly was, will not be there when the second Joshua, Christ, will have gathered and settled Israel the second time in their own Land. Further, the blood of the sacrificed animals was not carried outside the camp, for we read, “Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat; and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness... and he shall go out unto the altar that is before the Lord, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.” (Read Leviticus 16) Neither was the blood of Christ borne with His body to the grave, but was poured out on the Cross, the altar of His sacrifice, as the price of our redemption, by and through which we are cleansed while still sojourning in this, our earthly tabernacles. As Peter reminds us, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (I Peter 1:18 and 19). Yes, without blemish and without spot, since none other could have been either a fitting or an acceptable sin-offering. May we not see SEVEN drops of blood in our dear Lord’s atoning sacrifice? from His agonising sweat, from the cruel crown of thorns, from the nail-prints in both His hands and in His feet, and from His sword-pierced side. Surely, yes. Hath He marks to lead me to Him, if He be my Guide? In His feet and hands are wound-prints, and His side. Is there a diadem of splendour that His brow adorns? Yea, a Crown, in very surety, but of thorns”.

The foregoing thoughts are I believe a few of the hidden truths to be seen in the ceremony of the Two Goats, which was only enacted on the Great Day of Atonement. There may be others since much

of God's truth is sometimes hidden beneath the surface, where, "Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill He treasures up His great designs and works His sovereign will." But first the natural, afterwards that which is spiritual; the diviners rod may detect the presence of water beneath the surface, but he has to bore and sometimes dig to a considerable depth before he finds that clear spring which will provide him with the natural water of life. The same applies to our Heavenly Father's purpose in His plan of Salvation and Redemption in Christ.

Thus, if through earnest prayer and patience, we seek with the mind of the spirit, we shall be enabled to understand the meaning of His marvellous designs, and gather those priceless treasures of His will, which otherwise would have remained for ever hidden beneath the surface. I have not expressed my thoughts without some fear that their meaning may be misunderstood. I lay no claim to their being perfect, the brethren and sisters can judge for themselves. I love to paint my pictures as I see them with the eye of Faith, whilst ploughing a lonely furrow through this wilderness of isolation towards the Promised Land. May it please our Heavenly Father to grant us, one and all, not only a distant view of its goodly landscape, but also an abundant entrance through its gate into the Beautiful City.

With love and joy in the Service of the Master. Sister E. Houlston

Psalm 43

Prayer to God in Time of Trouble

Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from those who are deceitful and unjust deliver me! For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you cast me off? Why must I walk about mournfully because of the oppression of the enemy?

O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

‘A Reason For The Hope That Is In Us’

1 Peter 3:15

Foreword

Our Lord used the most precise language to describe His mission to save all who would do His Father's will; He said "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Clear, straight-forward, unambiguous. Again, He told His disciples "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down His life for His friends," and "I give my life for the sheep."

Such plain words of our Lord provide a rock-solid foundation encouraging our trust and belief in Him as our Saviour, and on such simple words and phrases as these we are able to approach the Scriptures with the certainty that we are able to understand sound Bible teaching devoid of all the complication of theology. William Tyndale is quoted as saying (around 1532 AD), "*I defie the Pope*

and all his lawes. If God spare my life, ere many yeares I wyl cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture, than he doust.” His life was not spared but it was not to be too many years before the Bible was translated into English for all who could, even ploughboys – to read and understand. Never believe anyone who tells you that a long education in Bible study is necessary. Prayer and humility is more rewarding. Luke 11:9 & 10, Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

We pray that readers will find this a firm foundation on which to build and see in it the unbounded love of God, and of Jesus Christ who said “I and my Father are one” – one in love, purpose and commitment to the saving of whosoever will seek righteousness and perfection evermore.

Adam and Eve

QUESTION 1). Our first question is: - 'Did Adam and Eve need the Tree of Life to keep them alive while in the Garden of Eden?'

ANSWER: To this we must say, No, they had the food from the Garden to keep them alive. Genesis 1:29-30, "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so." Adam and all the beasts of the earth were given this food to sustain their natural life.'

The Tree of Life

QUESTION 2). Our second question is: - What was the purpose of the Tree of Life?

ANSWER: Our answer to this is that we feel sure the Tree of Life was a real tree and Adam and Eve had free access to it whilst in the Garden of Eden. Once Adam and Eve transgressed God's commandment they had to leave the Garden and no longer had access to the Tree of Life but they continued to live their natural lives remaining dependent upon the "every green herb for meat".

Apart from Genesis there are seven other references to the Tree of Life in the Bible – Proverbs 3:18, 11:30, 13:12, 15:4, Revelation 2:7, 22:14, and 22:17. Each of them refer, in some symbolic way, to more than our natural life – wisdom more precious than wealth, fruit of righteousness, hope realised, a wholesome tongue, a gift from Jesus, for healing of nations, right to eat of tree of life – such matters suggest an opportunity of eternal life for they appertain to spirit life.

In this present Christian dispensation we see Jesus as our Tree of Life because of all the things we read about Him in the New Testament. Here are a few verses from John's gospel:- John 1:4, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." 4:14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. 5:24, "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. 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; 5:40, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. 6:27-63: 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." 32, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life

unto the world. 34. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life... 40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day... 47. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life... 50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world... 54. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

This is ample evidence to show we have eternal life through Jesus and this is why we believe Jesus is our Tree of Life. We see the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden as symbolic of the offer of eternal life through obedience, that is, through the perfect obedience of Jesus who died for us and in whom we have our faith. We have the same choice as Adam and Eve, and we fail as they did; we have temptation to disobey. In fact, the whole purpose of law is to give us opportunity to obey our Creator. It is His Law we obey or disobey and there is no commandment that it is impossible for us to keep. Jesus said, 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect', and we know Jesus was perfect and He is our pattern. So when we offend, as we do from time to time, we have, by the loving mercy of God, Jesus to appeal to for forgiveness, and so live by God's grace. God's Law is good and by obedience we show we love Him.

The First Transgression and The Wages of Sin

QUESTION 3: Did Adam by his transgression, bring natural death into the world?

ANSWER: No. Adam was like other animals in respect to his physical needs requiring food for sustenance and in the natural course would die at some time as do all animals.

Natural life in all its forms was and is transient. Birth, growth to maturity, reproduction and death is God's arrangement for all living things since He brought each of them into being. Neither the natural death of Adam nor the natural or common death of any of his descendants was or is the penalty for sin.

Adam was created a corruptible creature and was to remain so all his natural lifetime. This is the position we, as descendants of Adam, are in and the hope of the Gospel is to receive a change to Spirit nature like the angels as we read in Matthew 22:30, "For in the resurrection they... are as the angels of God in heaven.

However, we read in Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" - but this does not apply to our natural death; it applies to the law of sin and death. This death is the wages due to the sinner unless he or she is forgiven.

In many parts of the world today the death sentence is enforced for serious breach of law and such was the case too under the Law of Moses as we read in Deuteronomy 24:16. "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin."

This statement of fact of being put to death for one's own sin is straightforward to grasp and alone it should be sufficient proof to show that the common or natural death is not the wages of sin. A 'putting to death' suggests a violent form of death.

Jesus was the exception to the teaching that “every man shall be put to death for his own sin”; He was put to a violent death though in His case it was totally undeserved and it was not for Himself. We are told that it was for us - to take away the sin of the world! (John 1:29). This “sin of the world” is Adam’s sin by which we are all in bondage as his descendants, which forfeited life was passed on to us.

Pass From Death To Life

QUESTION 4: Jesus said that the faithful have “passed from Death unto life.” What death has the faithful person passed from as he can still expect to die the common death of all men?

ANSWER: The death that the faithful person is saved from is not natural, or the common death which we die at the end of our lives; if it was then Jesus’ sacrifice has failed, for we all still die. No there is a second death for those who have died in their sins; those who are enlightened but choose to turn away from God’s offer of redemption.

This is not natural death but a judicial death – this is the death that Jesus’ sacrifice saves us from, when we turn to Him in faith.

Change Of Nature

QUESTION 5: Could Adam have lived for ever without a change of nature?

ANSWER: No. The body with which Adam was created was not designed to continue for ever. The Apostle Paul is very clear on this as shown in 1 Corinthians 15:42-54 where we read the body “is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 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.

It is evident from this that there will be a change of nature in due time for the faithful.

What Change Took Place

QUESTION 6: Was Adam’s nature changed from the “very good” condition after he transgressed?

ANSWER: There is no evidence of this. The Scripture tell us of no change in Adam’s nature. There was however a change in Adam’s relationship to his Creator. Whereas he was created a Son of God and remained so while obedient to Him, by transgression he sold himself to be a servant or slave of sin – “his servant ye are to whom ye obey (Romans 6:1). All Adam’s descendants, are born into this bondage to sin; not made sinners nor made sinful, neither are they held guilty of Adam’s sin, but they are legally held in bondage to sin for the purpose of salvation that by one sacrifice many are saved as we read in Romans 5:18, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

It isn’t true to say God’s creation became less than very good at any time. Neither did man necessarily become more sinful. We have been given free-will to do right or wrong. Whether one

wishes to serve God or not is a matter of our own choice - just as it was for Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve did not have to sin and neither do we.

However, yes, we see many evil people bringing up their children to be evil too and this wrong behaviour is due to selfishness and self-righteousness and ignorance. Paul tells us in Romans 1:28 of those who do not like to retain God in their knowledge.

What Death Did Adam Die

QUESTION 7: We read in Genesis 2:17 that "...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Was this impending death fulfilled?

ANSWER: No. When two words are repeated in the Hebrew language as we find here where we have 'death' and 'die', i.e. "*Muth TeMuth*" translated "surely die", it is used to show the certainty of the matter and so it was translated "surely die" to emphasize the certainty of death. But there is no record of Adam and Eve dying that day. This has caused much speculation and argument and because Adam and Eve did not die the very day they transgressed many people believe it means they started dying that day and that they would die within a 'day' of a thousand years. But was this the sentence? We believe it was not the sentence.

Our first two questions related to this and here we can take the matter further and say that the animal(s) sacrificed to provide Adam and Eve with coverings were slain in their stead.

This means that their punishment was commuted by God by way of atonement. This is a perfect example of what was to come later, as seen in part in the Law of Moses, and ultimately completed with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. So the death that eventually came to Adam and Eve was not the punishment for the sin they committed but the end of their natural lives.

Forgiveness Through The Shedding Of Blood

QUESTION 8: In Genesis 3:21, we read "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." This required the slaying of at least one animal and maybe two. Adam and Eve had transgressed God's commandment and as God says (later in the Bible) there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22) it is evident that Adam and Eve were not therefore punished with death and the skins were in effect the covering over of their sin.

What is the connection between the animals sacrificed in Eden and the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God?

ANSWER: We see the animal which was sacrificed in Eden as a type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are told that the blood of bulls and of goats which were sacrificed under the Law of Moses cannot take away sin (Hebrews 10:3). It is evident that sins were 'covered over' by the sacrifice of animals but not taken away until Jesus came so John the Baptist hails Jesus as, "Behold! The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). This was effectively fulfilled when Jesus gave His life in sacrifice on the cross.

It may be said that we are not told that Adam and Eve repented of their transgression, which is true enough, and nothing had been said beforehand that God would accept repentance. This was an entirely new experience for Adam and Eve of course, and they were afraid of God and tried to hide from Him amongst the trees of the Garden. They were certainly not rebellious once they had transgressed, but were downcast, dreading what God was going to do next.

We have been given a very brief outline of events in this account in Genesis and it is easy to speculate one way or another but if we look at later events recorded in Scripture we see that, while God is long-suffering He does not forgive those who persist in rebelling against Him, though He is pleased to forgive and in fact wants to forgive all who will seek Him with all their heart. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for us that we might be forgiven.

Next, one may ask how can anything take away something that you have done wrong? Some wrong thing that has been done cannot be undone, of course, but Jesus took away the consequence of our transgressions so that we can stand before God as though we had done nothing wrong. This is forgiveness without limit; neither does it require any further shedding of blood. Jesus forgives us if we come to Him in faith seeking forgiveness. No sinner will be turned away if their heart is right.

Atonement

QUESTION 9: How does Jesus' sacrifice save the sinner from the consequence of his sins?

ANSWER: A sinner owes that which he cannot pay without perishing; he owes his life. The basis of the Atonement is that if someone else could be found with the means to pay the debt, and providing the supreme authority sanctions the transaction, the sinner is freed from his debt while at the same time the justness of the law is upheld. God, in His ultimate love for His creation, brought Jesus into the world for this very purpose.

When Jesus, in His supreme love for us, submitted Himself to the death of the Cross, He made Himself the sin-bearer, translating into reality the deliverance from the death foreshadowed in Eden when Adam was covered by skin of the slain animal. Jesus' death was therefore an exact substitutionary sacrifice. We have been purchased out of bondage, the bondage of sin, by the payment of a price, the sinless life of Jesus which He laid down for us on the Cross.

Baptism

QUESTION 10: In Acts 19:3-5 we read, "And he said to them, unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, unto John's baptism. Then Paul said, John verily baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." What is the difference between the two baptisms?

ANSWER: In Romans 6:3, we read, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" John the Baptist could not have baptised anyone into the death of Jesus as He had not at that time given His life in sacrifice. But John had said, "I indeed baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:8). Jesus confirmed this when He said to Nicodemus (John 3:5), "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The Apostle Paul tells us that "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). (That is, all those in Christ shall be made alive, not all people), and from this we see we can be either "in Adam" or we can be "in Christ".

By our natural birth to our parents we are born as descendants of Adam and therefore we are "in Adam." We can, by a new birth, be "in Christ" by baptism into Him. We would compare this to a person who having been born in one country wishes to become a citizen of another, for example, having been born in England I am naturally a citizen of this country, but if I were to choose to be a citizen of the U.S.A. for instance I could apply to that country for citizenship and live there instead of

in England. Baptism then, is our means of leaving behind our relationship to Adam and from this time on be related to Jesus Christ.

For our salvation then, baptism is necessary. It is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21) and by it we receive the promise by faith of Jesus Christ... given to them who believe” (Galatians 3:22); and by it we come into a new covenant relationship with God through Jesus’ death as we read in Luke 22:20, at the Last Supper, Jesus “took the cup... saying, This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood, which is shed for you.”

By baptism into Jesus we come into grace and favour with God and become His children and as we are now “in Christ” we are free from any future adverse judgment as we read in Romans 8:1, 2, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Once a person is baptised it can be said “ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised Christ from the dead will also quicken your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwelleth in you.” (Romans 8:9-11).

No one can be in Adam and in Christ at the same time. We have to accept we have been bought from our old master, ‘Sin’, redeemed by Christ, and “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24).

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Romans 8:15-17).

Judgment

QUESTION 11: Let us next turn to the subject of Judgment. It is the expectation of Christians that there will be a day of judgment for all people at some future time and many Bible references are quoted for this yet there is much argument as to when the Day of Judgement will be, who will be brought before the Judgement Seat of Christ, where it will take place and what will be the result for various groups of people.

We of course acknowledge the many judgments of God throughout past ages and that there are judgments yet to come, but we are told that the wages of sin is death and we ask what death this refers to for in Hebrews 9:27, we read, “And as it is appointed for men once to die, but after this the judgment.” It is obvious from this that the common death which comes to us all at the end of our lives is not the judgement for our sins - but that there is a final judgment which follows later. Also it was mentioned in the answer to Question 10 on Baptism that there is to be no future adverse judgment for the faithful. How can we be so sure?

ANSWER: Because sin leads to so much harm, God, who is Love, will not let a sinner live for ever. Nevertheless a sinner, however bad, who repents of his deeds and turns to God and appeals to His mercy and loving kindness with his whole heart is forgiven and offered the free gift of eternal life in the appointed way through baptism into the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

We see three groups of people and first will briefly mention those who never come to a knowledge of the Gospel; these are unaware of God’s ways and remain unenlightened and are

therefore not counted as being under His laws and so they do not receive any penalty or punishment under the law but are as the beasts that perish. As Paul wrote in Roman 4:15, “where no law is, there is no transgression”. There is no future resurrection or judgment recorded in the scriptures for these people.

Then there are those who come to a knowledge of God and His ways and learn the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. Having this enlightenment it is incumbent upon them to seek for increased knowledge and understanding to ensure their salvation is secure. They know they are under law and ought to seek to obey God but if they do not and remain unrepentant sinners they become subject to adverse judgment in due time. Let us take a few thoughts from Romans 2:8, 9 & 16, “but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness - indignation and wrath... tribulation and anguish... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ;” Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness... we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.”

It is seen from this that the apostle Paul is saying that God has a very real and deep anger against sinners (which is all of us), which will only be turned away by individual faith in the Atonement made by Christ. Those who refuse their opportunity to obtain salvation offered in love by God will reap the reward of their deeds. So if we received the call of the gospel and fail to obey it but continue to sin presumptuously and are unrepentant, or have wilfully withstood the grace of God, then the sleep of death will be ended by an awakening to shame and contempt - the resurrection to judgment, - to suffer the condemnation of the second death which is truly the wages or penalty of sin. This is the death to be feared, for in effect, such a person has “crucified the Lord afresh” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

The third group is the faithful. If during their life they heard the call of the gospel and responded, and have accepted the principles and provisions made for their deliverance then their sleep of death will be concluded by an awakening to the eternal life conferred upon them during their probation and will receive the gift of life for evermore. For such as these the plain statements of Jesus are present realities; “He that believeth is passed from death unto life” and “He that believeth shall never see death.” The death which the believer shall never see is that death which come after judgment which is the wages of sin and which results in eternal annihilation. The sleep of death at the end of a faithful life counts only as a rest from one’s labours.

The truth is then, that so far from having to go on trial for his life at the judgment, those who belong to Christ are assured now of a glorious waking; the blessedness of his position is that there is no uncertainty; his name has been inscribed in the book of life even now and the object of his life is to so walk that it is not blotted out. That is why Revelation 20:6 says, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Jesus does not say that in the judgment he that believeth shall not be condemned; He says he that believeth shall not even come into judgment. (Romans 8:1). Why? Because at that day those who belong to Christ have been judged already; judgment takes place day by day during our lifetime. Paul says: “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged (day by day), we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:31,32).

Anyone whose soul is burdened can seek peace with God through Jesus Christ. Any who realizes his or her position and says “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned...” need have no doubt about his reception, “But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him... for this my son (or daughter) was dead and is alive again; he (she) was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.” (Luke 15:18 and 22).

The ‘Virgin Birth’

QUESTION 12: Is the Virgin Birth important? Surely any man who lived a good life could have done what Jesus did. So why was Jesus not the son of Joseph?

ANSWER: Yes, the Virgin Birth was very important indeed. We know that Jesus was the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary and we must never overlook the significance of this matter. It is a known and accepted biological fact that life is passed from father to child and having God as His Father means that Jesus' life was not passed down from Adam but direct from God. Mary was a descendant of Adam and this ensured that Jesus was "made like unto His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17) but the "life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11) and as the foetus makes its own blood which never mingles with the mother's blood, there was no possibility of the life in Mary's blood being passed down to Jesus. So we can say with assurance that Jesus' life did not come from Mary.

Let us compare and contrast these two Sons of God, Adam and Jesus, from scripture:

Adam received his life from God at his creation.
Jesus received His life from God by begetting.

Adam transgressed God's commandment and served Sin as a master.
Jesus always did His Father's will and never served Sin.

Adam, by sinning came into bondage to Sin.
Jesus was never in bondage to sin.

Adam, through transgression, was alienated from God.
Jesus was never alienated from His Father.

Adam's descendants are all concluded under sin.
Jesus was not concluded under sin.

We see then that Adam once had the same standing as Jesus inasmuch as he too, was a Son of God, but he lost that position through transgression of God's law. He forfeited his life and became a servant of Sin – as Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24) and as Paul explains, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). 'Sin' is personified as a 'master' or a 'King' reigning over his servants - and servants receive wages; "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23).

The First Sin.

The one sin of Adam meant that his life was forfeit, or under sentence of death, and he should have died in the day he transgressed God's commandment. But God in His mercy, provisionally covered over that first sin when the animal was sacrificed in Eden allowing Adam to continue his life under new circumstances outside of the Garden of Eden. It is surely obvious that had Adam died in the day of his transgression we would never have lived. But Adam lived on and the life he passed down to his descendants was a life under sentence of death, or as Paul expresses it, "concluded under sin" (Galatians 3:22). Our life then, is as Adam's life - under forfeit to Sin as a master.

We see from this that Jesus, because of the virgin birth, had an unforfeited life, a life not passed down from Adam; a life not in bondage to Sin, not concluded under sin, in fact, a free life.

Freedom From Sin

This freedom Jesus has promised to the faithful. John 8:34-36, "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in

the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Free, as sons of God by adoption, and no longer servants of sin. This is the work of God in Jesus Christ – to give this freedom to His disciples that they may abide with Jesus for ever. Freedom from condemnation as Paul tells us in Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”

So the one sin of Adam brought all his descendants into subjection, concluded under sin - not as a punishment for something we did; not as a curse for something Adam did, but for the purpose of a blessing in God’s plan of redemption and salvation in Jesus Christ, “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” (Galatians 3:22).

The purpose then, of the Virgin Birth was to produce a man who was personally free and uncondemned and therefore in a position to offer Himself to take Adam’s place in death – to take away the sin of the world.

What we have considered here are legal matters consequent upon the Law of Sin and Death (Roman 8:2), and the condemnation from which we have been freed by the grace of God.

Unless Jesus had received His life direct from His Father He could not offer it back to His Father to “take away the sin of the world” as John the Baptist had said. (John 1:29). Nor “give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28), as Jesus said of Himself.

However, Jesus was rejected as the Son of God by the Jews in authority in His day, refusing to be enlightened as to their position. Jesus said, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men prefer darkness,” and again, “Except I had come and spoken unto them they had not had sin”, showing that enlightenment brings responsibility. But when we become enlightened and responsible we find that what God requires initially is not strict obedience to a legal code, as the Jews thought and sought to their sorrow to observe, but faith in the promises made to the fathers. When we learn what these are and what faith involves, we find that we are under the law of (the) sin and (the) death and ready to perish. If anyone then thinks he can obtain forgiveness and salvation by good works he is doomed to failure. But salvation is by the grace of God for those with the faith in Jesus and what He has done for them.

If Jesus had not been the Son of God there would have been no salvation for us.

If Jesus had not lived a life of perfect obedience before His sacrifice it would not have been an acceptable offering and there would have been no salvation for us.

If Jesus had not given Himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God there would have been no salvation for us.

If Jesus had not risen from the dead to be our Mediator and High Priest at God’s Right Hand to give continual forgiveness to the meek of the earth, there would have been no salvation for us.

Jesus means of birth, His manner of life, His willing sacrifice in place of Adam, His resurrection by His Father, are all essential steps ensuring salvation for the faithful.

Our response is to be baptised into His death and become one of His faithful disciples.

FINALLY

From what has been written here it can be seen that a full understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation has not been handed down to us by any of today’s churches with their made-made Creeds

designed to exclude rather than include would-be disciples of Jesus Christ, and that it is not safe for us to accept their interpretation of every point without satisfying ourselves of their soundness.

The revelation of God is progressive; this is true of the scriptures themselves in their gradual unfolding from Genesis to Revelation; it is true of the working out of the Plan itself; and it seems to be equally true of the re-discovery of the true understanding of the Gospel in these last days.

Since the Middle Ages much groundwork has been laid by reformers and during the nineteenth century very many Bible scholars broke free of Roman Catholicism, searching the Scriptures for themselves. They became teachers and leaders of a large variety of new sects and denomination all with varying views regarding what was Bible teaching. While we must be very thankful for the earnest labours of early reformers we see divisions are not good; Christ is not divided.

Each one of us must progress from light to light as we prayerfully consider and study the things God has caused to be written for our learning. Let us be honest enough and humble enough to follow where the truth leads.

It now rests with you, the reader, to decide where the truth is to be found, and what your own position is. Do not be put off with the excuse that these questions are deep and involved and beyond your ability to find the answers. The truth of the matter is that they are simple when once the mind has been freed from unscriptural errors, and we wonder why such errors are still tenaciously held by so many. But we must avoid anything that bars our progress and listen to God when He says "Come now, and let us reason together."

The Nazarene Fellowship



"The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Numbers 6:24 to 26