

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter

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Editorial

At the time of writing the world has just heard the result of the elections in the U.S.A. and Joe Biden is to be the next President. The question in the minds of many is ‘What effect will this have on the situation in the Middle East?’

We have seen how Donald Trump has helped Israel with vast sums of money and the latest in armaments to support Israel’s armed forces against the enemies which surround their small country but it seems most unlikely that Joe Biden will continue the same policy for he has shown more interest in appeasing and supporting Israel’s enemies in the past. So what may we expect while he is in office?

In these pages we constantly mention the nearness of the return of Jesus Christ at a time of great trouble and we read His words in Luke 21:25 & 26, “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:” Now Jesus’ words might not seem clear unless we are used to Bible language but we find earlier in the Bible that the expression “sun, moon and stars” is used prophetically for the family of Israel before they became a nation, which helps us see the picture Jesus is building for us; then He refers to “the distress of the nations”, which is abundantly clear at this present time; next, “The sea and the waves roaring”. which is a bit more symbology and refers scripturally to nations at war with each other, and next, – “men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” which is becoming a reality in these troubled times. It is also worth noting that the word translated “perplexity” means “with no way out” and this is the dilemma the world is in as never before.

Finally, in verses 26 to 28, we read of Jesus' return when "the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man (Jesus Christ) 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 deliverance draweth nigh." Jesus spoke these words 2000 years ago, but what of Israel today? While it is true they acknowledge God and are thankful to be back in their own land, they also believe God is supporting their aims by providing them with the necessary military might and strategies, not only their own but also from friendly nations, e.g. the USA, which they need in order to resist their many enemies.

But where is their faith in God? Does He need the military might of the nations to keep Israel safe and build up their nation? Of course not. And does Israel look to their God for His support – the support they really need. No. it does not. There seems surprisingly little evidence showing they put their trust in God but are forever seeking help from others nations and fail to show the same faith in Him that their forefathers had some three thousand years ago.

And here I wish to give just one example of which we read in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 where, in the days of King Jehoshaphat, when they were about to be attacked by the armies of Ammon, Moab and the people of Mount Seir. They had a big problem – and this was their opportunity to show their faith. Let us read some extracts from this story . . .

Verse 1. "Now it came about that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. Some came and reported to him, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar." Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court, and he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You... Now behold, the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir,... see how they are coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance. O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You." Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel ... the Levite of the sons of Asaph; and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel. You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you." Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD ... They rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed." Jehoshaphat appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His loving-kindness is everlasting." When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed. For the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them completely; and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another. . . When Judah looked toward the multitude, and behold, they were corpses lying on the ground, and no one had escaped. . .

Every man of Judah and Jerusalem returned with Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. They came to Jerusalem with harps, lyres and trumpets to the house of the LORD. And the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God gave him rest on all sides.”

Will we ever see the like? I would like to think so, but first there must be a big change of heart from their trusting in themselves and expecting other nations to help them. Yes they do acknowledge God is guiding their nation and keeping their enemies in check but where is their trust in God? This we have yet to see.

With love in Jesus Christ to all our readers, Russell.

“Doubt”

Be never afraid of doubt. We are in the fog eternal of wrong, and there is no way for us to get clear but to prove all things and hold fast. Make free use of the intelligence God has given you, only taking to use it in a consciously supreme allegiance to right and to God. Your questions then will only be your helpers, and the faster they come the better will be your progress in the truth.

Never settle upon anything as true because it is safer to hold it than not. To accept the Bible even because it is safest, as some persons do, and some ministers very lightly preach, is to do the greatest dishonour both to it and to the soul. Such faith is cowardly, and is even a lie besides. It is basing a religion, not in truth, but in the doctrine of chances, reducing the salvation of God to a bill of insurance. If the Bible is true, believe it, but do not mock it by assuming for a creed the mere chance that it may be. For the same reason take religion, not because it will be good for your family, or good for the State, but because it is the homage due inherently from man to God and the kingdom of God.

Have it as a law never to put force on the mind, or try to make it believe, because it spoils the mind's integrity; and when that is gone, what power of advance in the truth is left? I know very well that the mind's integrity is far enough gone already, and that all our doubts and perpetual self-defeats come upon us just that reason. All the more necessary is it that we come into what integrity we can, and stay there. Let us be immovable as rock by any threat of danger, any feeling of risk, any mere scruple, any call to eve by sheer self-compelling will; he that is anchored in right will do no such thing. There must of course be no obstinacy, no stiff holding out after conviction has come; there must be tenderness, docility, and with these a most firmly-kept equilibrium.

Never be in a hurry to believe; never try to conquer doubts against time. Time is one of the grand elements in thought as truly as in motion. If you cannot open a doubt to-day, keep it till tomorrow; do be afraid to keep it for whole years. One of the greatest talents in religious discovery is the finding how to hang up questions, and let them hang without being at all anxious about them. Turn a free glance on them now and then as they hang, move freely about them, and see them, first on one side and then the other, and by-and-by, when you turn some corner of thought, you will be delighted and astonished to see how quietly and easily they open their secret and let you in! What seemed perfectly insoluble will clear itself in a wondrous revelation.

Brother Horace Bushnell

The Biblical Prayer that has given the Jewish people strength to persevere

This prayer has kept the Jewish people strong over the centuries. It is called Shema, and it is a prayer straight from the Bible – A Biblical prayer.

Some prayers that have been recited by the Jewish people for centuries were written by great sages. And some come directly from the Bible. The prayer in this song is a Biblical prayer. It is the Shema, and it is one of the first prayers that a Jewish child is taught.

The Jewish people say this prayer multiple times a day. It is a declaration of faith in God; a declaration that God is one.

When there is a crisis in the world or in the Jewish community at large, this is one of those prayers that is said in a unified way to beseech God to bring comfort and clarity. If one does not have much time to pray for a certain reason in the morning, the Shema is one of those prayers that is still said. Here are the words to this prayer. (These words are from the opening line and the first paragraph).

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates” (Chabad.org).

It is such a beautiful thing that Shema has connected the Jewish people all over the world, throughout all of time.

Leah Rosenberg. **June 7, 2020**

* * *

Editor’s note: It’s also the first prayer I can remember being taught at Sunday School so many years ago. It can be found in our Bibles in Deuteronomy 6:4 to 9. Here is The New Revised Standard Version :-

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Part One of Two

THE KINGDOM AND THE PARABLES.

Certain parables of Our Lord are supposed to favour the idea that “the Kingdom of God “ signifies “the Church,” or the state of matters in the present dispensation. Even advanced Millenarians are found maintaining this position. Thus, B. W. Newton, in his “Aids to Prophetic Inquiry, third series,” in a chapter on the parables of Matthew 13 says - “There are parts of the New Testament which very distinctly supply the Prophetic history of Christianity during the present period.” “This instruction is generally conveyed in prophetic parables; of which the Marriage Supper - the Wise and the Foolish Virgins - the Servants trading with the Talents - the Sheep and the Goats, are examples; all these parables refer to the Professing Church.” But the 13th chapter of Matthew affords the most important example. - . . . “The object of Our Lord in this chapter is, as he himself says, to teach us respecting the “Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven “ “respecting the introduction of Christianity by the foolishness of preaching; and respecting its subsequent corruptions.” “The Kingdom of Heaven” is to exist in the earth at two very different periods; first, while the world remains under the power of Satan as it now is; secondly, when it shall be sustained by the manifested and glorious power of Christ, after Satan has been bound.

These are conditions, circumstantially very different; but the essential points of similarity are paramount to any of the circumstantial differences; and therefore those who profess the name of Christ now, and those who will bear that name in the Millennium, are alike regarded as subjects of the same kingdom. They have the same King – the same Legislator - the same Spirit – the same Priest - the same. Redemption. They differ only in circumstantial relations. The Kingdom of Heaven is also called the Kingdom of Christ, because He is its Head. Thus, Christendom, i.e. Christ’s Kingdom, is an equivalent expression to Kingdom of Heaven as used in this chapter of Matthew.”

In a little work on the Gospel, the late W. Godson, says, “I believe that the past and present imperfect state of things connected with the Christian dispensation is properly designated the Kingdom of God, because the Saviour, in speaking of this state of things, designates it the Kingdom of Heaven (see Matthew 13). Here the Saviour evidently describes the Christian institution from its commencement to its close. **First** - Showing, in the parable of the sower, the way in which the Kingdom of Heaven is peopled. **Second** - Foretelling the existence of the Kingdom of Heaven in the midst of a corrupt world, in the parable of the tares. **Third** - Pointing out its small beginning as a grain of mustard seed, and its extensive growth. **Fourth** - Predicting its corruption, in the parable of the leaven, a substance that throughout the Scriptures represents evil, and which was to be introduced amongst the good meal amongst his people, and work until the whole became leavened. Paul says the mystery of iniquity worked in his day, and the awful extent to which the Kingdom has been corrupted in our day is only perceived by those who faithfully compare it with God’s word. **Fifth** - The Saviour next shows the sacrifice some will make to enjoy the inestimable blessings of the Gospel, in the parable of the hid treasure, and of the man seeking goodly pearls. **Sixth** - He likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a net gathering all kinds of fishes, good and bad; evidently pointing out the mixed nature of the subjects of this Kingdom; but they are to be separated at the close of the present dispensation.

In harmony with this interpretation of the chapter Jesus says (verse 41,) in explaining the parable of the tares, the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” The present is the Kingdom, in its gathering form, an institution for subjugating men to God - a state of trial to prepare subjects for the future glorious

manifestation of the Kingdom. The one the Kingdom and patience of Jesus; the other, the Kingdom in its glorified state, where God's people shall be rewarded for all their past sufferings. But those converted to God are as truly under the Divine government now, and consequently in God's Kingdom, as they will be in the future: the difference is that God now reigns over them in a state of trial and suffering, but then in glorified circumstances."

These quotations may suffice to give us an idea of the sense in which these Parables are understood by many who have arrived at comparatively sound views as to the national element of the Kingdom as it shall exist in the future. They cannot get rid of the popish idea of the Church being the Kingdom. But Mr. Newton is too assertive, and not sufficiently demonstrative. Where is his proof for the statement "that those who profess the name of Christ NOW, are subjects of Christ's Kingdom?" They are never so designated in the Scriptures, but are repeatedly termed "heirs." "Heirs of the Kingdom" – "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And the assertion that "Christen-dom i.e. Christ's Kingdom, is an equivalent expression to Kingdom of Heaven," is equally destitute of foundation. And so Mr. Godson, "The present is the Kingdom in its form, an institution for subjugating men to God, a state of trial to prepare subjects for the future glorious manifestation of the Kingdom."

If subjects are only now preparing, how can the Kingdom have any real existence? There are six parables in Matthew 13 in which the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to certain things - wheat and tares in one field - mustard seed growing to be a tree - leaven in meal - treasure hid in a field - a merchant seeking goodly pearls - a net cast into the sea. These are preceded by the parable of the sower, which differs from the others, inasmuch as it is not said that the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to it.

On the parable of the sower Mr. Newton says - "It refers to the mode in which our dispensation was introduced. The agency by which the Apostles expected the "Kingdom of Heaven to be introduced was glorious power; but instead of this it was lowly testimony. The result was, not universality of success - it was almost universal failure. This first parable, therefore gives a character upon the whole period, of which it commences the history. It could not be that dispensation in which the Messiah of Israel "shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God." Strange that the saints of God should ever have confounded between periods so dissimilar. It could only have been because our eye had ceased to be single; because we had sought to reign as kings when we should rather have desired, to be "as the offscouring of all things." This confounding of periods so dissimilar, however, should not seem strange to such as Mr. Newton, who can apply the same designation to both. If he, a believer in the coming Kingdom, can term this time of "universal failure" "the Kingdom of Heaven," without seeing the strangeness of it, he need feel no surprise that the so-called "saints of God" who for the most part, have no faith in the future Kingdom, should confound the present with the future.

But it is very strange to me that Mr. Newton should identify the parable of the sower with the six that follow it, when it is wanting in that feature by which the others are marked, namely "the Kingdom of Heaven is like." The mere fact that it, like the parable of the tares, has to do with the sowing of seed, is no reason why the two parables should be applied to the same period. True, in the explanation of the parable of the sower "the Kingdom" is mentioned, but it is as the subject of preaching - "When anyone heareth the Word of the Kingdom." As shown in a former paper, Jesus preached the Kingdom, saying, "the Kingdom of God is at hand," or approaching. And he told his disciples that "this Gospel of the Kingdom should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." And if, as Mr. Newton says, "this first parable fixes a character upon the whole period of which it commences the history," that character must be that of a Kingdom preached, but not of a Kingdom set up, or introduced.

Before noticing in detail the Kingdom-parables in this chapter, I would observe that the common mode of understanding them, now under review, has probably arisen from the supposition that every circumstance introduced into a parable is intended to teach some particular truth. This has been carried to so great a length by some that in the parable of the Good Samaritan the two-pence given to the innkeeper represent the two ordinances baptism and the Lord's Supper! But a glance at some of the parables is sufficient to show that each parable was designed to illustrate some one point in particular, and that the various accessories of person, place and time, and the actions ascribed to the actors represented, are but the filling up of the picture. Thus, in the parable of the Ten Virgins, the one point illustrated and enforced is "always ready." The number of the virgins has no relation to the number of the saved or lost.

Again in the parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, evidently intended to illustrate the certain punishment of the Jews for their rejection of their Messiah, it is represented in the filling up of the picture, that the parties were aware that it was the son of their landlord whom they resolved to put to death. But as a matter of actual fact this was not the case. Jesus prayed for those who put him to death, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Peter told the Jews, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers;" and Paul, speaking of the wisdom of God in a mystery, says, "Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Extreme caution is therefore necessary in making a parable the basis of any doctrine that is not expressly taught in the plainer portions of the word.

The parable of the tares (Matthew 13), is held by many to be illustrative of the existence of the good and the bad in the church during the present dispensation; and because Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field," the conclusion is easily reached that the kingdom and the church are identical. But where is the evidence that the existence of good and bad in the church is the point taught in the parable? This parable is accompanied fortunately, with an explanation; and on the point in question, the explanation is, "The field is the world," not the church. Besides, if the church were the thing intended, how does it come to pass that the wicked are not to be disturbed in the church, while in His plain teaching regarding "the church," our Lord made provision for the expulsion of offenders? (Matthew 18:15-17). In this passage certain offenders, who are members of the church, are directed to be treated "as heathen men and publicans." If the field represents the world at large in the present dispensation, why are the servants surprised at the appearance of the tares, seeing there must have been plenty in the field of the world when the wheat was being sown. If the several points in the parable are to be taken into account, it shews a field cleared and prepared for the reception of the good seed, and entirely free from tares; and this can by no means refer to any period of the world's history down to the present date.

These reasons seem to me to be sufficient to set aside the interpretation that makes the church, or the world as at present constituted, the scene of the parable of the tares.

But suppose we apply it to the Kingdom of God to be established in the world to come by the Lord at His second appearing, what circumstances do we find obtaining then? Have we not the world as a cleared field, in which a new crop of people shall be grown? Read the description of the setting up of Messiah's kingdom in the prophets. "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen (nations) for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." "In the days of these Kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." "He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-

hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” “The Lord will come with fire, and with the chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire; for by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many.” “It shall come that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory, and I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations ... that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.” ... “And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched [the agents of their complete consumption], and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” “Enoch also the seventh from Adam, prophesied of them, saying, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands [myriads] of His saints to execute judgment upon all, etc.” “I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war ... And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” Even in regard to Israel shall this severe discipline be exercised; “as I live saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you; and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand ... and I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face, like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord ... For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land serve me; there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings,” etc.

This result is described by another prophet: “Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified.”... “They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.”

In these quotations we have the means by which a new dispensation is to be inaugurated in connection with the re-establishment of God’s Kingdom. The infliction of Judgments shall form a prominent part of the Divine procedure. And this is in strict accordance with the necessity of the case, as well as with the Divine plan. The flood, the cities of the plain, the nations of Canaan, Nineveh and Babylon, all illustrate the necessity for occasional displays of the bare and holy arm of the Almighty. “When His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness,” otherwise most strikingly declared through Zephaniah, “my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord with one consent”

But not alone with judgment shall the Kingdom of Heaven be introduced. “He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.” “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth.” “There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.”

Does not this answer to a cleared field sown with good seed, and giving promise of a good crop? And does it not correspond with the requirements of the parable? For we must observe that in this parable the good seed is not the Word of the Kingdom," but "the children of the Kingdom."

This designation is applied to Israel by our Lord in Matthew 8:12, even while they were unbelieving and worthy of rejection. Much more shall it apply to Israel when purged of the rebels, and planted in their own land. And the same designation may be fitly extended to "the nations of them that are saved who shall walk in the light of the New Jerusalem."

Brother J. Cameron.

To be concluded in next C.L.

Talitha Cumi.

The story of Jesus and the little daughter of Jairus;
as they told it to me at the Sea of Galilee in 1868.

By Robert Morris, LL.D.,

Matthew 9:25 "He took her by the hand and the maid arose."

Mark 5:41. "He took the damsel by the hand and said unto her Talitha Cumi, which is being interpreted, Damsel (I say unto thee) arise."

Luke 8:54. "He took her by the hand and called, saying, Maid, arise.,' –

1) By the Sea her memory dwelleth,
Maiden, well-beloved and fair,
And each loving mother telleth
How she lay a dying there;
How she lay, that sweet one, dying
Only child - there was no more –
While the Oriental crying
Swelled the murmurs of the shore:
So they tell it by the sea
Of the placid Galilee.

2). How the weeping father hastened
Christ, a present help, to meet:
And with awful sorrow chastened
Fell imploring at his feet:
"Master - oh, my little daughter, -
Only child, - about to die, - "
While the dashings of the water
Mocked at his despairing cry;
So they tell it by the sea
Of the storm-tossed Galilee.

3). How He found the stricken dwelling
How He clasped the clay-cold hand:
Needless is the further telling,
Death obeyed his Lord's command:
While those waters roll, the story
Of the maiden will remain,
Promise of that greater glory
When the Christ shall come again.
So they think along the sea
Of this much-loved Galilee.

4). How the Lord no tarry making
Through the thronged narrow street,
Hastened to a wondrous waking,
Such as every saint shall meet;
Mattered not though servant coming
Said the little one was dead;
And the breakers hoarsely booming.
All the mournful message spread;
So they tell it by the sea
Of the dirge-like Galilee.

A Right Understanding

A right understanding of The Atonement is essential before anyone can rightly claim to be preaching the Gospel.

Where Dr. Thomas went wrong was in making the stupid statement that the natural corruptibility which we share with all other forms of life is the penalty of sin. He said "the nature of the lower animals is as full of this physical evil principle as the nature of man, though it cannot be styled "sin" with the same expressiveness because it does not possess them as a result of their own transgression."

Why on earth it never occurred to him that the fact that the lower animals have a corruptible nature which is not the result of sin is the best of reasons for thinking that neither is man's natural corruptibility the result of sin.

This is what is really wrong with Christadelphianism - the theory that nature, both of man and animal alike, is sinful flesh - there is nothing the matter with the view that man is by nature an animal. It is his brain and its capacity for the abstract thought which makes him different.

Ernest Brady.

Palestine Will Be Colonized...

Written in April 1886

THAT Palestine will be speedily colonized by the Jews is not a dead but a living certainty. There is not a single fact that can be mentioned but what lends assurance thereto. The soil has once sustained a teeming population, and will again under cultivation bear the burden of multitudinous life. The soils of Bashan and Gilead prove that nature in that region has not lost prolific power, and though on the west of Jordan the scene is very different, the difference will disappear when the heavy hand of God is lifted from the acres, and the blue summer shews that heaven smiles again upon the furrowed field.

Without the remotest intention of fulfilling prophecy, or, indeed, of promoting specially the interests of Jews, Mr. Laurence Oliphant negotiated some time ago with the Turkish Sultan to secure Bashan and Gilead for the earliest beginnings of colonial settlements. He did not succeed, but he initiated effort - which was something. He marked the trees; others will cut the wood.

By excellent economic reasoning and lucid statement, he gained and kept the Sultan's ear. Perhaps he had not read or remembered the prophet Micah. But it is singular (or is it singular?) that Micah should testify that God shall feed his people "in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old" (Micah 7:14). That this is introductory to the final regathering and establishment of Israel in their own land seems evident from a study of the prophecy, which rejoicingly concludes with the reflection - "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (verse 20). From these words it is not doubtful what is in the prophet's mind.

In Bashan and Gilead, then, we may expect to see the earliest illustrations of that marvellous Jewish prosperity, which, like Jonah's gourd, shall suddenly spring up, to the jealousy of some and the astonishment of all.

Of course, the world admits the Jewish genius for getting gain, but this has usually manifested itself in trading either in money or merchandise but there is a surprise in store for the

world, which will make even a Manitoba farmer rub his eyes. "The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might."

Like charmed serpents the astonished nations will creep out of their holes, and an unusual fear will fall upon them, as they witness what looks very much like a magic creation of colonial wealth. They had used to think that Jews had dealings with the "devil," but such marvellous growth of prosperity as this looks as though, this time, God was in it. Yes, the power that fed a nation in the desert shall be at work in that prosperity. This it is, and no circumstance of chronology, as we have been taught, that gives the meaning of the words, "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things" (verse 15). This is no hidden hint of time, given to perplex curious chronologists, but the announcement of wonders to be wrought for Israel, similar to the wonders of the Exodus.

It is no objection to the colonization possibility that it is only the poor, as a rule, who are dreaming of Palestine. The poor, forsooth! It is the poor who constitute the strength and hope of every nation. The poor are the world's creators. Who has made the firm foundations of whatever material greatness Australia is destined to reach? The poor, whom we sent out as criminals to that shore. If men can create the materials of worldly prosperity, who have only nature's gift in wooing the wind and sun, and whose hearts are laden with the oppressive memory of crime, what miraculous might be theirs whose patriotism burns with religious heat, and whose faith lays hold of the God of Israel. It is not wealth but faith that is wanted to make fruitful the fields of Palestine, for in this sense also men plant and water but God giveth the increase.

Brother Joseph Chamberlain

The Great Commandments

The 'clear teaching' of Scripture is contained in the first two commandments which Jesus repeated to the lawyer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." - Matthew 22:37-40.

Beyond this the scriptures have to be reasoned out. And that is what God wants us to do - and He asks to be included. "Come let us reason together." - Isaiah 1:18.

We may wish to be like Daniel to whom The Archangel Gabriel said, "But will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth" - Daniel 10:21.

Or we may wish to be with the Apostles when Jesus gave them His last message before His ascension, "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 were 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." - Luke 24:44, 45.

And Paul wrote to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." - 2 Timothy 2:15

Though we must be aware of what Peter wrote, "our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these

things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” - 2 Peter 3:15-16.

We all know and agree that that we must never interpret one scripture in a way that will contradict another scripture; and to this end we must compare scripture with scripture. A preconceived idea will have the effect on all one reads; it makes so many things fit in where they are not meant to be and that is to be avoided.

Let's consider the words to Solomon, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.” Proverbs 2:1 to 11.

Author unknown

The Secret of The Jewish Revival

By Leah Rosenberg. September, 2020

How the Jews have survived throughout the centuries is truly miraculous. It is G-dly.

G-d has kept His promise to The Jews

The only way the Jews could have survived throughout all the persecutions, genocides, and hate is because G-d has kept His promise. And the Jews have kept their faith in G-d. There is a unique relationship between G-d and the Jewish nation.

While the world watches and listens, and antithetically even more so when it doesn't, the Nation of Israel thinks of new ideas, acts with purpose and meaning, and moves against the stream of humanity to make the world a more humane, more productive, more believing place. They do not just settle for satisfactory. The Jewish nation strives to reach the top. If you did not know the Jews still existed but just heard their story, you would deem it impossible for that nation to still be around. And to be thriving? Unimaginable!

The strong will and ambitions of the Jewish People to survive come from its divine mission in the world. It sounds preposterous, but if you watch the video, you'll understand how Jewish survival is, in fact, a supernatural phenomenon.

Is There A Supernatural Devil?

During a conversation on a Facebook forum I asked Sam if he believed in a supernatural devil

Sam: Yes, I believe in a supernatural devil. All I have to do to prove it to myself is to read Matthew 4:1-11. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus of Nazareth was sinless, there's no way that he was fighting against some evil inside himself in his great temptation as some teach. The Bible is replete with evidence of this if we'll allow the Holy Spirit to open our eyes. (No reflection on you in any way)

Russell: I agree with you Sam when you say - “that Jesus of Nazareth was sinless, there's no way that he was fighting against some evil inside himself in his great temptation as some teach.” However, we learn from Hebrews 4:15 that “we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”; and in James 1:13, we read, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14. but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

From such passages as these we learn that being tempted is not sinful; it does not make us sinners. In fact, we have to be tempted in order to build characters well pleasing to God by overcoming our temptations. It is God’s way of testing and by overcoming temptation is the only way we have of showing how much we love Him.

We are all tempted by immoral thoughts; but that is not sin unless and until we give in to those wrong thoughts. This being so we see there is no need for a supernatural Devil. Mankind has proved to be quite capable of excelling in evil without any outside help. Being drawn away by our own lusts” is not something outside ourselves – and Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin for He never gave into any temptations.

What Think Ye

It is well known by a few of us that in the area of Gloucestershire there abides a man who considers himself a man of God who believes in and reckons himself to be consistent in the wisdom and understanding of the Word of God recorded in the Bible. This man makes a great issue of the importance of faith, to which we are in agreement. Therefore, knowing his views, I am forced to ask the question, “From what part in the history of Genesis does he begin to explain the entry of faith into the world of humanity?”

For example; he is adamant that Adam showed no faith in God’s commandment, either in his disobedience or afterwards, but in his view, was a partaker at 930 years of age of the sentence pronounced in Genesis 2:17. We must therefore conclude that he regards Adam as having no hope. For in Hebrews 11:1 we are told, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (See also Romans 8:24,25).

Seeing then that Adam had no hope or evidence of a better future other than hard labour and return to dust, how did his two sons, Cain and Abel obtain their knowledge which caused them to bring offerings to the Lord, the one diverse from the other? And how and where in Genesis does it record the reason for this difference in the offerings? Can our man of God point to Genesis and show where it states the reason why “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh”? (Hebrews 11:4). Can he point to any divine commandment in Genesis given specifically to Abel for obedience, as was given to Adam? I think not. Abel was outside the garden where there was no prohibited tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so that he could not sin by that means. We must therefore, in the absence of a recorded commandment, consider what made Abel righteous, and the answer is found to be “by grace.”

We should all be ready and willing to accept logical reasoning from the Holy Scriptures. So, what do we learn from Cain’s offering? God did not accept it. Why? Because Cain lacked faith, as stated in Hebrews 11:4; and as the Angel of God stated, “If thou doest well shalt not thou be accepted, and if not, sin lieth at the door.”

Here then was a position that if Adam had not taught his sons that by his own disobedience they had been constituted sinners and must obtain a covering through God's institution of the typical and sacrificial lamb in recognition of the shedding of blood as was so in his own case, they would still be under the law of sin and death (a legal position), from which freedom was possible by faith, but that faith must be exhibited by personal association with what God provided for that purpose. This is known as Redemption at a price, the price being an unforfeited free life by bloodshedding.

We concede there must have been some code of moral conduct which also demanded understanding and faith in God, even from Adam to Abraham, but I am afraid our sincere man of God will look in vain for any commandments from God recorded up to the time of Noah apart from the latter being, told to build an Ark for the saving of his household. God's commandments are just and good but without Redemption are useless for the obtaining of eternal life through His Gracious Gift, of which we will now consider.

Forget atheists, evolutionists and wishful thinking immortal-soulists, - the Genesis record of the creation of Adam is that God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth also created Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils and lungs the breath of life and he became a living soul dependent for continuance of life on food and oxygen. He was capable of decay and death when God put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, so that death as we know it in the natural order of things, is the result of our decaying nature.

In the preview of Genesis 1:26-28 it records God the Creator giving man the dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth. We are told by the Apostle Paul that this state of things was figurative of that greater state to come inasmuch as Adam failed to be crowned with glory and honour and reign over all things put under him (Hebrews 2:5-10). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that Adam was not reigning in a provisional state of probation and that because his was a nature capable of decay and death, that therefore death was reigning. Such a theory would nullify Scripture and also the very teaching of Paul on the subject in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin..."

It is absolutely clear that the common death of Adam and all created species did not come about by one man but by the appointment of the Creator. To believe otherwise is to believe in evolution, how then can Darwin be criticized? How could the braking of a Divine Law to Adam cause a change in his nature which was already existent? Such biblical athletes think they can break the rules of Divine wisdom and logical reasoning, and spring from the legal to the physical just when it suits their purpose or their inability to read and understand what God has caused to be written for our enlightenment.

Sin was not in the world at Creation but death was. But this was not therefore the "Death by sin" Paul speaks of in Romans 5:12 for he says, "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: for until the law (Moses) sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

Now if Paul was speaking of the common natural death, why did he stop at Moses? It is obvious he was speaking in the legal sense of a sentence of death or termination of life as a penalty for sin which is transgression of God's law. Paul is actually saying that the Sin of Adam (The Sin of the world), and the penalty due, was passed upon all men though they had not sinned personally, - so what Sin is he speaking of that was in the world and the death associated with it? The answer is in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

If many were made sinners by Adam, how could Paul say that there were some who had not sinned from Adam to Moses? And if, as some believe, this making of sinners means that an element and a bias toward disobedience was injected into man's flesh, then alternatively this would be the same treatment

in being made righteous, the latter being impossible in the physical sense. For it is an abstract state of "Grace."

It is plain to the enlightened sons and daughters of God that Paul is teaching that God concluded all under Adam's sin - the Sin of the world, and the Death by Sin (shedding of blood), a legal penalty removable by faith, typically and anti-typically; all were constituted sinners and all can be constituted righteous without any physical change in both cases.

Now perhaps it is plain why Paul stated about death reigning from Adam to Moses even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Though had they not sinned personally they were concluded under the Law of Sin and Death, but there must have been a way out of this position for God is just and does not condemn the children for Adam's sin. We must therefore conclude that they were shown the way and must accept it by faith. Enoch walked with God but Genesis does not tell us in what way, yet Hebrews 11: 5 speaks of him pleasing God by his faith, and the Apostle Jude confirms him as a prophet speaking of the Lord's coming to execute judgement, yet we have no record of Enoch in the King James Bible but Jude had access to this information so why not more information about Adam than what is accessible to us?

Coming now to Moses; Israel is delivered from bondage by the shedding of blood but the first-born of Egypt die (Exodus 11 and 12). From that time on Israel were under the blood of the covenant which God had enjoined unto them, through the law given to Moses, a law under which they could choose continuance of life or inflicted death according to personal conduct. Nevertheless there remained the Edenic Law of sin and death which the blood of bulls and goats could not take away under the Mosaic Law, for Paul informs the Romans in chapter 5 verse 20 concerning the offence of Adam that the law entered that the offence might abound. In other words the law of itself could not give eternal life by works insomuch as the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) had not yet appeared to take away the offence of Adam (The Sin, singular, of the world) for under the law there was a remembrance again made of sins every year (Hebrews 10:1-3).

Paul therefore in his appraisal of what the Mosaic Law could not do on account of all, Jew and Gentile being concluded in God's wisdom under sin (the sin of the world), God did through His beloved Son. Hence the proclamation of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Paul therefore in the light of this continues his letter, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:20-21).

At this point I must put the very important question, not only to our sincere professing man of God, but to all who hold the view that natural decay and resulting death is the penalty passed upon Adam and all his posterity. If, as Paul teaches, sin has reigned unto death and righteousness is reigning in their places, to what death but that of Jesus can he be making reference? And does not Romans chapter 6 answer this for you? But if you insist that Paul is referring to sin reigning unto natural death, then it is clear that when you die sin is still reigning over you, you are therefore not in Christ, - not under Grace, - you are not freed from Sin but still under its dominion. What a prospect!

In conclusion and in respect of all sincere seekers of The Truth as Jesus and His Apostles taught it for salvation and eternal life, my feelings are like those expressed by Paul in Romans 10:1-4, - My hearts desire and prayer to God is that they might be saved for I feel they have a zeal for God but in some of the things I have written they lack the wisdom and understanding I have at times been exhorted to get and which God has seen fit to give me though I feel unworthy.

Therefore if anyone derives spiritual benefit from what I have written, I seek no justification or glory for myself but Praise and Thanks to Him who created all things and gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have eternal life.

“Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life and few there be that find it.”
“Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.” Wise words from the Lord Jesus. Amen

Brother Phil Parry

Why Baptism ?

Foreword

Most Christians believe baptism to be important but see the rite in differing ways. The majority of churches teach infant baptism but others prefer adult baptism as we see practiced in the New Testament and understand this adult baptism to be “the answer of a good conscious towards God.”

In this article we confine ourselves to Bible teaching showing the origins of this practice; why it was introduced and how it saves us

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### **Baptism - and The New Covenant**

#### **John’s Baptism for the remission of sins**

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light” (John 1:6).

This introduces to us John the Baptist who was baptising in Jordan because there was much water there. Now John’s baptism was the “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” and was for the Jews only - those who were already in covenant relationship with God through being under the Law of Moses, and many Jews came to John confessing their sins and were baptised by him.

At this time John made a public proclamation to the people, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand”, or, as we read in the Emphatic Diaglott, “Reform! because the Royal Majesty of the Heavens has approached” (Matthew 3:2).

When John saw Jesus coming to him he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water” (John 1:29-31).

But John was hesitant to baptise Jesus “and forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said to him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3:14,15).

When Jesus submitted to the Baptism of John He had no sins to confess, nor any defilement from which to be cleansed, but by it He typified His own death, burial and resurrection and His baptism was an act of consecration and dedication prior to His work of preaching the gospel and then, taking away the sin of the world by the free-will sacrifice of His own life.

Perhaps we could draw a parallel or a similarity between the Passover Lamb being set aside three days before the Passover with Jesus' baptism three years before He gave Himself as the sacrifice for the sin of the world. (Matthew 26:2). "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

### **Ye must be born again**

We find that early on in Jesus' preaching, a ruler of the Jews, named Nicodemus, came to Him one night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:1-6).

Here we see Jesus also preaching baptism as a new birth, or being born again, and His disciples baptised more people than John, as John had said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30 and John 4:1,2).

But let us go on ahead to the time when Jesus had finished preaching to the nation of Israel and at the last supper He took the bread and said "This is my body which is given for you" and then the wine about which He said "This is my blood which is shed for you" and thus established the New Covenant; then later that night well knowing that He was going to be crucified the next morning, He prayed to His Father saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do..." (John 17:4). The work which God had given Him was now complete but Jesus knew the need for one more supreme work which only He could complete and this He chose to do – the greatest act of love that any man has ever done and only Jesus was in the position to do it - to give His life a ransom for many. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13,14).

At the end of the forty days after His resurrection and before His ascension into heaven Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, and that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). And so it was that the eleven apostles, having all things brought to their remembrance, whatsoever Jesus had said, and having their understanding opened, were renewed and strengthened and responded according to their faith.

### **Baptism into Jesus Christ**

We now find the Baptism the Apostles preached and practised was into the death of Jesus (Romans 6:3), which was very different to the baptism preached by John in two outstanding and very important aspects. First, we saw how John's baptism was for those who were already in covenant relationship with God through being under the Law of Moses, however, the old covenant relationship was ended with Jesus crucifixion when the veil in the Temple was miraculously torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51) the moment Jesus died on the cross. Jesus had fulfilled the Law of Moses and, being ended, there was no longer a covenant under that Law nor were any of its rituals and ordinances of any value to those who continued to observe them. From the time of the resurrection of Jesus there was a new covenant established and all those who would come to God had to come into the new covenant relationship with Him through Jesus Christ by baptism into His death and this new covenant was extended beyond Israel to all the world, to as many as were and are called.

## **Two Greek words for 'life'**

The second aspect is seen when Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." He was speaking of a new life – a spirit life – in the new relationship with Him. "Born of water and of the Spirit." All of the human race has received natural life passed down throughout all generations from Adam with the exception of Jesus who was born of a virgin but received His life direct from His Father and not from Adam.

There are two distinct words used in the Greek language for 'life' and they are 'psuche' for our natural life passed down from Adam, and 'zoe' for the spirit life which leads to eternal life which we receive from God when we are 'born again'. Whenever we read of eternal life throughout the New Testament we find that the Greek word 'psuche' is never used but 'zoe' is used exclusively. It is unfortunate that this important distinction is lost in the English translation.

And so at baptism we receive a new life – our 'zoe', or spirit life. When Jesus said, "I am come that they may have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), he used the term 'zoe' thus showing that we have been given spirit life now, along with our 'psuche' or natural life, and that we might have it more abundantly at His return and the resurrection, when the faithful receive eternal life and their natural life is no longer required.

## **Sacrifices for sin – from Eden to Gethsemane.**

Let us now turn briefly to the subject of sacrifices for sin in the Old Testament. In the Garden of Eden Adam was told that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil "for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). When Adam and Eve broke this commandment they were liable to the consequence of breaking the law, but God in His mercy spared their lives and the first animal sacrifice was slain in their stead to provide them a covering for their sin.

We believe Cain and Abel were also instructed in sacrifices for Abel's sacrifice was acceptable but Cain's was not (Genesis 4:5). Later the ordinances and commandments under the Law of Moses gave further instruction explaining the need for sacrifices for forgiveness for those in covenant relationship with their Creator.

The fundamental idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament is that of substitution, the life of the sacrifice, which is in the blood, for the life of the sacrificer. It was sanctioned by God Himself and is expressed in terms of covering over with the substituted life being accepted by God in the place of the life of the offerer. Hence the Scriptural practice: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Psalm 32:1,2).

Such sacrifices, however, necessarily pointed to a priesthood to mediate for the people and such a priesthood needed cleansing before they could offer cleansing for the worshippers to bring them near to God and keep in fellowship with Him. Also these priests under the Law of Moses continually changed and the priests and services needed purification and their sacrifices required constant renewal.

There was one sacrifice which founded the Law of Moses and which needed no renewal. We read of this in Exodus 24:3-8, "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and

sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.”

Likewise there is one sacrifice which instituted the law of love of the New Covenant. This time it was a perfect sacrifice and it completed the work of salvation, for the blood of bulls and of goats had only covered over sin and could not take it away (Hebrews 10:4) because the life of the animal was not a true substitute for the life of man that was lost by Adam. However, the blood, in which was the life (psuche), of Jesus was the exact equivalent to the life Adam forfeited in Eden.

All this showed man’s need and God’s merciful kindness. Hence Jesus, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world, and who on a perfect altar brought a perfect sacrifice, once for all - a perfect Substitute and a perfect Mediator. (Hebrews 10:1-24). “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:19).

Hebrews 10:28, “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

Our baptism then, is the answer of a good conscience towards God, by a complete immersion in water representing our death with Jesus, then arising out of the water to newness of life in Him; a re-birth in Jesus Christ. And to those baptised into Jesus, Paul exhorts, “If ye then be risen (from the water of baptism) with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4).

Brother Russell Gregory