

# The Berean Expositor

Acts xvii. 10, 11

“Study to show thyself approved unto God,  
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,  
rightly dividing the Word of truth”

II Tim. ii. 15

VOLUME LI.

1981 - 1982

The Berean Publishing Trust,  
52a, Wilson Street, London EC2A 2ER  
England

Dear Fellow-members,

Once more, in the mercy of God, we are able to issue another volume of *The Berean Expositor*.

The last two years have been significant by reason of the fact that our circulation has increased and we have, in addition, been able to produce more volumes in the study of the Word of God.

These we commend to the Lord to use and “give the increase” which will be to His glory and the lasting blessing of all those who read them.

We give our heartfelt thanks to all those who support our witness financially and prayerfully so that we can continue to “redeem the time” as long as the age of grace lasts.

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## INDEX

ARCHAIC AND OBSOLETE WORDS OF THE A.V.-- No.23. and No.24.	4
CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES--	
No.1 Relaxation	8
No.2. Quietness	10
No.3. Thankfulness	11
No.4. Joyfulness	13
No.5. Patience	15
No.6. Humility	17
GALATIANS, THE EPISTLE TO THE-- No.2. to No. 10.	20-52
MATTHEW, THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO-- No.1. and No.2.	53-62
MEN GOD CALLED--	
Jonah	63
Joseph	66
The Woman, Mary	69
Nathaniel	72
MIRACLES OF THE APOSTLES, THE-- No.1. to No.5.	75-94
PETER, THE FIRST EPISTLE OF-- No.4. to No.10.	95-108
PETER, THE SECOND EPISTLE OF-- No.1. to No.3.	109-114
ROMANS, THE EPISTLE TO THE-- No.1. to No.8.	115-143
USE AND ABUSE OF JOEL'S PROPHECY, THE-- No.3. to No.8.	144-181

## Archaic and Obsolete Words of the Authorized Version.

### No.23. p. 20

WANT. At the marriage at Cana in Galilee described in John ii. 1-11, we read “And when they *wanted* wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine”. The A.V. is ambiguous judged by modern usage of this word. Did they *desire* wine or did they *lack* wine? The latter is true. The bridegroom who had supplied the wine according to Jewish custom, had evidently miscalculated and not provided enough. “And when the wine failed” or “ran short” is the correct meaning. The verb “want” did not begin to have the meaning of desire until almost a hundred years later than 1611.

WARD. As a suffix, “ward” means in the direction of, occurring in words like inward, outward, upward, downward, etc. In middle English it was optional whether *-ward* was put as a prefix or a suffix. “And such trust have we . . . . to *God-ward*” (II.Cor.iii.4) or towards God. “His works have been to *thee-ward* very good” (I.Sam.xix.4). Likewise we have “Thy thoughts which are to *us-ward*” (Psa. xl. 5). “His power to *us-ward* who believe” (Ephesians i. 19). “More abundantly to *you-ward*” (II.Cor.i.12) means “still more toward you”. “Which to *you-ward* is not weak” (II.Cor.xiii.3). Most of these now archaic phrases were derived by the A.V. translators from the Bishops’ Bible and from Tyndale. We have pointed out before how greatly the translators of the A.V. were indebted to him.

### No.24. pp. 97 - 100

WAX. This is quite a common word in our English Bible and simply means to grow. It only seems to be used today of the moon, waxing and waning. In modern English it sometimes means “become”. The mustard seed in Luke xiii. 19 “grew and *waxed* a great tree”, meaning it “became a great tree”. “*Wax* old” is equivalent to growing old. “Is the Lord’s hand *waxed* short?” (Numb. xi. 23) today would be rendered “is the Lord’s hand shortened?”.

WEALTH. In I Cor. x. 24 we read, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s *wealth*”. On the surface this appears to countenance theft in thought or action, but in 1611 *wealth* meant more than money. It denoted well-being or welfare and so the N.I.V. renders the verse, “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others”.

WIT, WIST, WOT. These are old English words meaning to know or discover. In Gen. xxiv. 21 we have Abraham's servant and his attitude to Rebekah "wondering at her held his peace, *to wit* whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not", that is *to learn or know* whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not. Later on, when Moses as a baby was put in a basket by the river's bank, "his sister stood afar off, *to wit* what would be done to him" (Exod. ii. 4). She wanted *to know* what the result of this action would be.

There is a well-known verse in Luke ii. 49 giving the Lord's reply to His parents' reproach, "*Wist* ye not that I must be about My Father's business?". The N.I.V. renders it "Didn't you know I had to be in My Father's house?". There is no word for "business" in the Greek. In II Cor. viii. 1 the A.V. rendering is, "Moreover, brethren, we do you *to wit* of the grace of God . . . .", which means we cause you to know. Sixteen times the A.V. translators insert *to wit*, without any corresponding Hebrew or Greek word or words. This was done in 1611 for clarity. One well-known verse is Rom. viii. 23 ". . . waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body". Wit, wist, and wot are quite obsolete today.

WITCH. Twice this word appears in the A.V. (Exod. xxii. 18 and Deut. xviii. 10). In the second occurrence the word is masculine and it is difficult to know why the translators used the word "witch" here, specially as they have rendered it "sorcerers" where it occurs in Exod. vii. 11, Dan. ii. 2 and Mal. iii. 5. These people were equivalent to spiritist mediums in touch with the demonic world under Satan's domination. The great danger of this and the possibility of it affecting the Lord's people accounts for the extreme penalty that God prescribed.

WITHAL. This preposition is an archaic form of "with" which found its place at the end of a clause or question. "To overlay the walls of the houses *withal*" (I.Chron.xxix.4) is typical. In the majority of cases, it can be omitted as the sense is perfectly clear without it. The A.V. uses it 24 times.

WITHS. Delilah, we are told, bound Samson with "seven green *withs*" (Judges xvi. 7-9). These were seven bow-strings such as we have in Psa. xi. 2 "For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string . . . .". In these texts "withs" and "string" are the same Hebrew word *yether*.

WOE WORTH. Once only does this archaic expression appear in the Bible, namely in Ezek. xxx. 2 "Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Howl ye, *Woe worth* the day". This means "alas, for the day". "Worth" is an obsolete verb meaning become or happen. "Woe betide the day" is less archaic and would be understood at the present time.

**WORSHIP.** Up to the 17th century, this word meant to give due honour or respect to human beings as well as to God. “Then thou shalt have *worship* in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee” (Luke xiv. 10) just means “you will be honoured”. In the parable of the king and his servants recorded in Matt. xviii. 23-35 we have “the servant therefore fell down, and *worshipped* him (the king), saying . . . .”. This is equivalent to the servant falling on his knees and imploring the king. Wyclif’s version of John xii. 26 sounds strange today: “If any man serve Me, My Fadir schal *worschip* hym”. The idea of God worshipping a man is impossible in the modern meaning of the word. “My Father will honour him” is what is really means.

In the N.T. *proskuneo* means to kneel in supplication to a human being in asking for a favour, or to do this in worship of God. When referring to man it can be rendered “kneel before” or “do obeisance”. When used of God or the Lord Jesus Christ “worship” is the normal translation. The context alone should decide. The older meaning is still retained in such titles as “your worship” applied to mayors or magistrates.

**WORTHY.** Not only does this word express worth or excellence, it is also used in the A.V. in the sense of “deserving”. “If the wicked man be *worthy* to be beaten” (Deuteronomy xxv. 2) means “deserves to be beaten”. “Did commit things *worthy* of stripes” (Luke xii. 48) would be rendered today “did what deserved a beating”. When Solomon said to Abiathar (I Kings ii. 26) “. . . . thou art *worthy* of death”, he meant, “you deserve death”. In Rev. xvi. 6 in connection with the judgments of God on the followers of the Beast, we read “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are *worthy*”. This means “they have their due” or “as they deserve”.

**WREST.** This verb means to twist or pervert. “Thou shalt not *wrest* judgment” means “you shall not pervert justice”. Peter likewise talks of the opposers who “*wrest*” or twist (the Scriptures) “to their own destruction” (II Pet. iii. 16). This is surely a solemn warning to any who tamper with the Word of God.

**YESTERNIGHT** meaning last night occurs in Gen. xix. 34 and xxxi. 29. We still retain “yesterday” but have dropped yestermorn, yesternoon and yesterweek.

In this series we have pointed out scores of English words used in our A.V. which are obsolete or have completely changed their meaning since 1611. This is inevitable with language which is always in a state of flux or change. Some words or expressions have altered so much that they have now come to mean exactly the opposite to their usage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. “By and by” is an example of this which today means later on or presently. In 1611 it meant immediately, or at once.

There is therefore a real need for a version in modern English which faithfully reflects the original languages. In recent years we have had quite a number of new translations of the Scriptures and in our opinion, there have been too many of them. Some are only loose paraphrases hardly fit for the designation of translations and are useless to the serious student of the Word of God.

We should avoid two extremes. (1) Accepting every version that comes along, however highly publicized. (2) Rejecting all modern translations and treating the A.V. as though it was as fully inspired by God as much as the original autographs. Our old English Version is an excellent version on the whole and will never be superseded. Its matchless prose and general reliability are too well known to need advertising. However, it has marks of human frailty on it, as all translations have, and we do not further the truth by ignoring this. One of its most stalwart defenders, Archbishop French (*Trench?*), who was one of the foremost scholars of his day, wrote *On the Authorized Version of the New Testament* and discussed some of its weaknesses, and this book, together with others, can still be obtained second-hand. A parallel Bible, with the A.V. and R.V. side by side, together with one of the more reliable modern versions, will prove helpful to those lovers of the Word of God who have no access to the original languages.

Let us constantly thank God for all those lovers of His Word who down the centuries have laboured to give us a reliable original text and translations in our own language.

# Christian Attitudes

## No.1. Relaxation.

pp. 131 - 133

“Be still and know that I am God” (Psa. xlv. 10).

In his series in *The Berean Expositor* on the Psalms, Stuart Allen drew attention to many interesting features of this Psalm (B.E. volume L., p.164). He points out that Psalms xlv. - xlviii. form a trilogy and he comments on the prophetic aspect, as the Psalmist looks forward to the time when war will cease, and this must relate to the second coming of our Lord.

*The Companion Bible* gives the following outline:

1. God our refuge
- 2, 3. Danger defied (earth moved, waters roar)
- 4, 5. Zion defended
6. Danger defied (heathen raged, earth melted)
7. God our refuge
8. Works seen (Behold God's works, earth desolate)
9. Wars ended
10. Himself known (know God—His exaltation—earth)
11. God our refuge

The Psalm commences with “God is our refuge and strength” and in verses 7 and 11, we have the refrain, “The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge”.

The refuge in verse 1 is a place of refuge, a place to which one flees. A different word is used in verses 7 and 11, which means a high place, a tower, or an impregnable place.

The Psalmist describes a scene of great trouble, the removing of the earth, the roaring of the waters, but he contrasts this with the peaceful scene in the holy city, where streams of the river bring joy and gladness. God is there. The city will not be moved.

Then a different scene is set. The heathen rage, the kingdoms are moved. He utters His voice and the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

A description of a peaceful scene follows. He maketh wars to cease, the bow is broken, the spear is cut asunder, the chariot is burnt. Then comes the words which we wish to consider “Be still and know that I am God”.

We live in difficult days, and there is trouble all over the world. The pressures of life affect us all and there are times when we need a word of comfort. In the business world,

the strain is enormous and many are caught up in what is called the “rat race”. How do these conditions affect us? What is our attitude of mind? When the businessman goes home, does he take his worries with him? If we have an hour to spare in the evening, can we relax, or are we still troubled by the strains of this life? It may be easy to advise the troubled to “Be still” and relax. But how can the anxious mind be set at rest?

The Hebrew word translated “Be still” is only translated once in this way. There are at least 20 occurrences of this word, and it is rendered cease, fail, forsake, let alone, let go, stay, etc. The basic meaning is to “let go”. The translation “Be still and know that I am God” reads much better than “Let go and know that I am God”. Yet, as we meditate upon it, we can see that the rendering “let go” is a valuable aid to our understanding. We carry our troubles always, and we do not let them go. How can we relax if we do not let our troubles go? Psa. lv. 22 reads “Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee . . . .”. But if we cast our burdens on the Lord and then pick them up again or fail to let go, are we relieved of our burdens? To cast our burdens on the Lord means that we must let them go. And if we let go, then we become “still” and know that the Lord of hosts is with us. We enter the refuge.

Certainly there is a need to “hold fast” and to be steadfast in the things of God. But we need to let go those things concerning this world which constitute a burden.

We need to rightly divide, to distinguish between those things which we should hold firmly and those things which we should hold very loosely, things which we should let go when we need to relax.

When we wish to relax, and “let go” may we remind ourselves of Phil. iv. 6, 7:

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Yes, that peace will help us to “let go” and relax. Then shall we “Be still and know, that I am God”.

So then, let us learn to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. iii. 2).

## No.2. Quietness. pp. 149 - 151

“Rest in the Lord and wait . . . .” (Psa. xxxvii. 7).

Our peace of mind may be disturbed as we hear of continual violence in so many parts of the world; even in Northern Ireland and in this country we see lawlessness and the loss of innocent lives. In his second epistle to Timothy, Paul warned him that perilous times would come and the long list given in chapter iii. includes trucebreakers, false accusers, fierce, traitors, etc.

*The Companion Bible* indicates an outline of Psa. xxxvii. as follows:

- A1 | 1-11. Admonitions and reasons
- B1 | 12-26. Contrasts. Lawless and righteous
- A2 | 27-29. Admonition and reason
- B2 | 30-33. Contrasts. Righteous and lawless
- A3 | 34. Admonition and reason
- B3 | 35-40. Contrasts. Lawless and righteous.

The text that we wish to consider comes in the first section A1 and so we give the outline of that section:--

- A | 1. Trust. Fret not
- B | 2. Reason. “For”
- A | 3-8. Trust. Delight. Commit
- B | 9-11. Reason. “For”

Apart from the work of those who are violent, we may be vexed by the work of evildoers, who seem to prosper while those who try to live honestly suffer. Indeed, there is a real danger that a Christian may become jealous of the prosperity of those who are caught up with solely material ambitions. If this material attitude is allowed to develop, may there not be the possibility that a Christian may be tempted to lower his standards and achieve a higher “standard of living”? The Psalmist warns us of this.

Verse 1, “. . . . neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.”

Verse 7, “fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.”

Verse 8, “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.”

“Fret not” means “heat not thyself with vexation”. Do not allow yourself to be emotionally upset when you see the activities of the evildoer. But how can this mental attitude be avoided? Let us look at the Psalm again.

Verse 3, “Trust in the Lord and do good”

Verse 4, “Delight thyself also in the Lord”

Verse 5, “Commit thy way unto the Lord”

Verse 7, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”

“Rest” means “be still or keep silent”. When we are upset, how often a torrent of words can flow from our lips! How hard to keep silent! But the Psalmist advises us when we are vexed and upset, often by circumstances beyond our control, to be still, be quiet, be silent. Then we can turn to the Lord in prayer, to commit our way unto the Lord and trust in Him. Then we begin once again to delight in the knowledge and in our experience of the presence of the Lord. We can accept those adverse circumstances, knowing that He can give us the strength to endure suffering.

Verse 18 reminds us that “the Lord knoweth the days of the upright” and we are also reminded of Job who said, “But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job xxiii. 10).

When we have to endure any kind of affliction or suffering, let us remember Psa.xxxvii. and rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him . May we not fret or become vexed, but rather learn to wait in patience before the Lord. Our prayer may indeed be a silent prayer, just resting in His presence, look upward to Him for courage and strength. As gold is refined by fire, so the fire of affliction may remove the dross and enable us to come through our experience in a state of greater spiritual maturity, and with greater faith in our Lord, our Saviour and Head.

### **No.3. Thankfulness.** **pp. 171 - 173**

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,  
and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High” (Psa. xcii. 1).

There are over 100 references in the O.T. and more than 50 in the N.T. to thanksgiving. To try to summarize them in a short article is not an easy task.

If we turn to Nehemiah, and read of the tremendous opposition to the work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, we can understand the great pleasure of Nehemiah when that difficult task was completed. Chapter viii. tells us how Ezra read the book of the law of Moses to the people and in chapters xi. and xii., we read of those who were to dwell in Jerusalem and about the thanksgiving that was rendered. Mattaniah was given a special office in regard to the giving of thanks (see Neh. xii. 8). In chapter xi. 17 we read that he should begin the thanksgiving with prayer. In chapter xii. 27, we find that the dedication was to be made with gladness, both with thanksgiving and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. In justification of the inclusion of songs of praise, verse 46 explains,

“For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.”

Paul also links songs of praise with thanksgiving:

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. v. 19, 20).

On some special occasions, Psalms were written to give thanks. In II Sam. xxii., there is a song of thanksgiving by David as he thanked God for deliverance from his enemies. Another special Psalm is recorded in I Chron. xvi., to give thanks for the transfer of the ark of God to Jerusalem.

Psalms cv., cvi. and cvii. exhort Israel to remember the marvelous works of the Lord. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt and an account of the experiences of Israel in the wilderness are recited and in Psa. cvii. there is the refrain:

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”

Many Psalms give thanks to the Lord. Some give thanks for deliverance from the enemy (e.g. Psa. xxxv.). In Psa. lxxv. thanks is given to God the judge. In Psa. lxxix., there is a prayer for help as Jerusalem is invaded, which ends with praise and thanksgiving. Another Psalm is prophetic in character and ends with rejoicing and thanksgiving (Psa. xcvi.).

Coming to the N.T. it is remarkable how many times Paul gives thanks for the saints to whom he is writing. For example, “. . . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Eph. i. 16). See also Rom. i. 8; I Cor. i. 4; Phil. i. 3, 4; Col. i. 3.

Prayer should always be made with thanksgiving.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. iv. 6, 7).

We should abound in the faith, and this should be accompanied with thanksgiving.

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus our Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col. ii. 6, 7).

And there is the need for constant prayer with watchfulness.

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. iv. 2).

Paul exhorted Timothy to pray for all men, and prayer and intercession should be made with thanksgiving (I Tim. ii. 1).

Sometimes we find difficulty in saying “thank you” and yet it is possible to convey thanks without actually using those words. Read Phil. iv. 10-20. Paul had received a gift which mean so much to him, and he did express his deep appreciation. In his special way, he says he was glad to receive the things, which were “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well pleasing to God” but he adds that they would receive an even greater benefit because “my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”.

So then, let our Christian attitude be one of thanksgiving to God for all His goodness to us, blessings both spiritual and material, and let us praise Him for the fellowship we enjoy with those of like precious faith.

While it is right that we should constantly thank the Lord for all His gifts, let us not forget to thank those who help us in any way. A word of thanks may give joy and gladness as appreciation of kindness is so expressed. Let us not take things for granted but remember to say “thank you”.

#### **No.4. Joyfulness. pp. 192 - 195**

“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. iv. 4).

Walking down a crowded street, do you notice the expression on the faces of the people who pass by? How many appear cheerful? The successful businessmen, those who own a car and a fair salary, and even younger folk, often look worried or perplexed.

How many people who attend church give the impression of being really happy? Surely the Christian should be an example and radiate joy and gladness.

The wise man says in Prov. xvii. 22:

“A merry heart doeth good like medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

If we are cheerful, there may be a benefit to health, for a healthy mind does affect the body. One would expect those who suffer from ill health or some major disability to be sad, but how often do we find such people relatively happy. We may know people who have indifferent health who are an example to us.

If we refer to II Cor. xi. 24-28 we shall find a list of the trials and sufferings of the Apostle Paul. The last epistles written from prison do not contain any complaint, although in prison, Paul must have suffered much. He writes about the revelation he received and he blesses God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. i. 3).

As there are so many references in both the O.T. and the N.T. to rejoicing, gladness and joy, we will limit our comments to the letter to the Philippians. In chapter i., he explains that what happened to him had furthered the gospel. Because of his bonds, and his witness, others became more confident to speak the Word without fear; but Paul might have been upset as some preached a Christ of contention, not sincerely, but trying to add affliction to his bonds (Phil. i. 16). However, others preached the gospel in the spirit of love, and supported him. How did Paul react to this confusion? The answer in verse 18 is given:

“What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

In the same chapter, he discusses the way Christ would be magnified in his body, whether by life or death. But he realizes how much his life meant to the brethren at Philippi, and he expressed his confidence that he would abide and continue with them for their furtherance and joy of faith. He adds:

“That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again” (Phil. i. 26).

Notice his concern and desire for their joy. In verse 25 he refers to joy and it is interesting that the word used for rejoicing in verse 26 is a stronger word indicating boasting. See how he encourages the saints so that they with Paul may rejoice.

In chapter ii. 17, 18 he expresses the possibility that he might die for his faith and his death would be like the drink offering which was poured over the sacrifice:

“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.”

This was a mutual rejoicing; I joy and rejoice together with you and you joy and rejoice together with me. So in what we would call adversity, Paul was rejoicing and asking the saints to rejoice with him.

Read what Paul wrote about Epaphroditus, who nearly lost his life in his willing service (Phil. ii. 25-29). When you see him, rejoice (verse 28). Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness (29). What a welcome he ought to receive and what joy at his coming! How Paul seeks to radiate joy and gladness and encourages others to share that joy with him.

Chapter iii. begins “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord” and then he seems to deviate, as he often does in his letters. He writes about his seven losses in the flesh and the seven gains he wishes to obtain in the spirit. He presses towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (verse 14), and he advises the saints:

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded . . . .” (iii. 15).



“we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

Romans xv. 4 tells us that the Scriptures,

“were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (xv. 5, 6).

Turning to II Pet. i. 5-7 we have the following steps:

Add to your faith virtue – knowledge – temperance – patience – godliness and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (i. 8).

The Apostle Paul is our example. In writing to Timothy he remind him of the persecutions and afflictions he suffered, but despite all the adversity, his faith and patience remained firm.

“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, . . . . but out of them all the Lord delivered me” (II Tim. iii. 10, 11).

He warns Timothy that those who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

As we read of all the things that Paul suffered, and remember his experience in prison, we realize how much patience Paul needed. Yet he endured, and wrote those wonderful epistles which contain the revelation of the mystery and the hope that awaits us.

Is it not wonderful that in Rom. xv., we have the reference to the God of patience and consolation? (verse 5). This is followed by the title the God of hope in verse 13 and in verse 33, the God of peace.

Have we ever thought of the tremendous amount of patience that has been shown by God over so many years? How patient was God with Israel, His chosen people! And when in the fullness of time, God sent His Son, He was rejected and crucified. Yet, God is patient still. He is the God of patience awaiting the time when His purposes will be fulfilled. And if God is so patient and if Paul our example was patient too, should we not also be patient?

The parable of the sower (Luke viii. 15) refers to the seed that was sown on good ground which brought forth fruit with patience. If we sow seed, whether in our gardens,

or on the spiritual level, in ministry or in our personal witness, do we expect “results” at once? Surely we should await the harvest with patience.

If we suffer affliction, or if our faith is tested in any way, should we not hold on in faith and endure with patience?

Let us conclude with two references:

I Tim. vi. 11, 12: “Be thou, O man of God, flee these things; follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”.

Col. i. 10-12: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His gracious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints (holiest) in light . . . .”.

Is it hard to be patient? Yes, most of us would reply. But if we are strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, surely we shall be enabled to be patient and so glorify God in our lives.

## **No.6. Humility.** **pp. 230 - 232**

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. ii. 5).

How often do we wish to have our own way? It is natural to have desires and ambitions and to seek to achieve them. As Christians we need to have a balanced outlook and to remember that even “Christ pleased not Himself” (Rom. xv. 3). The danger is that if we are self-willed, we may become proud. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall (Prov. xvi. 18). The fall of Satan was due to iniquity that was found in him. The King of Tyrus is described in Ezek. xxviii. 12-15. He was in Eden (he was the anointed cherub) and so it is reasonable to assume that the account of the King of Tyrus relates to Satan. Verse 17 of that chapter says “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty . . . .”. If pride was the cause of Satan’s fall, should this not be a warning to us, lest we think of ourselves “more highly than we ought to think” (Rom. xii. 3).

The children of Israel were exhorted to “remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart . . . .” (Deut. viii. 2. See also verse 3).

Micah vi. 8 reads:

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

As we come to the Gospels, we find many references to the need for humility. The disciples wanted to know who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, and our Lord set a little child before them. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. xviii. 4). Our Lord spoke of the scribes and Pharisees who were proud and liked to be called “Rabbi” and have the best seats at civil functions. Christ said that “he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. xxiii. 11). He washed the feet of the disciples as an example of true humility (John xiii. 4-16). Christ quoted the words “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” in Mat. xxiii. 12 (also Luke xiv. 11 and xviii. 14).

An example was the wedding feast, when he advised guests not to take the best seats, lest they be asked to step down in favour of a more important person. Better to be asked to “come up higher”. The quotation in Luke xviii. 14 relates to the publican and the Pharisee who went into the temple to pray; it was the humble prayer of the publican that was commended by our Lord.

So in His teaching, our Lord often spoke about the need for true humility. It was in His life, His death and the cruel suffering on the cross that our Lord showed how His teaching was put into practice.

He was in the form of God, but did not consider that He should grasp at His “rights” as being equal with God. He gave up His “rights” and emptied Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and He was made in the likeness of men. Then, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians ii. 5-11).

His sevenfold humility is to be followed by a sevenfold exaltation, and the time will come when at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And so, Paul says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”. Let us reflect on what our Lord has done for us, what a tremendous sacrifice He made, giving up His “rights” and suffering such a dreadful death for our sakes.

May we remember verse 3, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”. This is true humility, and the reverse of pride. It is the spirit of Christ, who took our sins and carried them to the tree.

James writes,

“Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up” (James iv. 10).

Let us conclude with a quotation from Col. iii. 12, 13:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

Let this mind be in you.

## The Epistle to the GALATIANS.

No.2. i. 4 - 13.

pp. 10 - 15

The reason given for the tremendous gift of the Lord Jesus Christ is stated in verse 4:

“that He might deliver us from this present evil age (world A.V.) according to the will of God and our Father.”

*Exaireo* (deliver) means to pluck or tear out and then rescue, set free. It is translated “rescue” in Acts xxiii. 27. Every believer in Christ has been rescued from infinite danger, for this present age is controlled by the usurper, Satan and he is its god (II.Cor.iv.4) and runs the system behind it. Some may think Paul has exaggerated in calling it evil. Have we not made wonderful scientific advances in this age which had made life easier in many respects? While this may be so, from God’s standpoint it is evil, because it rejects Him and His Truth. All man’s increased knowledge of the universe brings him not one whit nearer God; in fact it seems to be the reverse, he gets further and further away from Him.

The wonderful deliverance by redemption causes the Apostle to pause and praise the Lord for it, “to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”, and we should do the same. Usually Paul commences his epistles by some kind of commendation before he introduces his subject and the reason for his writing, but it is not so here. He is too deeply moved for that. He says:

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all” (i. 6, N.I.V.).

It was incomprehensible to the Apostle that believers who had been so gloriously freed from bondage, could act in this way and put themselves back into slavery again. The word “turning away” is in the present tense which showed that it was still going on as Paul wrote. Not only this, but they were doing it “quickly”, so soon after receiving the gospel, or it might mean so soon after the arrival of the false teachers from Jerusalem. In any case the Galatians had made no long stand for the truth. They had soon capitulated and even become enthusiastic for this new so-called gospel. In doing this they were not just turning away from Paul, but from God “Who had called them”.

This was a terrible thing and the Apostle does not mince his words:

“. . . . there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (i. 7-9).

These were strong words indeed, but they were absolutely necessary. Fundamental truth was at stake and there could be no compromise. What “we preached” and what “ye received” was the criteria *and it still is*. In religious circles there is scarcely a word that is more misused than the word “gospel”. It is on everyone’s lips whatever their persuasion, and from this one would think that its meaning was clear and evident to all. However, like the word “democracy” it can be made to mean anything the user wishes. All the professing churches assert that they are preaching the “gospel”, but so often this so-called gospel bears no relationship to the true one revealed in the Word of God.

There is a constant need for everyone who professes to be a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to test every “gospel” that he reads or hears by the one so clearly expressed in God’s Word. That gospel originates solely from God and was made known by His revelation to the Apostle Paul and delivered through him as the channel.

“For I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is *not* after man, for I *neither* received it of man, *neither* was I taught it *but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (i. 10, 11).

Just what this gospel of God consisted of, Paul does not state, but it had been very clearly made known to the Galatians by his ministry. He had “placarded” (literally) Christ before them (iii. 1) and so magnified Him that they could have been in no doubt whatsoever that the good news centred in the Lord Jesus, and what He had accomplished for them on the cross and by His resurrection.

That gospel is clearly expressed in I Corinthians:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. xv. 3, 4).

This death was an atoning death; it was “for our sins” as Peter expressed it:

“Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by Whose stripes we were healed” (I Pet. ii. 24).

The work on the cross, then, touches the root cause of all man’s troubles, namely sin and its consequence, death, and any gospel that does not do this is fraudulent, deceiving and completely empty of any virtue or power.

Here is the acid test for all gospel preaching, past, present and future. Does it present a Christ crucified for the sins of His people and risen again as the conqueror of death? If it does not do so then the two greatest enemies of mankind, sin and death, are left dominating us for ever and we are as utter slaves without hope. This is what the Galatian Christian failed to realize. No wonder Paul was stirred to the depths of his being. He even put himself under God’s curse if he failed to deliver faithfully the good news of redemption committed to him by the Lord and worked out by Christ alone. Any mingling of “good works”, human merit or religious ordinances as a necessary part of the true gospel was heresy, even if an angel from heaven preached it.

Who were these troublers? There is little doubt that they were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who were zealous for the law. We read of them in Acts xv.:

“And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, *ye cannot be saved.*”

A remarkable thing is that the problem of circumcision for Gentile believers is not dealt with in Galatians which strongly suggests it was written *before* Acts xv., when the Jerusalem Council settled this question, otherwise Paul would surely have referred to it as it would greatly have helped his stand on this point. He dismisses it by saying “If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing” (v. 2, 3). It looks as though the Apostle feared that the Galatians had not appreciated the seriousness of their fall from the truth of the gospel, for he repeats himself saying “if any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received let him be accursed”. He then follows it with a protest:

“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ” (i. 10, N.I.V.).

Why should he say this unless he had been accused of acting so as to get human approval and thus winning adherents, by suiting his message to his hearers? Whatever faults Paul may have had, a man-pleaser was certainly not one. So much so he now proceeds to give details of his past life showing that such a charge was completely false. He had long ago realized that trying to combine pleasing the Lord and pleasing man was impossible. Peter and the apostles associated with him had publicly declared the same truth for in Acts v. 29 we read:

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

We need to remember constantly the same truth. All service and witness must be done as unto the Lord and not to man. To carry out the Lord’s work with one eye on man and his approval is to court failure. Sometimes faithfulness to the Lord means that we have to say or do things that are unpopular and will not please. The temptation is then either to soften or avoid this in some way because we are afraid to offend others. Many a church minister is at the mercy of his congregation. He knows that if he tells them the truth there will be trouble and perhaps his job will be in jeopardy. This is specially true, Paul warns, of the last days when “men will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto myths (fables)” (II Tim. iv. 3, 4). Thus it is that these hearers get what *they want* rather than *what they need*, and in doing this, swerve from the truth and get embedded in error.

Paul intends to leave the Galatian Christians in no doubt of his faithfulness to God’s truth committed to him, so he now outlines the steps that led to his conversion and the experiences that followed:

“For ye have heard of my conversation (manner of life) in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it and

profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (i. 13, 14).

In dealing with his past history the Apostle was honest and does not attempt to excuse his conduct. He shows how in his ignorance and darkness he treated the early church as heretics and did his level best to stamp them out. *Dioko*, the word for persecute is used in Acts ix. 4 "Saul, Saul, why do ye *persecute* Me?". Little did he realize that in touching the Lord's people he touched the Lord Himself, which only goes to show the wonderful unity made between the Lord Jesus Christ and His people.

As he looked back on this episode in his life, he felt nothing but shame, although, as he said later, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (I Tim. i. 12, 13). Nevertheless he describes himself at this time as a "blasphemer and a persecuter and a violent man" (I Tim. i. 13, N.I.V.). Surely then it was obvious that such a man could not have invented the gospel that he preached which was the direct opposite of all his thoughts and actions before his conversion. Let his critics bear this in mind, specially when they accused him of inventing the gospel that he preached.

**No.3. i. 15 - ii. 3.**  
**pp. 24 - 29**

It is evident from Paul's reference to the "Jews' religion" in Gal. i. 13, 14 that he regarded Judaism as a different religion from Christianity. As regards the former he made great strides and forged ahead, outstripping many of his contemporaries. He was a man who never did things by halves. The Laodicean spirit was absolutely foreign to his nature. He tells the Galatians that he was exceeding zealous (*zelotes*, a zealot) for the traditions of his fathers (i. 14) and he was well aware of the bondage of the law, just as Peter was when he described it as a "yoke" which "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10).

What he was so concerned about was the attempt of the enemy, through the Judaizers, to fasten the heavy weight of the Mosaic law upon the Galatian converts and so render their liberty in Christ null and void. Paul was the Apostle of freedom as the clarion call of Gal. v. 1 makes clear. He who had been so wonderfully freed by the Lord took the greatest care that the yoke of the law would never be placed upon the Gentile converts that were under his charge no matter where it came from. He sums up his conversion by saying:

"But when it pleased God Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the heathen (Gentiles) . . . ." (i. 15).

It was the risen Christ Whom he met on the Damascus road causing him to make an immediate turn-around and place himself entirely at the Lord's disposal by saying "Lord,

what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). This the Lord made abundantly clear to him and he expresses it by saying "that I might preach HIM among the Gentiles".

What an example this is to all would be preachers whatever persuasion they are! The Lord Jesus Christ, His Person and Work should be the continual subject for all preachers, but how many sermons pass this test? So many consist of anything but this, yet they are all supposed to be Gospel preaching! No wonder there is a falling away in many a church today.

Paul now goes on to record his movements after his conversion, and it is not easy to identify these with those recorded in the Acts. There are differences of opinions among expositors and a lot of space could be taken up with discussing these. The Apostle states:

“. . . . Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days . . . ." (Gal. i. 17, 18).

Where do the "three years" start from, his conversion or after his return to Damascus? We are inclined to say, from his conversion, but some do not take this view. In trying to solve problems of chronology it is easy to miss the purport of this portion of the epistle to the Galatians and that is *Paul's independence of the twelve and any other human source for his ministry*. Had we a fuller and more detailed chronology of this period in the Acts of the Apostles, doubtless chronological difficulties would vanish. Our exposition will therefore concentrate on the above main reason, which the epistle demonstrates, namely Paul's unique Gentile ministry and the gospel associated with it.

But before this took effect, he tells us that he made no attempt to get help from local believers or from the leaders at Jerusalem, but he went for a protracted period into Arabia, which presumably means the country around Damascus. In the quietude of this region apart from any other Christians, he could think things over under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, getting to know the Lord's will and deciding the next steps to take in his witness for Him (i. 15-17). This period ended by his return to Damascus (17). Paul continues his epistle by saying:

"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (i. 18, 19).

Again we are faced with chronological difficulties. From what point do we date the three years, from Paul's conversion or from his return from Arabia to Damascus? And is this the visit recorded in Acts ix. 27 (after "many days" had passed and this might cover three years Acts ix. 23), or was it the "famine relief" visit of Acts xi. 30? It would seem that the former is indicated, for the second visit was apparently paid from Antioch, not Damascus. What is clear is that for the first crucial years, the Apostle had not re-visited Jerusalem and by this time his gospel ministry as fully developed, so it was evident that he did not owe his gospel to the Jerusalem church and when he visited Peter (Cephas) it was to get to know him *personally*, and not to receive further details concerning the gospel which the risen Christ had communicated to him, though doubtless

Paul would have been vitally interested to learn from Peter all he could reveal concerning the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus.

In addition to this, Paul met James, the Lord's brother, who was able to add further details concerning the Lord's home life, but apart from these two, "other of the apostles saw I none" Paul declared, even though he was in Jerusalem (Gal. i. 19). In other words he had no prolonged contact with the leaders of the Jerusalem church before his own gospel was formed, and this gospel therefore owed nothing to them, but was entirely "by revelation of Jesus Christ" independent of all human contacts.

So much was depending upon this, that he makes a solemn assertion, "now the things that I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (i. 20)—the independence of his ministry from the Twelve was crucial, so there must be no misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the facts. He goes on to state:

"Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ" (i. 21, 22).

If the visit to Jerusalem just described was the one recorded in Acts ix. 26-30 then the Apostle, omitting the brief stay at Caesarea, is now referring to his return to Tarsus, where we find him in Acts xi. 25, for Tarsus was situated in the province of Syria and Cilicia. Paul preached in this area quite independently of the mother church at Jerusalem, for he owed nothing to them as regards the gospel that he ministered. Not only this, but he was unknown personally to the churches of Judaea, that is the country churches as distinct from Jerusalem (i. 22). Yet they recognized the gospel that he preached as being the truth, even though it came from its one time bitterest enemy, and "they glorified God in me" (i. 24).

When we come to chapter ii. of Galatians we have another dating problem:

"Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also" (ii. 1).

Does the Apostle mean fourteen years after this conversion or fourteen years after the first visit to Jerusalem? The most natural way to read his words is that he has the latter in mind and if this is so, and the first visit is that of Acts ix. 26, then this one must be either the visit of Acts xi. 30 (the "famine relief" one) or the council of Jerusalem visit of Acts xv. 2. In any case this represents a considerable lapse of time during which Paul was engaged in his Jewish and Gentile mission and there could not have been any doubts as to the gospel he preached during this period.

Why did he go to Jerusalem again? The Apostle is quick to tell us. It was "by revelation" (ii. 2). The Lord had made it quite clear to him that this was in His will and right throughout his life, the Apostle had one dominant purpose, namely to carry out the will of Christ whatever the cost; for it was *His* approval that he coveted above all else. We give the structure of this section of the epistle which has been exhibited by Charles H. Welch in *The Apostle of the Reconciliation*, for he vividly sets out the essential points of this most important visit and its bearing on the truth:

## Galatians ii. 1 - 14.

- A | 1, 2. | a | PAUL goes to Jerusalem for the faith.  
          b | BARNABAS stands fast with him.
- B | 3-5. | c | Titus a Greek not *compelled* to be circumcised.  
          d | Paul's stand for THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.
- C | 6-10. | e | Those who *seemed* to be somewhat.  
          f | Nothing added to me.  
          g | Gospel of the Circumcision.—PETER.  
          g | Gospel of the Uncircumcision.—PAUL.  
          e | Those who *seemed* to be pillars.  
          f | Only . . . Remember the poor.
- A | 11-13. | a | PETER comes to Antioch; overthrows the faith.  
          b | Even BARNABAS carried away.
- B | 14. | d | Peter's walk against THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.  
          c | Compelled Gentiles to Judaize.

In this analysis, Paul's absolute equality with the Twelve is made perfectly clear. The words of C. H. Welch are to the point here:

“Notice how the structure brings into severe contrast the two chief actors. Paul's name is associated with a supreme fight for freedom and for the truth of the gospel. Peter's name is associated with blame, dissimulation, and with a walk contrary to the truth of the gospel. With the champion of reconciliation (Paul) Barnabas stands firm, but with the vacillating minister of the circumcision (Peter) Barnabas wavers and falls. Titus a Greek is brought forward as Paul's great object lesson. There, in the very citadel and shrine of the circumcision (Jerusalem), Titus, the Greek, was *not compelled* to be circumcised. Peter on the other hand, by his withdrawal from the table of the Gentiles, by the re-erection of the barrier broken down by God in Acts x. . . . . *compelled* these Gentiles to Judaize . . . . Paul declares that at this most critical conference, when the whole subject of his ministry to the Gentiles was discussed ‘they *added nothing*’ to him, ‘only that he should remember the poor’!”.

**No.4. ii. 4 - 16.**  
**pp. 41 - 46**

In the visit to Jerusalem described in the second chapter of the epistle Paul found disturbing elements. After stating that Titus, a Gentile was *not* compelled to be circumcised\*, the apostle refers to:

“. . . . false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:” (ii. 4).

[\* - Some may be disturbed by a footnote in the N.E.B. where it is stated that “some witnesses”, omitting *hois oude* at the beginning of verse 5 make the sense to mean that Paul *did yield* to the circumcision of Titus. The witnesses are not given, but full information is found in the critical notes of *The Greek New Testament* edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger and Allen Wikgren. Most, if not all the modern translations ignore this reading as does the Nestle text. Bearing Paul’s character in mind and the crucial struggle for the truth of the gospel in the context, we can ignore it too.]

The words in the Greek suggest that these false brethren had been deliberately ‘planted’ on the church and been brought in secretly to spy out their liberty in Christ and if possible to bring them back into bondage again. We cannot be sure whether the Jerusalem church or the Galatian church is meant, but it makes little difference. The main thing is that here was a Satanic onslaught on the gospel of the grace of God which the Apostle of liberty resisted to the utmost, so that its purity and its very existence might be preserved for the future:

“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (ii. 5).

We little realize what we owe to the courageous stand of this man, so that the gospel might not be blotted out, but continue, not only with the believers of the time, but also right through to us today. At Jerusalem, in spite of the “somebodies” and “somewhats” and the insidious infiltration of the enemy, one man, by the grace of God, in the face of all odds, stands resolutely for the truth and refuses to yield. All the Jewish leaders could do was to ask him “to remember the poor!”. They could add *nothing* to him (ii. 6). At a crucial time like this, personalities pale into insignificance. Truth must have first place. Let us always remember this fact. We little know what practical effects a faithful stand can have on others. Paul had been called and fully qualified by the risen Christ and this had been abundantly vindicated by the Lord in the saving response of many to the Christ-given gospel of grace, apart from works or merit, that he had faithfully preached. How many times such a situation has occurred in past history, only the Lord knows. It surely is perfectly clear, that today, with its increasing darkness, there is a need to exhibit such an unyielding response as that given by Paul at the beginning, even though we have to stand by ourselves, humanly speaking.

In his later letters, the Apostle gives practical evidence that he had not forgotten the material needs of believers who were poor, for he raised a substantial fund among the Gentile churches for them which he and others took to Jerusalem on the occasion of his last visit (I Cor. xvi. 1-4). In Gal. ii. 10 he asserts “which very thing I was eager to do” (R.S.V.).

Another very important thing that resulted from this visit to Jerusalem was the complete acceptance of Paul’s apostleship to the Gentiles by the Jewish leaders and recognition of the fact that there was perfect equality between him and the Twelve. This was sealed by giving the right hands of fellowship and was a sign of friendship and trust. What a blow all this must have been to the Judaizers! Not only was Paul’s gospel recognized by the leaders of the mother church at Jerusalem, but his apostleship as well. Thus, in a wonderful way, the Lord vindicated His servant.

But what did Paul mean by “the gospel *of* the circumcision”? and “the gospel *of* the uncircumcision”? This should not be read as the gospel *to* the circumcision (Jew) and uncircumcision (Gentile). At the same time we must recognize that there are not two different ways in which God saves sinners. This would be foreign to the whole Bible. The Lord Jesus as sin-bearer on the cross, in His death and resurrection forms the one all-sufficient basis for the salvation of the sinner, whether Jew or Gentile. In spite of this, there were differences in the *presentation* of the Gospel owing to the utter contrasting backgrounds of the Jew in covenant relationship with God and the pagan Gentile, in all his darkness and ignorance of God and His Word. One has only to read Eph. ii. 11, 12 to see this:

“Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh who are called the uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:”.

added to which desperate condition they had no written revelation from God to make Him known to themselves. This was Israel’s prerogative, for to them had been committed the ‘oracles’ (words) of God, i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures. This is why the Apostle Paul, when confronted with the pagans at Athens, makes no attempt to quote these Scriptures for they would have meant nothing to them. On the other hand in his contacts with the Jewish synagogues on his missionary travels he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures (Acts xvii. 1, 2); likewise the Apostle Peter in Acts iii. 19-26. This context is a good illustration of the “gospel of the circumcision”. Peter addresses his hearers as “ye men of Israel” (Acts iii 12) and bluntly accuses them of murdering the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 13-15). In spite of the magnitude of this sin, he proclaims to them (the circumcision) the good news (gospel) of forgiveness. He urges them to repent (change their attitude of mind) and turn back to God (be converted). The result of this would be that their sins would be blotted out (19), Christ would return to them, and the earthly kingdom purpose of God which had been the theme of all the O.T. prophets, would then be fulfilled and the kingdom restored. He reminded them that they were the children of Abraham to whom the Lord had made wonderful unconditional and eternal promises concerning the *seed* and the *land*.

If this was not good news in the fullest sense to sinning and backsliding Israel, then words have no meaning. But it rested squarely upon the redeeming work of Christ on the cross, just as Paul's gospel did.

The leaders of the Jerusalem church, James, Peter and John fully admitted this and therefore sealed the matter by giving the "right hands of fellowship" (Gal. ii. 9), thereby showing that there was no rivalry between them even though they went to the circumcision (Israel), while Paul's sphere was the "heathen" (the Gentiles). In other words, it was recognized that his was a Christ-directed ministry independent of the Twelve and the mother church at Jerusalem.

It was only possibly a little while later that the incident recorded in verses 11-16 took place. It is always lamentable when violent disagreement occurs between believers over the Word of God and its practice, and even worse when it is in public with the possibility of unbelievers being present. Doubtless Paul would rather have dealt privately with Peter's inconsistent walk, but danger was not past, even though the result of the meeting with the Jewish leaders had proved satisfactory. By his actions, Peter was denying the reconciliation that commenced in Acts x. There God had showed him that it was now His will that the barrier between Jew and Gentile should be removed, so that Gentiles could be saved and be grafted in to the stock of Israel and share their covenant blessings (Rom. xi. 16-18) and also act as a spur to the nation "to provoke them to jealousy" (Rom. x. 19; xi. 11).

It was logical therefore that Peter could now have close fellowship with Gentile believers and even share his meals with them. Before Acts x. Peter's attitude would have been entirely different. As he said to Cornelius:

"Ye know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation, but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts x. 28).

The divine reversal Peter had obeyed until "certain came from James . . . ., but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Gal. ii. 11, 12). Those who came were obviously Judaizers, hence Peter's fear, though we need not assume that they were *sent* from James with his authority. In fact Acts xv. 24 denies this. Peter probably remembered the rebuke the Jerusalem believers had given him for eating with the Gentiles (Acts xi. 1-18). The fear of man that bringeth a snare has been at the root of many an action that has resulted in backsliding. Fear can make cowards of us all. It was not only the lapse of a prominent leader that was to be regretted but the bad effect that this action had on others and even Barnabas:

"The other Jews joined him (Peter) in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray" (Gal. ii. 13, N.I.V.).

Both courage and fear can be contagious. We can radiate both by our actions. Here at Antioch Paul had to act quickly before the rot spread any further and as a consequence he

had to face Peter publicly and rebuke him, regrettable though this was, and once more make a public declaration of the truth of the gospel.

From verse 15 to the end of the chapter, there follows a passage of close theological argument, anticipating chapters iii. and iv. We have a problem like that which meets us often in John's gospel, in deciding where Paul's words to Peter end and his argument relating to the truth for the benefit of the Galatian begins.

Probably the whole section was delivered to Peter and the believers present, for all of it related to the pressing problem of the moment. Paul remonstrates with Peter by reminding him, that although he was a Jew by birth and hedged in by the food restrictions of the law, yet now, under God's instruction, he fully shared meals with Gentile believers. Then, through fear he withdraws and puts up the barrier again:

“When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, you are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?” (Gal. ii. 14, N.I.V.).  
“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor” (ii. 18).

Not only was Peter's action undoing what God had taught him in Acts x., but it could be construed that works and law-keeping were necessary for acceptance with God. But the Lord Jesus, in His earthly ministry had made it clear that He had not come for people who thought themselves to be righteous, but for sinners who needed repentance (Matt.ix.13). And later on, Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was going to declare that “there is none righteous, *no, not one*”, and that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii. 11, 23). Consequently he continued by saying to Peter:

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (ii. 16).

Justification by faith in Christ was at the heart of the gospel which had been committed to the Apostle Paul. In English we can express “justification” by the word “righteousness”, but it is important to remember that there is no such distinction in the Greek word or its derivatives. “Just” and “righteous” are similar in thought. A righteous being, as God uses the term, is one that has never sinned once in thought, word or deed and is therefore perfect *inside* as well as outside. It should be obvious that no such being has walked this earth since the fall of Adam (Psa. cxliii. 2), with the exception of One, Who is God manifest in the flesh.

All this and more is developed in Romans written later. What is the meaning of “the faith *of* Christ”? This could be construed as an objective genitive and be rendered “faith *in* Christ” as the R.V. and many modern translations. On the other hand faith is often used as the equivalent of *faithfulness*, and then the constant faithfulness and unchangeability of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus would be the basis of justification rather than the believers' faith *in* Him. Both are of course true and can be

looked on as two aspects of the great work of redemption which has been worked out by God alone in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**No.5. ii. 20 - iii. 9.**  
**pp. 72 - 77**

The Apostle Paul finishes his address to Peter publicly in the well-known words of Gal. ii. 20, 21:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

These words are really a concise summary of the teaching he later gives in the epistle to the Romans, specially in chapters vi. and vii. Saul the zealous Pharisee, had to learn the real place of the law of God as it affects mankind as sinners. What meant so much to him in his pre-Christian life, he found to be useless in conquering the great problem of sin. Once he could say that “touching the righteousness in the law he was blameless” (Phil. iii. 6). That is to say, as far as external observance of the law was concerned, he was correct in all details. What he had never realized to this point was that the law touches *the mind* first of all. He said:

“. . . . I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. vii. 7).

Now lust originates in the *mind*, and the law of God shows this up remorselessly, but gives no power to conquer or eradicate it. The result for Paul was

“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment (the law) deceived me, and by it slew me” (Rom. vii. 11).

This painful experience proved to be the death knell to all the Apostle’s hopes for complete personal righteousness by his own efforts. The next move, if there was to be one, must come from God. And it did, by the same means, namely *death* followed by *resurrection life*, for the Lord unfolded to Paul the great truth of *identification with Christ*, in His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection (Rom. vi. 1-11), and it is noteworthy that this doctrine is only found in Paul’s writings.

When we understand this, we are able to plumb the depths of Gal. ii. 20. “I have been crucified with Christ” declares the Apostle. The verb is in the perfect tense in the Greek, expressing past action issuing in abiding results. Nevertheless he is abundantly alive, for the power and life of the risen Christ now indwells him and takes complete control from this moment onwards.

Paul gladly yielded to all this, for it was the complete answer to all his personal problems. He did not attempt to frustrate the grace of God that had worked in this marvelous way. He now realized that “righteousness inside and out” could never come by law-keeping. If it could then the sacrificial death of Christ with all its agony and darkness was a waste of time and of no value whatsoever (verse 21) to deal with the overwhelming problem of sin.

All these words he addressed publicly to Peter and those with him, doubtless hoping and praying they would recognize the great mistake Peter had made by re-erecting the barriers of the law. This matter was so basic and important that the next chapter takes it further, and what Paul had argued from his own spiritual experience, he now shows to be grounded upon the Scriptures themselves. And for this, he finds the example of Abraham a perfect illustration.

When we study the record of this patriarch, we find that all the basic truths of Christianity are reflected in his life. Consequently we find him also brought forward as an example in the epistle to the Hebrews and the epistle of James. Abraham was a Gentile, not a Jew, though he became their ancestor. He knew nothing of Moses’ law with its ritual, its types and shadows, nor of the temple that followed. The Judaizers quoted Moses, but Paul quotes Abraham with the promises of grace granted him by God. If they refer to centuries of tradition and practice, he will appeal to the great covenant based on grace that was older still.

But before he does this, he makes a personal appeal to the Galatians:

“You foolish Galatians: Who has bewitched you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn one thing from you; did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you trying to attain perfection by human effort?” (Gal. iii. 1-3, N.I.V.).

Their stupidity amazed Paul. Had they been bewitched by someone? The word “bewitched” has links with the English “fascinated”. They had listened to the glib tongues from Jerusalem and doubtless these had presented their case very persuasively so that the Galatians had become fascinated by their arguments. And yet Paul, in his initial ministry to them, had so truthfully and vividly brought before them a crucified Christ as the only answer to their needs, that it was as though the Lord Jesus had been “placarded” before them. This is the sense of the Greek *proegraphie*. The large hoardings that carry advertisements by road sides would be a modern example. A crucified Messiah, so presented, cut the ground from under the Judaizers feet with all their talk about the law of Moses.

The Apostle now asks them a simple question, how did their Christian life begin? Did it begin by their own efforts, by their own faulty attempts to obey the law? Or did it begin in simple faith in that crucified One which was ministered to them by the Spirit? That is, they received the Truth by *hearing* the Word of God as spoken by Paul and *believing* it without any works of merit on their part.

Furthermore, their belief had been followed by persecution from their fellow countrymen. Had this been to no purpose and been utterly valueless? (iii. 4). In verse 3 we have “spirit” and “flesh” put in antithesis. When Paul does this the normal meaning is the new nature given by the Holy Spirit at the new birth as opposed to the sinful old nature inherited from fallen Adam. The ensuing conflict from these two opposites is described by Paul from his own experience in Rom. vii. Here the Galatian believers are forcibly reminded that their salvation commenced with the Holy Spirit’s work, and did they imagine that further spiritual progress could be made by something as utterly imperfect as the sinful old nature?

The Acts period was one of evidential miracles which accompanied the ministry of the earthly kingdom in the days of the Lord Jesus and with the renewed offer of mercy to Israel as revealed during the Acts of the Apostles. These special kingdom gifts are referred to in verse 5:

“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and *worketh miracles* among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

To clinch his argument the Apostle immediately cites the example of Abraham, for he did exactly what Paul was urging the Galatian believers to do, namely to *believe God*, apart from any works of his own, and thereby it was accounted to him by God for righteousness. Abraham realized he could do nothing himself, but throwing himself on God, he reckoned that the Lord could do what he could not. Accepting this humble position of utter dependence, he was ‘justified’ or accounted righteous. It should have been obvious to the Galatians that any other attitude would have been stubborn pride and self-satisfaction:

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (i.e. Gentiles) through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (iii. 6-9).

It is striking how Scripture is personified as “seeing beforehand” and “preaching” to Abraham. The written Word is indissolubly linked with the Living Word, and is given the attributes of God, in this instance, *foreknowledge*. God’s choice by grace of the pagan Abram had one great object in view to produce a race that He would redeem and spiritually educate so that they as His representatives could take the knowledge of Himself and His salvation to the ends of the earth. This redemption and justification could only be along the same lines as their progenitor, Abraham, that is by complete trust in the salvation which God alone can provide. If they did not know in their experience this salvation by faith alone, how could they preach it to the world? They had to go through the long discipline of being under the law given through Moses not to save them but to prove the opposite, that this law with its great standard of absolute righteousness can only condemn sinners; it can never save or justify them.

All this and more the Apostle Paul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is going to argue from the O.T. Scriptures, which was the Bible of believers living at this time.

In what sense could the Gospel be preached *before* the earthly coming of the Saviour and the sacrificial offering of Himself on the cross? This was possibly because in the divine foreview, the seed of Abraham had *Christ in view* as the seed as well as the nation of Israel (Matt. i. 1). This explains the rather perplexing argument in chapter iii. 16 which we shall deal with in its place.

Paul can no firmly assert that “They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (iii. 9). These men of faith are one with Abraham in their firm trust in God and His provision by grace of that all-needed righteousness which they could never produce themselves.

It is the same today. Mankind can be divided into two classes, or at least those who have come under the sound of the gospel of Christ. Either like Abraham of old, they have realized their sin and failing and their utter inability to eradicate it and its consequence, death, or they persuade themselves that, given time, they will one day be able to work out their own salvation and make themselves perfect. None seem to agree as to how this is going to be accomplished, but they all delude themselves by wishful thinking that it can be realized if they work hard enough. The epistles to the Galatians and Romans show the utter falsity of such ideas. God’s good news about His Son and what has been accomplished by Him for sinners is the only answer, and this is the glorious gospel that we have to proclaim “in season and out of season” (II Tim. iv. 2-4) while opportunity lasts and this is what the Apostle Paul was urging on the believers in Galatia.

**No.6. iii. 10 - 18.  
pp. 86 - 92**

Having cited Abraham as an excellent example of the faith that takes God at His Word without trying to add human works or merit, the Apostle Paul passes on to the law of God given through Moses. Doubtless the Judaizers would deem the reference to Abraham to be irrelevant. The main point to them was the law and the necessity for practicing it in order to be saved and it was this fundamental error they were pressing on the Galatians.

Paul goes to the heart of the matter straight away by stressing that this law was not just a string of precepts to be talked about and admired. It was a rigid code to be *obeyed to the letter continuously without one flaw*, and the failure to do this brought the offender under nothing less than the *curse of God*. To prove this point he quotes Deut. xxvii. 26:

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written  
Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of the law to do them . . . .”,

and this is followed by the first verse of the next chapter “and it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, *to observe and do all*

*His commandments which I command thee this day . . . .*” (Deut. xxviii. 1). It must never be forgotten that only one people of the earth received the law of God and that was the people of Israel and they undertook by solemn covenant to keep it in all its details. After reciting the law to the people, we are told that Moses confirmed the covenant by the sprinkling of blood on the altar and the people themselves:

“And he took the book of the covenant (the law) and read it 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*” (Exod.xxiv.8).

There is a lot of loose thinking today about the law of Moses. Too often it is forgotten that this was a solemn covenant made between Jehovah and His earthly people Israel alone. It was never given as a covenant to any Gentile nation. Therefore when the question is asked, who comes under the curse of God? the Scriptural answer is perfectly clear, the Jewish nation.

“Now we know what things soever the law saith, it *saith to them who are under the law*” (Rom. iii. 19).

Consequently the Jew as a sinner was under a double disability. He was not only under the dominion of sin and death as the whole human race has been since the fall of Adam, but was in addition a breaker of the *covenant* of the law, the penalty of which was God’s curse. Contrary to popular opinion, Adam as a sinner was *not* cursed by God. It was the serpent and the ground that was cursed for Adam’s sake (Gen. iii. 14, 17). While it is true to say that the whole human race as sinners have broken God’s law for we are “all under sin” (Rom. iii. 9) yet it was only one section of them (the nation of Israel) who have *covenanted with God* to keep this law, knowing at the same time what would be the consequence of breaking that covenant, namely coming under the terrible curse of God. It is noteworthy that God refers to the law as the old covenant which Israel ‘broke’ (Jer. xxxi. 32).

It was in this sense that the Jew was not only under sin but “under the law” as Paul expresses it in Romans and Galatians and “as many as are under the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are in the book of the law *to do them*” (Gal. iii. 10), and this was clearly recited to Israel and not to any other nation. The conditions of this divine code had been made abundantly clear to this people. It consisted of commandments, *all* of which had to be kept in *practice* not theory, and this meant that not *one* slips in thought, word or deed could be tolerated during the span of human life. Ninety nine percent obedience was not sufficient; it must be one hundred percent. Nothing less than this would be counted as “keeping the law”.

It should have been obvious that no failing creature could ever approximate to such a standard. As we have before pointed out, the law set out the high standards of God but gave no power or ability to keep them. All it could do was to show up the sinfulness of sin, and condemn it, bringing in the verdict of guilty (Rom. iii. 9-19) and finally shutting

us all up to one remedy and only one, namely Christ and His redemptive work for us. This is going to be the argument of Gal. iii. 24:

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.”

The Apostle therefore proceeds in his argument:

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is *not* of faith, but the man that *doeth* them shall live in them” (Gal. iii. 11, 12).

Here we come to a key-text which forms the Scriptural basis of Paul’s gospel ministry, “the just shall live by faith”, quoted from Hab. ii. 4 and is also used in Rom. i. 17 and Heb. x. 38. The Hebrew *emunah* translated ‘faith’ in Habakkuk means steadfastness and fidelity and is accompanied by the pronoun ‘his’, whereas the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the O.T.) supplies the pronoun “My” and reads “the righteous one will live by My faithfulness”. Paul omits the pronouns but there can be no doubt that, taking the whole of this teaching on justification into account he means that the righteous one will live (in future resurrection life) because of his faith in the Lord’s faithfulness; quite apart from any works of effort on this part.

Both Old and New Testaments regard righteousness in legal terms. We quote Charles H. Welch (*Just and the Justifier*, p.18) here:

1. God is looked upon as a Judge (Isa. i. 7, 8; Rom. viii. 33).
2. The person to be justified is guilty. He is looked upon as exposed to the judgment of God (Rom. i. 32), and whose mouth is shut (Rom. iii. 19).
3. There are three accusers: (i.) The law (John v. 45); (ii.) Conscience (Rom. ii. 15); (iii.) Satan (Zech. iii. 2 and Rev. xii. 10).
4. The charge is drawn up in legal handwriting (Col. ii. 14).
5. The gospel provides the guilty person with a plea (Rom. iii. 23-25).
6. The Lord Himself is the Advocate (I John ii. 1, 2).
7. The sentence for believers is one of complete forgiveness, justification, acceptance, and title to life and to inheritance (Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34; II Cor. v. 21).

Thus it is that justification by faith in the teaching expounded by Paul and inspired by the Spirit of God, means that righteousness or complete rightness which is reckoned by God to the believer in Christ, in this way leaving him accepted and assured in Christ forever.

It is important to realize that the three quotations of Hab. ii. 4 found in the N.T. stress a different word each time. In Romans the emphasis is in the word ‘just’ or ‘righteous’, the two English words referring to the one word used in the Greek (*dikaïos*). In Galatians ‘faith’ is the important word as opposed to works and human merit; whereas in Hebrews the stress is on the word ‘live’ for here we have the personal response in spite of discouragement and difficulty, and the need to “go on to maturity (perfection)”.

The Apostle Paul, in the context we are studying, makes it quite clear that the law of God is certainly not “through or by faith”, that is, it has nothing to do with the thought of receiving a right standing with God as a gracious gift through faith in Christ. Rather it stresses that if works are to be the basis of forgiveness and life eternal, then such obedience to the law must be absolutely complete (Gal. iii. 12) and that is utterly impossible for any human being because all the world is guilty before a righteous God. There is “none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. iii. 10, 19). Thus the emptiness and deceitfulness of the Judaizers’ contention that the law must be introduced into the gospel is made manifest.

Paul goes on to deal with the fact that, in breaking the *covenant* of the law the Jew came under its *curse* which was the terrible penalty imposed by the Old Testament upon law-breakers. Hence the need for their Messiah to bear that curse so that they could be for ever freed from it:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. iii. 13).

The Apostle here quotes Deut. xxi. 23 “a hanged man is accursed by God”. This does not mean that he was cursed *because* he hung from a tree, but rather that this was the outward sign that he had broken the covenant of law and brought the curse and punishment upon himself.

This was a death of degradation and shame and into this terrible experience the Lord Jesus willingly entered so that those under the curse might be freed from it for ever. He Himself became the accursed one to free those under the curse! (see also II Cor. v. 21). Perhaps it was at this point on calvary’s cross that the Father had to turn away His gaze from His beloved Son, which wrung those words of agony from Christ “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Matt. xxvii. 46). During those hours of physical darkness we shall never know what bearing the penalty for our sins cost the Saviour. Keeping this in mind, may God constantly deliver us from a light estimate of sin.

Verse 14 which follows shows that the deliverance of Israel from the curse of a broken covenant of law was utterly essential if the earthly kingdom purpose of God was to be fulfilled, the Gentile world reached and the unconditional promise to Abraham realized, that in his seed *all families* of the earth should be blessed (Gen. xii.). Paul expresses it in this way:

“. . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. iii. 14).

And now, lest anyone should argue that the law nullified these earlier promises of God to Abraham, the Apostle shows that this was impossible. In order to make this clear he gives as an example a man’s last will and testament. The Greek *diatheke* can mean covenant or testament. In order to understand this passage we must remove from our minds the modern conception of making a will, as the legal requirements were different in N.T. days. For instance Paul says “though it be a man’s covenant (or will), yet if it be confirmed no man disannulleth or added thereto”. Adding to a confirmed will was

illegal, whereas today a codicil can always be added to a will provided it is properly witnessed.

We are greatly indebted in many respects to the researches of Sir William Ramsay in Asia Minor and in his *Historical Commentary on St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians* he deals with the process of adoption and will-making. He writes:

“The idea that they who follow the principle of faith are sons of Abraham, whatever family they belong to by nature, would certainly be understood by the Galatians as referring to the legal process called adoption, *huiothesia*.

Adoption was a kind of embryo will; the adopted son became the owner of the property, and the property could pass to a person that was naturally outside the family only through his being adopted. The adoption was a sort of will-making; and this ancient form of will was irrevocable and public. The terms ‘son’ and ‘heir’ are interchangeable.

An illustration from the ordinary fact of society, as it existed in the Galatian cities, is here stated: ‘I speak after the manner of men’. The will (*diatheke*) of a human being is irrevocable when once duly executed. But, if Paul is speaking about a will, how can he say, after it is once made, it is irrevocable?

Such irrevocability was a characteristic feature of Greek law, according to which an heir outside the family must be adopted into the family; and the adoption was the will-making. The testator, after adopting his heir, could not subsequently take away from him his share of the inheritance or impose new conditions on his succession. The Roman-Syrian Law Book will illustrate this passage of the Epistle. It actually lays down the principle that a man can never put away an adopted son, and that he cannot put away a real son without good ground. It is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth; yet it is so. The expression in Gal. iii. 15, ‘when it hath been confirmed’ must also be observed. Every will had to be passed through the Record Office of the city. It was not regarded in the Greek law as a purely private document. It must be deposited in the Record Office.”

From this extract it will be seen that a man's will made at this period of history gave the Apostle Paul a splendid illustration to show that the law of Moses given 430 years later could not abrogate God's unconditional promise to Abraham. Just as a human testament once made and completed could never be altered in early N.T. days, so the Lord's promises of grace to Abraham could not be changed or rendered null and void by Moses' law or by anything else:

“And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, *cannot disannul*, that it should *make the promise of none effect*. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (iii. 17, 18).

Some may have a difficulty with verse 16:

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of *one* and to thy *seed* which is Christ.”

This verse is beloved of amillennialists who want to spiritualize everything connected with the kingdom of God even if it relates to the earth. They reject the idea that Abraham's seed can refer to the literal people of Israel and this is the verse they

frequently quote. But if they would only look down the chapter and read the last verse this is what they would find:

“And if ye (the Galatian believers) be Christ’s *then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.*”

So Abraham has a literal seed after all! Is Paul contradicting himself? No, not when one faces all the Scriptural facts. In verse 16 Paul is alluding to Gen. xxi. 12:

“ . . . . for in Isaac shall thy *seed* be called.”

The Hebrew *zera* is a collective noun and is used here as a singular with a singular verb. But if we turn to Gen. xvii. 7 we read:

“And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and *thy seed (zera)* after thee in their *generations*, for an everlasting covenant . . . .”.

Here *zera* is obviously treated as a *plural* (generations) and the truth of the matter is that the Seed, Christ and the seed (Abraham’s posterity) is looked on as *a unity* in the kingdom purposes of God and both are necessary in the divine plan. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one foundation for the whole redemptive purpose of God which embraces both heaven and earth. In this way the Apostle was able to dispose of objections that might be made by any Judaistic opposer, that the law of Moses cancelled the promises of grace made to Abraham four centuries before.

### **No.7. iii. 19 - iv. 12. pp. 133 - 138**

The Apostle now goes on to ask the question “What, then, was the purpose of the law?” (Gal. iii. 19, N.I.V.) and we do well to pause and consider what the Scripture says the law of Moses can or cannot do, lest we start interposing our own ideas. We commence with the fact that it was “holy, just and good” (Rom. vii. 12, 14, 16). It was God’s law and therefore perfect. Its main aim was to show up sin in its true colours, as the next verse in Galatians shows:

“It was added because of transgressions till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Gal. iii. 19).

“I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. vii. 7).

It is well that we note what the Word of God tells us what the law can and *cannot* do:

- (1) It cannot give eternal life (Gal. iii. 21). In O.T. days it could give as a blessing lengthened human life. In referring to the law relating to the obedience of children to parents, Paul could add in Ephesians “that it may be well with thee and *thou mayest live long on the earth*” (Eph. vi. 2, 3).
- (2) The law could not give all-needed righteousness (Gal. ii. 21).

- (3) It could not give a divine inheritance either now or in the future (Gal. iii. 18).
- (4) The law cannot perfect or lead to spiritual maturity (Heb. vii. 19).
- (5) It was only a “shadow” of good things to come (Heb. x. 1).
- (6) It was “weak on account of the flesh”, that is sinful human nature could not attain to its high standard (Rom. viii. 3).
- (7) Its final purpose was to lead to Christ—to shut the sinner up to Christ as the only complete remedy for his sinful condition (Gal. iii. 24).

It was summed up in one word “love”, *but God’s standard of love not man’s*. “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart”, “Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself”. “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law . . . . love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. xiii. 8-10).

But it is this very thing that failing man cannot do. Love in terms of human conception must be banished from the mind. This is a poor sordid thing by comparison. But for the believer, God’s love has been “shed abroad” (poured out) in our hearts (Romans v. 5). However the Apostle did not seek to minimize in any way the law of God given through Moses. It was given in awe-inspiring majesty through the mediation of angels and Moses (Acts vii. 53). It was “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal. iii. 19). This shows there must be two contracting parties, God on the one hand and Israel on the other. When God dealt with Abraham, no such mediation was needed and Abraham was even put to sleep, that all might be of God’s doing (Gen. xv. 12) for this was all of grace.

This is so much better than law which, in spite of its standards, cannot annul the promises of God.

Are these two in opposition? “Is the law against the promises of God?” (Gal. iii. 21). This is impossible for it would imply that there is inner conflict in the mind of God. Promise and law come equally from God but need to be related to the place the Scriptures reveal that they occupy in His purpose. The law shuts up (concludes) all under sin, leaving one way out and that is solely through Christ Jesus by grace and received on the principle of faith (iii. 22).

Paul illustrates what he means by being “shut up under sin” by giving the duties of a guardian slave, translated “schoolmaster” in the A.V.

“Among the Greeks and Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of the boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood” (Thayer).

The time in the experience of the Galatians that this illustrated was likened to bondage, but now they are all “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (iii. 26) and the bondage is cancelled and in its place is sonship with divine inheritance in view. Not only this, but by the redemptive work of Christ which has completely liberated them, they are welded together as an entity in Christ Jesus. They are *one in Him* and all earthly labels and divisions have vanished.

“. . . . 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” (iii. 28).

“In Christ Jesus” gives their standing in Christ and they join the spiritual ranks of faithful Abraham and those who walked in his footsteps.

The Apostle now contrasts the conditions under the sphere of the law with this new and wonderful position “in Christ” as being an heir with freedom and goes back to the illustration of the pedagogue:

“What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by the father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit Who calls out Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and since you are a son, God made you also an heir” (Gal. iv. 1-7, N.I.V.).

There is only one word that can describe the condition of those who are under the dominion of the law and the principles of the world, that is slavery. The heir, while he is a minor, knows nothing of freedom but is hedged around with restraints and prohibitions until he attains his majority (*maturity?*). The Apostle now applies this to the time before redemption when all were in bondage. *Stoicheia* means “elementary principles” or stages of religious experience (whether Jewish or Gentile) which they have gone through in the past, but are now outdated and abolished by Christ. If the Galatians had been Gentile pagans before they were saved, they could scarcely have been said to be in slavery to Jewish law from any angle. The margin of the New English Bible translates Gal. iv. 3 “elementary ideas belonging to the world”.

However some modern translators render *stoicheia* “elemental spirits of the world” which in popular belief were often linked in men’s minds with spiritual forces. These were thought to control the world as in astrology today. This was the ground from which the later Jewish gnosticism was to grow.

Paul describes these “elements” in verse 9 as “weak and beggarly” or poor, and marvels that the Galatians prepared to go back to the slavery from which they had been redeemed. And the basis of this deliverance is given in verses 4 and 5:

“But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (iv. 4, 5).

Scripture asserts that there is a time and season to every purpose under heaven. The purpose or plan of God is called “the purpose of the ages” (literally Eph. iii. 11). Nations had been permitted to grope in darkness and these times are called “the times of this ignorance” Acts xvii. 30. Many forms of government had been tried and found wanting, Jewish religion, Greek wisdom and Roman power all stood self-confessed failures. The time had come for the Redeemer to be born, thus stressing His full humanity as well as

His deity. Here at last is the promised Seed of the woman Who will crush the serpent's head.

Not only this but He was born "under law" and as a Jew, this could only mean the law of Moses. Thus He might ransom and deliver those who were under the law with the penalty of God's curse if it was broken. We are told that Christ, the sinless One, completely kept the law and was therefore in the position of rescuing those who were enslaved by it in order that they might receive the status of sons with a divine inheritance in view. To such God sent forth the Spirit of His Son in their hearts (iv. 6). Exactly the same word *exapesteilen* is used of God's action as has already been used in verse 4 of His sending the Son. It is not strange therefore that the Spirit is described as "the Spirit of His Son". The result of this is the intimate words "Abba" which is Aramaic meaning "my Father". The two words Abba and Father come together in Mark xiv. 36 and Romans viii. 15. Romans viii. is the chapter of sonship, expressing a precious truth and priceless privilege. Those redeemed in this way leave slavery behind for ever.

Having established this, the Apostle turns back to the problem of the Galatians slipping back to bondage "How turn ye again . . . . ye desire again". It was inexplicable to him that they were willing to step down from the high and wonderful position into which free grace had placed them to the rudimentary things of the law, with its ceremonies, its rites, its days and observances. If they were not returning to idolatry, they were going back to childhood with its lack of freedom.

Paul venerated the law; it was "holy, just and good" to him (Rom. vii. 12) yet because of man's sinful nature, it was "weak on account of the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3) and he does not hesitate to place it on a parallel with the elements of paganism when such a misuse of the law becomes a competitor with, or a perfecter of the gospel of grace (verses 7-11).

"I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain" (Gal. iv. 11).

No one worked harder than the Apostle, but he strongly objected to wasting his time and strength. In no sense was Paul "afraid of" the Galatians. Rather he means "I am fearful for you" (see Gal. ii. 2; Phil. ii. 16; I Thess. ii. 1; iii. 5).

Paul now sums up by saying:

"Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are; ye have not injured me at all" (iv. 12).

To put it more plainly "put yourself in my place . . . . for I have put myself in yours". Is Paul saying in effect "let us be friends" or does he mean that he, a Hebrew and a Pharisee, had already become like a Gentile so far as the law was concerned and he appeals to the Galatians to take their stand with him? Moffatt's translation is very free:

"Do take my line, brothers, just as I once took yours."

We feel that the second interpretation is correct and fits in with the tone of the epistle.

**No.8. iv. 12 - v. 6.**  
**pp. 151 - 156**

The Apostle Paul now gives a personal appeal to the Galatian believers, referring to their past love, their present zeal and the evil influence of the Judaizers which was taking them back from freedom to bondage.

The Apostle assures them that, rather than feeling they had injured him at all, he entertained the warmest recollection of the way they had received him:

“. . . . ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first” (Gal. iv. 12, 13).

There is the possibility that this illness is synonymous with Paul’s thorn in the flesh (II Cor. xii. 7). On the other hand it could read “the trial that you endured through the condition of my body”. Whatever the ailment was, it was not only incapacitating, but also unsightly yet they resisted any temptation to show disgust with his appearance.

“And my temptation (trial) which was in my flesh ye despised not nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” (iv. 14).

The word translated “reject” is *ekptuo*, literally “to spit out”, suggesting that the sickness which had fallen on Paul rendered him objectionable to look at.

“What happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me” (iv. 15, N.I.V.).

What was the illness which was afflicting Paul? There have been scores of guesses by expositors, but surely the Apostle has given us a clue here. Why should the Galatians have been ready to hand over their eyes to him, could they have done so, if his eyesight had been normal? There would have been no point in using such a phrase. There can be little doubt that Paul suffered from some form of eye disease that possibly was prevalent in the East, and occurred through the weakness left by the overwhelming vision he had received on the road to Damascus which occasioned blindness with such a disease, accompanied by a constant discharge, he would have been very conscious of the spectacle he presented. Yet this had not affected the Galatians. Rather they had joyfully received him as though he was an angel sent by God or even Christ Himself. With this in mind he adds:

“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (iv. 16).

Verses 17 and 18 deal with the troublers who were upsetting believers. The A.V. is certainly not clear and we give the N.I.V. rendering:

“These people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you (from us), so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, providing the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.”

From these words it is clear that the false teachers, being moved with envy, had attempted to exclude Paul from the Galatians. After this, the “allegorizing”\* of the story of Hagar and Ishmael, Sarah and Isaac is a further attempt to show the foolishness of the backward movement of these believers who were so dear to the Apostle. He says:

“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth, until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you” (iv. 19, N.I.V.).

[\* - “The modern and common usage of the word *allegoria* is quite different from this Scriptural definition. According to the modern sense it is taken to mean a fictitious narrative which has another and deeper meaning than that which is expressed. Allegory is always stated in the *past* tense and *never in the future*. Allegory is thus distinguished from prophecy. The allegory brings other teaching out of past events, while prophecy tells us of events that are yet to come” (*Figures of Speech in the Bible*, E. W. Bullinger, D.D.).]

When Paul talks about an allegory, we must not conclude that he doubted the historical basis of the story in the O.T. It was sober fact to him but it illustrated the profound difference that existed between the two covenants, one of law and the other of grace and the impossibility of mixing the two together.

“Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as a result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves. This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free and she is our mother . . . . Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise . . . . But what does the Scripture say? Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son. Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman” (iv. 21-31, N.I.V.).

The story bears out in picture form the condition of one under the dominion of the law and in contrast one who has been freed from it by redemption. The two Jerusalems, earthly and heavenly bear this out too. The earthly one was still in slavery and subject to a Gentile power. The heavenly one was in a different sphere from earth and was in no sense in bondage. This is described in all its artistry and beauty by the Apostle John in the Revelation. But we must remember that this revelation is not confined to John and his writings. Hebrews xi. and xii. make quite clear that Abraham saw it in a vision, although the O.T. does not reveal this, and we believe that all the faithful who followed by overcoming faith, treading the same path as Abraham embraced, saw its wonders too. For them it was the “better country”, better than anything on this earth and worth going without a lasting home here and now, where they were only strangers and pilgrims.

The teaching that is implicit in this story is the contrast between freedom and bondage, between the law of Moses with its slavery and the glorious freedom resulting from saving grace. The Galatians had to decide which they wanted; they could not have both. So the Apostle uses every legitimate means to bring home to these Christians the intense seriousness of their choice and the results that would surely follow. His conclusion is:

“So then brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free” (iv. 31).

But what if those who are free choose to go back to slavery? The context that follows makes this perfectly clear, “Christ shall profit you nothing . . . . Christ is become of none effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (v. 2-4). The freedom that comes from Christ’s saving grace is the great key-note of Paul’s ministry. Yet thousand have never learnt this, some who even take the name of Christ. They still substitute their own imperfect doing for Christ’s perfect work of redemption and hope that somehow by mixing these two things they can gain favour with God.

The words of Gal. v. 1 are a clarion call today for all who call themselves Christians:

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (N.I.V.).

“Ye shall know the truth and the *truth shall make you free*” (John viii. 32), promised the Lord. Let us see to it that we never spoil this freedom, provided at such terrific cost.

The Apostle Paul has used two great lines of argument. First he has argued from history in chapters i. and ii. from his own experience and the experience of the Galatians. Secondly he has argued in chapters iii. and iv. from Scripture, showing that the teaching of the Judaizers is absolutely contrary to the Word of God.

He is now going to use another powerful argument namely the moral change which has been brought by the freedom of the gospel which all the prohibitions of the law of Moses had utterly failed to produce. But these were obligations as fruits of the gospel. God’s freedom does not mean licence, as so many have misinterpreted the gospel as preached by Paul. And so with all the earnestness at his command he says to the Galatian believers (and we paraphrase here), “Look, I Paul tell you this, if you now accept circumcision, Christ will be useless to you. I say solemnly that every man who accepts circumcision is accepting an obligation to carry out *the whole* of the law. In trying to obtain a right standing with God in this way you have broken the bond that united you to Christ (the bond of faith in Him). You have slipped from the sphere where grace operates . . . . Once faith is placed in Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is any good. The only thing that counts is faith in Christ which works out in love”.

We give the passage in the N.I.V.:

“Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be

circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value, the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (v. 1-6).

The tenses are important in this passage “If you let yourself be circumcised”. The verb is present subjunctive and does not refer to the past. Paul does not say “If you have been circumcised” for that would have excluded himself and every man who was a Jew. It was the contemplation of this rite and the attitude of mind that saw it as necessary to salvation. And in doing this the person concerned put himself in the position of not only being circumcised, but obeying the *whole* law, which had already been proved impossible for man who is a sinner and therefore constantly failing to reach the law’s perfect standard.

**No.9. v. 5 - vi. 8.**  
**pp. 173 - 178**

Paul is now about to introduce a pointed contrast with those who, by their defection and legalism, were falling from grace:

“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (Gal. v. 5).

“By faith” is opposed to “by law” of verse 4. The Spirit can refer to the work of the Holy Spirit or the sphere in which He works through the believer, that is the “spirit”, the new nature as opposed to the “flesh”, the old sinful nature. “To wait for” (*apekdechomai*) means “to eagerly expect”. The Judaizer expected to attain to righteousness by keeping the law, whereas the instructed believer looked for justification in the sphere of spirit through faith in Christ.

As a summary the Apostle now states:

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (v. 6, N.I.V.).

Paul is not one-sided. He does not allow the Gentile to boast of his uncircumcised state, any more than he will allow the Jew to boast in his circumcision. Both are now unnecessary and irrelevant “in Christ”. He has stated the same thing in Gal. vi. 15 and I Cor. vii. 19. At the same time the Apostle does not say “faith only” for this could be an empty lifeless faith. Rather it is faith expressed by a practical love which is constantly concerned for others.

He continues in expostulation:

“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the One Who calls you. A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough” (v. 7-9, N.I.V.).

The figure of a race, with its possibilities of defeat as well as the glorious possibility of a prize is a favourite one with Paul. Those who were being ensnared by law-keeping as their hope, were certainly not pressing forward, rather the opposite, they were turning backwards. Some in the Galatian churches may have replied by saying that this was only being done by a few. But Paul reminds them that only a little yeast is required to permeate a whole batch of dough, and yeast, in Scripture, is always used in a bad sense figuratively. Those who talk about the “leaven of the gospel” are most certainly confusing Bible metaphors. The Apostle is quoting a proverbial saying that was evidently well-known. Once again he stresses his amazement that any of the Galatian believers should fall out of the race by being ensnared in this way.

“The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. Brethren, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offence of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!” (v. 10-12, N.I.V.).

Two different types of person come before us in this section of the epistle, “the troubler” and “the restorer” of vi. 1. The agitators, whatever their number, were being led by someone who was possibly from the Jerusalem church. Paul warns them that such would have to answer to the Lord. Those who teach have an increased responsibility as James iii. 1 stresses and would have to bear the Lord’s judgment when “every man’s work will be tested by the fire of God’s holiness” (I Cor. iii. 13).

Did anyone seriously claim that Paul advocated circumcision? If they did, it could only have been true of his pre-Christian days, when he would have advocated the law with all his might. It was certainly never true since his conversion. If he had done so there was certainly no reason to persecute him, rather the opposite! Some ancient witnesses omit the word *eti*, ‘still’ and that would make the sentence run “if I am a circumcision preacher, then . . . .”. In any case the word may be taken in a weak sense meaning “at the present moment”, with no contrast with a past period.

Some have felt that verse 12 is vindictive but the A.V. does not recognize that the verb “cut off” is in the middle voice in the Greek and means “cut themselves off”. The language is strong, but we must remember that their disruptive work amongst the Galatian believers was serious and could not be regarded lightly by anyone who valued the truth of God.

The Apostle now begins to contrast the two opposites in the believer, the old sinful nature—*flesh*, the new nature—*spirit*:

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge your sinful nature, rather serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command, Love your neighbour as yourself. If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (v. 13-15, N.I.V.).

Paul returns for a moment to the glorious gift of divine freedom stressed in verse 1 of the chapter, but this freedom must not be abused. This freedom never means that a believer is at liberty to do whatever he likes. As we have stated before, he is now free to do *what the Lord likes* and to fulfil His will. The real Christian has to decide which of the two natures he is going to follow and he is reminded in verse 16:

“This I say then, Walk in the spirit (the new nature) and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh (the old nature).”

These two opposite natures with their practical effects are now going to be described by the Apostle so there could be no doubt as to what they involved in practice:

“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit The kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (v. 16-23, N.I.V.).

The N.I.V. here consistently uses a capital “S” in “spirit”, making it refer to the Holy Spirit, but it is better to use a small “s”, thus referring to the new nature, for it is these two opposing natures in the believer that form this section of the epistle. At the same time we do not forget that the Holy Spirit is the giver of the new nature implanted in the believer and this is the sphere through which He works.\*

[\* - Dr. E. W. Bullinger’s book *The Two Natures in the Child of God* can be profitably considered here. It can be obtained from *The Berean Publishing Trust*.]

The Apostle Paul does not make an exhaustive list of the works of the flesh and this is shown by the words “and the like” in verse 21. They seemed to be grouped in four sections: (1) sensual passions, (2) superstitions, (3) disruptive movements, and (4) excesses. All of them were rampant in the pagan world of the Apostle’s day and have become typical of the present time. The works of the flesh under the third heading are, alas, never long absent from Christian circles:

“Hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings”, and Satan does not have much difficulty in ruining the testimony of any Christian movement where these sins are permitted.

It is so refreshing to leave the uncleanness of the flesh, for the fruit of the spirit with its wonderful cluster of graces. One list starts with hatred; the other with love and love expands into a ninefold group that springs from the Spirit of Christ.

Chapter v. of Galatians concludes with the words:

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the spirit” (v. 24, 25, N.I.V.).

What does Paul mean by believers crucifying their sinful nature? In his experience this had been achieved, not by his own efforts, but by the work of Christ.

“I have been crucified with Christ”,

he says in ii. 20 and we should refer to his later epistle to the Romans, especially the inner section of chapters v.-viii. that unfold the great doctrine of identification of the believer with Christ in crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection as unfolded in chapters v. and vi. This is entirely God’s work, not the believer’s, but he is exhorted to count on it or to “reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. vi. 11). Thus he is delivered from the constant bondage of trying to overcome the flesh in his own strength and by his own efforts.

In chapter vi., in constant to the “troubler”, Paul deals with the “restorer”. The word in Greek as a broken net (Matt. iv. 21) is found in medical works for the resetting of a fractured limb. Instead of the overbearing spirit of the troubler the Apostle speaks of “the spirit of meekness” which seeks to restore one overtaken by a fault, considering himself lest he be likewise tempted:

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (vi. 1, A.V.).

The Apostle goes on to deal with burden bearing and there seems to be a contradiction. In verse 2 he exhorts believers to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ”. Yet in verse 5 he says “for every man shall bear his own burden”. Two words are used for burden here and two aspects of truth are presented. In verse 2 *baros* refers to pressure or weight and the believer is enjoined to assist another who is overloaded. But in verse 5 the Greek *phortion* refers to the equipment of a soldier which can be shared with none. There are responsibilities both in life and in the Lord’s service which are personal and cannot be passed on to someone else. Wisdom is needed here to discriminate between the two. The “spirit of meekness” will avoid any ideas of pride or aggrandizement, for “if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” and needs the warning of verse 7, “do not be deceived; God is not mocked”. A man reaps what he sows. “The one who sows to please his sinful nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the spirit, from the spirit will reap eternal life” (vi. 8 N.I.V.)

**No.10. vi. 6 - 18.**  
**pp. 195 - 198**

When we come to verse 6 of chapter vi., we have to ask ourselves whether this verse is linked with what has gone before or does it start a new subject? The former seems to be true, for the Apostle is saying that, because every man must bear his own responsibility, this does not exempt him from sharing in the general welfare of the church as a whole, or of those whose calling may be dependent on their liberality. The N.I.V. translates verse 6:

“Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor.”

This reminds us of Heb. xiii. 16:

“But to do good and communicate (share) forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”,

and Paul thankfully remembers the Philippian church when he departed from Macedonia “No church communicated (shared)” with him “as concerning giving and receiving” but this church only (Phil. iv. 15).

The Apostle goes on to expand his thought under the figure of sowing and reaping. Charles H. Welch has some helpful observations here:

“Under this figure of sowing and reaping is included the whole of life’s activities, and without using one word of philosophical jargon, nevertheless brings before us the whole philosophy of cause and effect. Every action may be likened to ‘sowing’. Reward and punishment alike may be compared with ‘reaping’, and just as men do not gather figs from thorns, nor grapes from a bramble bush (Luke vi. 44), so any action that has the flesh as its goal must assuredly reap corruption; every action that has the spirit as its goal must assuredly reap life everlasting.”

The Scriptures add: “And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” (Gal. vi. 9).

This should apply in our relationship to all as well as fellow-believers (vi. 10). At this point it appears that Paul takes the pen from the amanuensis and writes himself. This was his usual habit since some had been forging epistles purporting to come from himself (II Thess. iii. 17, 18) and in each case there is a reference to grace.

“See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand” (vi. 11, N.I.V.).

There have been different opinions as to the meaning of this. Some think Paul wrote the whole epistle and did not employ an amanuensis. Others feel he took the pen at this point (and we take this attitude). It does not affect doctrine either way. Whether the large letters were for emphasis or the result of his eye trouble we cannot say for certain,

but in any case we have an emphatic personal summary here dealing with circumcision, the cross of Christ, the crucifixion of self, the new creation and canon (rule).

“Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (vi. 12-16, N.I.V.).

The Judaizers chief object in stressing the rite of circumcision was to make a good showing before men. Numbers of converts were what they were after to give an impression of success and in doing this they avoided all persecution for the cross of Christ. The very thing they wanted to avoid, was the truth that the Apostle Paul gloried in proclaiming, namely the fullness that was in Christ through the cross and resurrection which made all such distinctions meaningless. This broke the connection with the outward world system with its empty show and Satanic domination. As he wrote to the Corinthian church:

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (II Cor. v. 17, N.I.V.).

There was no possibility of blending these two opposites. God’s answer to all the problems made by man’s sin and fall from grace is His new creation, a completely fresh start in Christ. This was the rule or guide that all who rejoiced solely in Christ Jesus walked by as day succeeded day. Upon them was peace and mercy:

“Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God” (Gal. vi. 16, N.I.V.).

Is the “Israel of God” a covering title for all those who were saved during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles? To judge by the way some use this title, one would judge that it was a frequent occurrence in the N.T. epistles to describe the church. The fact is that this is the only occurrence of the phrase in the N.T. There is no need here to render the Greek *kai* as “even”. Its normal meaning of “and” is sufficient.

Bishop Ellicott’s comment on this verse is:

“It is doubtful whether *kai* is explicative, *namely*, upon the Israel of God . . . . it is doubtful whether *kai* is ever used by St. Paul in so marked an explicative force . . . . and it seems still more doubtful whether Christians generally could be called ‘the Israel of God’. St. Paul includes all in his blessing, of whatever stock or kindred; and then, with his thoughts turning (as they ever did) to his own brethren after the flesh (Rom. ix. 3), he pauses to specify those who were once Israelites according to the flesh, but now are the ‘Israel of God’, true spiritual children of Abraham.”

This we believe to be correct. There is no clear Scriptural foundation for using this title as a general title for the church of God today. The *stigmata* or brand marks which Paul bore in his body, from the lashes of the Roman whip and the gashes from stoning, were definitely associated with fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and for ever

separated him from those who, to avoid the offence of the cross, adulterated the gospel of grace with the dregs of Jewish ritual.

All slaves were branded. As the slave of Christ these were His brand marks. Could his enemies show such practical evidences of their devotion and faithfulness to Christ?

He ends the epistle, as he always does with a reference to grace:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers, Amen” (vi. 18, N.I.V.).

The word at the very end of the sentence, apart from Amen is “brethren”, a blessed word to end his epistle where so much feeling has been manifested and so much error exposed and condemned.

We trust we have seen that the truth presented in this glorious epistle lies at the very centre of the gospel of grace. Its importance cannot be overrated and all who have the responsibility of preaching and teaching must give this epistle a prominent place in their witness. It is a wonderful companion to the epistle to the Romans and was one of the main instruments, through Luther’s ministry of promoting the Reformation and all who wish to be faithful to the truth which is centred in a risen and glorified Christ must give constant heed to its message.

# The Gospel according to MATTHEW.

## No.1. Introduction.

pp. 214 - 220

From the many attempts that must have been made in the early centuries to record the life, words and works of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke i. 1, 2), four have been inspired by the Spirit of God and preserved by Him to the present time. When these are examined carefully and reverently they disclose different aspects of the earthly life and ministry of Christ. It is of great importance to recognize these differences, for they show the divine purpose behind each Gospel and this keeps the student from wandering away from the theme or importing wrong ideas into each book.

Four verses from O.T. Scripture can be used to set out these four distinctive aspects of Truth, namely:

Matthew	--	“Behold thy King” (Zech. ix. 9).
Mark	--	“Behold my Servant” (Isa. xlii. 1).
Luke	--	“Behold the Man” (Zech. vi. 12).
John	--	“Behold your God” (Isa. xl. 9).

The Gospel according to Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as the Messiah and King of Israel and traces His genealogy back through David the king. It was evidently written for Hebrew believers. Mark presents the Saviour as the perfect Servant, hence there is no genealogy, for this is not necessary for a servant. His Gospel commences with immediate service and this is stressed right through to the resurrection. Even then it is not forgotten, for it closes with the words “the Lord *working with them*, and confirming the Word with signs following” (Mark xvi. 20). Mark has the Roman world in view.

Luke sets forth the Lord as the perfect Man and traces His genealogy back to Adam. He has the Gentiles in view and the Greeks in particular. John’s Gospel is severed off from the other three in time of writing, although the modern tendency is to give it an earlier date than it usually receives. He wrote to present Christ as the Son of God, the One who was both God and Man and he had the whole world in view for the word “world” is one of his key words and occurs some 78 times and this cannot be ignored by any one who desires to expound correctly the fourth Gospel.

Thus we see that the needs of the Hebrews, the Romans, and the Greeks who were the three great representative peoples of the world, are covered by the first three Gospels, and John writes and addresses them all, in fact the world at large, for, as we have seen, the word “world” is one of his key-words.

From the early centuries there has been an attempt to link the four Gospels with the fourfold cherubim with their four faces of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle, as designated in Ezek i. 6-10. The trouble was that it could not be agreed as to which face was to be

linked with which Gospel. The early fathers differed among themselves. Irenaeus assigned the eagle to Mark and the lion to John. Augustine assigned the lion to Matthew, the man to Mark, the ox to Luke and the eagle to John. Ambrose kept to the order of enumeration in Ezekiel. If there is any link with the cherubim (and they embody important doctrine) then the most satisfactory is:

Matthew	--	the Lion, the King
Mark	--	the Ox, the Servant
Luke	--	the Man, the last Adam
John	--	the Eagle, the Word made flesh Who was God.

The Gospel of Matthew comes first in the N.T. in many manuscripts and this is fitting, for it is closely linked with the O.T. Scriptures. In the four Gospels there are many quotations and allusions to the O.T. Absolute accuracy is not possible because some of these are fused and separation is difficult. In Mark there are 63; in Luke 96; in John 43; but in Matthew 126. There are some 37 direct quotations by Matthew which is more than occur in the other Gospels. The quotations are introduced by formulas which are more or less fixed such as "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet", or "then was fulfilled that which was spoken" (such as Matt. i. 22; ii. 15, 17; iii. 3; iv. 14, etc.). "It is written" (Matt. ii. 5; iv. 4, 7, 10; xi. 10, etc.), "it was said" or "it hath been said" (Matt. v. 21, 31, 33, 38, 43). This does not give all the variations, but they illustrate the way O.T. passages are introduced by the Evangelist.

Matthew presents the Lord as the Messiah and Priest-King of Israel and gives witness to the Messianic Kingdom of the O.T. prophets; hence his close link with the O.T. Scriptures.

Before we go any further it will be as well to consider the break between the Old and New Testaments. We must realize that when we turn from Malachi to Matthew, some 400 years have passed and that in this period great changes have occurred. At the close of the O.T., the empire which controlled Palestine was that of Persia. Persia was displaced by Alexander the Great, and the Grecian empire arose and dominated the scene from B.C.330 to B.C.167. At Alexander's death in B.C.323, his empire was divided between four of his generals. Two of these were Ptolemy and Seleucus and each one inaugurated a dynasty, Ptolemy in Egypt and Seleucus in Syria. There was continual contention between them for rule over Palestine, and sometimes one was victorious and sometimes the other.

The struggle under the Maccabees for Israel's national independence followed (B.C.167-141), and then a family of Jewish priest-kings, descendants of the Maccabees, arose and ruled in Palestine. They were known as the Hasmonaeans and they held power for 78 years, until Pompey conquered the land in B.C.63. This was the beginning of Rome's domination of the Jewish people. The Herods were of Idumaeen descent and after Caesar Augustus overthrew Mark Antony, the first of the Herods sought and received from Augustus the governorship of Judaea, Samaria, Galilee, Peraea and

Idumaea and he was ruling when the Lord Jesus Christ was born. Thus Rome was in the ascendancy over Israel when the story of the Gospels commenced.

At this time there were various sects in Palestine which come into the Gospel records and a short word on each may be helpful.

### **The Scribes.**

These were the students and teachers of the O.T. and were highly esteemed by the people. They opposed Christ and were denounced by Him as traditionalists who emptied the Word of God of its meaning (Matt. xvi. 21; xxi. 25; xxiii. 2). They also called Lawyers (Matt. xxii. 35).

### **The Priests.**

The priesthood was ordained by God in the time of Moses and consisted of the tribe of Levi. From the time of Ezra and Nehemiah the civil power passed into the hands of the priests so that they became princes of the realm as well as ministers of religion and their head was the High Priest. Again this sect persistently antagonized the Lord Jesus and finally delivered Him to Pilate to be crucified (John xviii. 3, 35).

### **The Rulers.**

Differing official duties are indicated by this title. Thus we have them as members of the Sanhedrin (the chief Jewish Council); "chief ruler" (John xii. 42) and "magistrate" (Luke xii. 58) and ten times as "ruler".

### **The Pharisees.**

The word means *separated* and was given them at the time of the Maccabees in mockery by their enemies, because they separated themselves from the political party in the nation. They expounded and guarded the written and oral law and were conservatives in distinction from the Sadducees who were the modernists.

### **The Sadducees.**

They were the political and aristocratic party among the Jews and were the rivals of the Pharisees. They denied the existence of spirits and the resurrection and, like the other parties, opposed Christ and were condemned by Him (Matt. xvi. 1-12; xxii. 23-33).

### **The Herodians.**

These were a political party rather than a religious one. They took their name from Herod's family and regarded Christ as a revolutionary character and came under His condemnation (Mark iii. 6; viii. 15).

### **The Galilaeans.**

This party came from northern Palestine and followed one named Judas of Galilee, who led a rebellion against all foreign domination. They were fanatics who clashed with Pilate (Luke xiii. 1-3).

### **The Samaritans.**

These were a mixed race living in Samaria who were descendants of the northern kingdom who were taken captive by Assyria in B.C.722. They offered help to build the second Temple but this was refused (Ezra iv. 1-3) and was the cause of the enmity between them and the Jews which was evident in the Lord's time (Matt. x. 5) and gives point to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 30-37).

### **The Synagogue.**

This refers to the place where the Jews assembled and its institutions dates from the captivity in Babylon. The Jews were then forced to meet in small groups when they could no longer attend the Temple.

Wherever Israel was scattered, synagogues were built where they could gather for worship and instruction. The Lord commenced His ministry in the one at Nazareth (Luke iv. 14-30). He was obviously familiar with the synagogue service and the Jews' attendance at the synagogue is still maintained today.

### **The Sanhedrin.**

This was the chief Council of the Jews. It consisted of (1) chief priests or heads of the 24 priestly courses; (2) the Scribes or lawyers; and (3) the Elders, who represented the laity. The Council had 70 or 72 members, the High Priest being the President and they held their office for years if not for life. The Sanhedrin could pass the sentence of death, but could not execute it without Roman permission. This was the body before whom the Lord was brought, in the palace of the High Priest. Peter, John and Stephen also were brought before them (Acts iv. 1-7; vi. 12 - vii. 1).

### **Authorship of the Gospel of Matthew.**

The earliest form of this Gospel was simply "according to Matthew" which neither affirms or denies that the author was Matthew the Apostle. Modern scholarship is practically unanimous that this Gospel was not written by the Apostle Matthew, whereas antiquity is unanimous that the Apostle *was* the author.

Dr. A. Plummer states:

"Ancient testimony in favour of Matthew being the author is very strong. It begins with Papias and Irenaeus in the Second century, and is confirmed by Origen in the third and Eusebius in the fourth, not to mention a number of other early writers whose

evidence repeats, or is in harmony with these four" (*Introduction, the Gospel according to Matthew*).

In the first book of his Commentary on the Gospel, Origen (born about 185A.D.), says:

"I have learned from uniform testimony concerning the Gospels (the four namely which are unchallenged, and are alone unchallenged throughout the universal church of God), that the first was written by Matthew, formerly a tax-gatherer, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ."

Dr. J. Morison states in his *Introduction to the Gospel*:

"There is indeed no evidence that, within the circle of the early Christian church, it was ever doubted that Matthew's Gospel was really Matthew's. There is still no more reason to doubt it, than there is to doubt that Virgil's *Aeneid* was written by Virgil, or that Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was composed by the tinker of Elstow."

Dr. A. T. Robertson says in his *Introduction to Matthew*:

"We know quite too little of the origin of the Synoptic Gospels to say dogmatically that the Apostle Matthew was not in any real sense the author."

In these studies therefore we shall assume that Matthew the Apostle is the human author under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### **Date of the Gospel.**

The actual year cannot be decided with certainty. The modern tendency is to give an earlier date to most books of the N.T. We shall not go far wrong if we say 60A.D. This, incidentally, is the opinion of Dr. A. T. Robertson.

We have stated that the four Gospels give different aspects of the earthly life and ministry of Christ, just as four great offerings in the O.T. are required to set forth all the aspects of His atoning death. No one Gospel can completely set forth this perfect life and service of the Lord any more than one view or aspect of a building can give a true idea of it as a whole. The unity and diversity of the Gospels must be recognized, to be in line with the divine purpose behind each one.

Many attempts have been made to create a harmony of the four. Scarcely two agree and none are completely satisfactory. If one Gospel had been the best way of presenting the truth of the earthly life and witness of the Lord Jesus, we may be sure this would have come to pass under God's guidance. It is much more profitable to try to discover the divine purpose behind each of the Gospels than to attempt to merge them all in one.

## **No.2. Features of the Gospel.** **pp. 232 - 237**

This Gospel contains a large proportion of *discourses* in contrast to Mark's which stresses the *actions* of Christ, those of the perfect *Servant*. Mark begins and ends with action. Chapter i. starts with immediate service and ends with the words "the Lord *working* with them and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark xvi. 20). It is clear that Matthew gives prominence to the *sayings* of Christ, as Mark does to His *doings*.

In the first Gospel there are six great discourses, five of which are closed with the same words: "it came to pass when Jesus had finished" (vii. 28; xi. 1; xiii. 53; xix. 1; xxvi. 1). The other one has likewise a formal ending (xxiii. 37-39) with different words. These addresses are as follows:

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| (1) Chapters v.-viii.   | The Sermon on the Mount                               |
| (2) Chapter x.          | The charge to the Twelve                              |
| (3) Chapter xiii.       | The Parables and Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven   |
| (4) Chapter xviii.      | Teaching on Greatness and Forgiveness                 |
| (5) Chapter xxiii.      | Denunciation of the Pharisees                         |
| (6) Chapters xxiv.-xxv. | The Ending of the Age and the Second Advent of Christ |

It is important to recognize that Matthew arranges his Gospel on a *grouping* plan, not a *chronological* one. He evidently had the instruction of Jewish converts in mind, such as met in study circles. It was important therefore that the teaching of the Gospel should be presented in such way that it would be easily remembered. Many of the Lord's sayings which Matthew has grouped together, regardless of chronological sequence, He must have given at different times, for it would be foolish to presume that the Lord Jesus in teaching deep and essential truths, would only mention them once.

The Evangelist arranges incidents and sayings into numerical groups of three, five and seven.

### **Three.**

- The are 3 divisions in the genealogy (i. 17).
- 3 messages to Joseph by angels in dreams (i. 20; ii. 13, 19).
- 3 incidents in the Lord's childhood: the Magi, the flight into Egypt, and the return (ii.).
- 3 temptations (iv. 1-11).
- 3 fold description of the Messiah's witness (iv. 23).
- 3 fold illustration (v. 22).
- There are 9 Beatitudes (3\*3).
- 3 occurrences of "your" (v. 16).
- 3 examples of righteousness: alms, prayer, fasting (vi. 1-18).
- 3 prohibitions (vi. 19 - vii. 6).

3 degrees of earnestness in prayer (vii. 7).  
 3 commands: ask, enter, beware (vii. 7-20).  
 3 pairs of contrasts: broad and narrow way, good and bad trees, wise and foolish builders (vii. 13, 16, 24-27).  
 3 fold "in Thy Name" (vii. 22).  
 3 miracles of healing: leprosy, palsy, fever (viii. 1-15).  
 3 miracles of power: storm, demoniac, sin (viii. 23 - ix. 8).  
 3 miracles of restoration: health, life, sight (ix. 8-34).  
 3 fold "fear not" (x. 26, 28, 31).  
 3 fold answer to question about fasting (ix. 14-17).  
 3 fold "is not worthy of Me" (x. 37, 38).  
 3 complaints of the Pharisees (ix. 1-17).  
 3 fold "what went ye out to see?" (xi. 7-9).  
 3 cities: Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum (xi. 20-23).  
 3 occurrences "at that time" (xi. 25; xii. 1; xiv. 1).  
 3 fold description of the Jews: empty, swept, garnished (xii. 44).  
 3 fold "verily" (xviii. 3, 13, 18).  
 3 classes of eunuchs (xix. 12).  
 3 parables of warning (xxi. 28 - xxiv. 14).  
 3 questioners: Pharisees, Sadducees, Lawyer (xxii. 15, 23, 35).  
 3 faculties of love: heart, soul, mind (xxii. 37).  
 3 sayings about "little ones" (xviii. 6, 10, 14).  
 3 questions (xxii. 15-40).  
 In chapter xxiii. there are a number of triplets:  
     teacher, father, master (8-10).  
     temple and gold, altar and gift, heaven and throne (14-22).  
     mint, dill, cumin, judgment, mercy, faith (23).  
     prophets, wise men, scribes (34).  
 3 fold reference to "blood" (xxiii. 35).  
 3 parables against negligence: faithful and unfaithful servants, the Virgins, the Talents (xxiv. 45 - xxv. 30).  
 3 men entrusted with talents (xxv. 15).  
 3 denials of Peter (xxvi. 69-75).  
 3 prayers at Gethsemane (xxvi. 30-44).  
 3 questions of Pilate (xxvii. 17, 21-23).  
 3 incidents which vexed the Pharisees (xii. 1-24)  
 6 (2\*3) great discourses as mentioned before.

And this may not exhaust the groups of three in Matthew's Gospel, but they are truly remarkable and could only occur by design.

### **Five.**

For examples of groupings of *five* we have five illustrations of the fulfillment of the law (v. 21-48); five wise and five foolish virgins; five talents which gained other five (xxv. 2, 20). In chapters xxi. and xxii. there are five questions about authority, tribute, resurrection, commandments and the Son of David. There are five references to the Kingdom of God (vi. 33; xii. 28; xix. 24; xxi. 31, 43).

## Groupings of Seven.

Seven demons (xii. 45); forgiveness seven times (xviii. 22); seven brethren (xxii. 25); seven loaves (xv. 34) and seven baskets (xv. 37); seven petitions in the Lord's prayers, etc.

The faithful student will take heed to these numerical groupings which help to impress their truth on the mind and memory.

Matthew's Gospel, with its constant reference to the O.T., presents the Lord Jesus in His relationship to Israel as their Messiah and Priest-King, as foretold by the O.T. prophets and makes known the great Messianic Kingdom which is the burden of them all. Peter's message to the nation in Acts ii., after their rejection and crucifixion of Christ, refers to the sending back of the Messiah upon their repentance and turning back to God (Acts iii. 19-21), when the restoration of "*all things* spoken by the mouth of *all His holy prophets*" since the beginning of time, "*all the prophets* from Samuel and those that follow after" (verse 24) had foretold these times and revealed the glories of this kingdom. Israel were "the children of these prophets" (25); they were right in the centre of God's earthly kingdom purposes and are reminded that this was only so because God had in view "all the families of the earth" and thus they (Israel) had the first place, in order to be the channel of blessing to all mankind. Thus the knowledge of God would finally "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi. 9) and so His kingdom on earth would become a glorious reality.

This will explain why Israel had such a prominent place at the Lord's first Coming and why Matthew's Gospel stresses this most important truth. Thus we have the commission of the Twelve recorded in chapter x. and the Lord's limitation of their ministry to Israel (Matt. x. 5, 6). And the Lord limits His own earthly ministry to Israel likewise, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (xv. 24). He promises the Twelve that they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (xix. 28).

This explains why the Lord's genealogy in this Gospel is traced through David to Abraham emphasizing the throne of David and the land promised unconditionally to Abraham and his seed (Gen. xv. 18), showing that the Lord Jesus was the rightful Heir to both. Matthew's other references to Christ as the Son of David are found in xii. 23; xxi. 9, 15; xxii. 42. He is Israel's King (ii. 2; xxi. 5; xxvii. 11, 29, 37, 42). Palestine is "the land of Israel" (ii. 20, 21); Israel are its inhabitants (viii. 10; x. 6; xv. 34); its cities are "the cities of Israel" (x. 23) and God is "the God of Israel" (xv. 31).

It is important to recognize the place of Israel in the divine plan of the earthly phase of the kingdom of God. In no sense was this plan finally *limited to Israel* and this is where the nation made a profound mistake in thinking that this was so, and looking with contempt on the Gentile world. The Gospel of Matthew ends with the commission "to make disciples of all the nations" (xxviii. 19, 20), thus fulfilling God's plan to reach "all families of the earth". It is a mistake to bring the Body of Christ in here, for its calling

and destiny is a heavenly one and at this time was still “hid in God” (Eph. iii. 8, 9) being vitally connected with the heavenly phase of the kingdom of God.

What is peculiar to Matthew is important. The incidents and teaching that are found only in this Gospel are the following: the genealogy traced through David to Abraham; the coming of the wise men; the slaughter of the innocents; the flight into and return from Egypt; the extended report of the Sermon on the Mount; Peter’s walking on the sea; Christ’s reply to Peter’s confession; Christ’s woes against the Pharisees; the judgment of the nations at the Second Advent; Christ’s betrayal by Judas for 30 pieces of silver; his remorse and suicide; the watch at the sepulcher; the bribing of the soldiers; the opening of the graves; the parables of the Tares, the hid treasure, the goodly Pearl, the fish net and the unmerciful servant, the labourers in the vineyard, the two sons, the marriage of the King’s son, the ten virgins, the talents, the coin in the fish’s mouth, the wonderful words, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matt. xi. 28-30).

What a loss we should have sustained if Matthew had not recorded these wonderful facts!

We now give the outline of the Gospel. We have used the structure of C. H. Welch, but extended it to include the six great discourses around which the Gospel revolves:

- A | i. 1 - iii. 16. From Birth to Baptism.
  - The Ministry of John the Baptist.
  - “Born King of the Jews.”
- B | iii. 17 - xvi. 20. Son of David the King. |
  - a | iii. 17. The Voice from heaven.
  - b | iv. 1-16. The Threefold Temptation of the King.
  - c | iv. 17. Time. “From that time . . . began”.
  - d | Three Discourses:
    - v.-vii. The Sermon on the Mount.
    - x. The Charge to the Twelve.
    - xiii. The Parables and Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.
  - e | xvi. 16-18. Confession: “The Christ”.
- B | xvi. 21 - xxvi. 75. Son of Abraham (Isaac) The Priest and Offering. |
  - c | xvi. 21. Time. “From that time . . . began”.
  - a | xvii. 5. The Voice from heaven.
    - d | Three Discourses:
      - xviii. Teaching on Greatness and Forgiveness.
      - xxiii. Denunciation of the Pharisees.
      - xxiv., xxv. The Second Advent and the End of the age.
    - b | xxvi. 36-46. Threefold agony of the King-Priest in Gethsemane.
    - e | xxvi. 63, 64. Confession: “The Christ”.
- A | xxvii, xxviii. From Baptism of suffering to Birth in Resurrection.
  - The discipling of the nations.
  - “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

This outline shows the balance of the various sections of the Gospel. It is essential that, from the standpoint of true *interpretation*, we keep within the scope of these sections.

*Application* of the truths therein can only be safely made after the interpretation has been settled. The question is what was it meant to mean to those for whom Matthew wrote? These, as we have seen, were undoubtedly Jewish converts, hence the important place that Israel takes in this Gospel which stresses Christ as Messiah and King of Israel and the earthly kingdom of which Israel and Jerusalem are the centre.

## Men God Called

### No.15. Jonah.

pp. 15 - 20

Jonah! The man popularly supposed to have been swallowed by a whale; a suggestion deemed so impossible that the higher critics (and others) tells us that this book is only a story, although one with a message for its time. Was he swallowed by a whale, or was he not? The A.V. tells us “Now the Lord had prepared a *great fish . . . .*” (i. 17): where the Lord Jesus Christ refers to this incident in Matt. xii. 40 the same version translates “whale” for the Greek *ketos* which means “any sea-monster or huge fish”. In Jonah the Hebrew tells us that the Lord had prepared a “great *dag*”, *dag* meaning simply “fish”. It simply tradition based on a faulty translation of the word used in Matthew that has given rise to the idea that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. However, as the old lady said, when she was told Jonah could not possibly have been swallowed by a whale “I believe that if the Lord had wanted Jonah to swallow the whale, he could have done it!”.

Did this actually take place, or is it a ‘myth’ with a meaning? For the believer it is surely sufficient that his Lord refers to this event as a type and sign of His Death and Resurrection. That there was indeed such a prophet is confirmed by a reference to him in II Kings xiv. 25, where he is identified as “Jonah, the son of Amittai”; precisely the same identification as is given in the book of Jonah. He is therefore an historical person, and given the omnipotence of God there is no logical reason why the events recorded of this prophet could not be true.

There had been a succession of evil kings over Israel: we read of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, who “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord” (II Kings xiii. 1, 2). Although this king “besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him”, the people “departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam” (II Kings xiii. 3-5). He was followed by his son, Jehoash, “and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord” (verse 11). On his death he was succeeded by his son Jeroboam, and the same sad verdict is given on his reign: “he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord” (II Kings xiv. 23, 24). Nevertheless the following two verses tell us that he was used by the Lord “which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah”. For even evil rulers are overruled by the Lord for His purposes.

Against such a background was Jonah called to prophesy. Clearly sooner or later God would bring some form of judgment upon Israel. It seems probable he was called to his work before the commission to Nineveh:

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me” (Jonah i. 2).

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and was noted for its violence and cruelty, and their wickedness was “full”, “their wickedness is come up before Me”. Jonah was to “cry

against it". The word 'cry' has the sense of making a general proclamation: some one has suggested he was told to "thunder forth". He was to make his message widely known. We discover the content of his proclamation, when he eventually reached Nineveh, from chapter iii. 4, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown". It is not recorded that his message included the need to repent, although in the event this was the result. It may be that his prejudice prevented him from appealing to the Ninevites to repent, and that while he was pleased to pronounce God's judgment upon his people's enemies, he did not look favourably on God showing them any mercy. Whether so or not, the thought itself is a sufficient warning to those who have the responsibility of preaching, to beware of letting their own ideas and prejudices influence their message.

Arise, go to Nineveh: but Jonah rose up to flee . . . . from the presence of the Lord. It is clear, however, that he realized he could never escape from God from his words to the sailors:

"I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, *which hath made the sea and the dry land*" (i. 9).

He revered Jehovah, yet he was fleeing from the *presence* of the Lord. He was fleeing from Jerusalem and the Temple, for it is clear, for example, from Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple he had built, that, although it was recognized Jehovah did not  *dwell* in the Temple, it was nevertheless His Presence Chamber. In Jonah's psalm, after his deliverance from the belly of the great fish, he says:

"I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple" (ii. 4).

It was the meeting place, the place of fellowship with God. In fleeing he knew he was doing wrong, and he could not "face" fellowship with Jehovah as a result.

But why did Jonah wish to avoid the fulfillment of his commission? He knew that Assyria was to be the "rod" of Jehovah's anger against Israel (Isa. x. 5). Yet he had himself prophesied to the effect that the Lord had said he would not blot out the name of Israel from under heaven (II Kings xiv. 25, 27). How could Jonah reconcile the two prophecies? How could he act in a way which would invalidate his own prophecy? How could he, a true patriot, do anything to bring about the downfall of his own nation? So he rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord. He prophesied about B.C.690, but it was not for about a further 60 years before Isaiah confirmed the judgment of God upon Israel through Assyria. Meanwhile it was a day of salvation for both Israel and Assyria. But Jonah did not realize this, and in the vain hope of averting the judgment of God upon Israel, he hoped for God's judgment upon Nineveh, and, from the human viewpoint understandably, he did not wish to be the means of preserving the nation destined to be "the rod of mine anger". Neither of the two nations availed themselves permanently of the time for repentance. We need to heed the lesson presented to us by Jonah, and to avoid trying to bring our own ideas of what God ought, or will do into our own life and witness.

Israel did not repent: Nineveh (in spite of Jonah) did: but Nineveh's repentance was only transitory. Was the repentance of Nineveh intended by God to be a demonstration to Israel: to Israel who *knew* God was gracious and merciful? If God spared Nineveh that great and wicked city, how much more would He be ready to spare the nation He had chosen to be His People!

But Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of Jehovah. He was prepared to sacrifice anything and everything for the sake of his people: even his God!

“Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, *because he had told them*” (i. 10).

We know that no loyalty should take precedence over our loyalty to God. We know it, but do we always put it into practice? In Jonah's case, at least, it meant a lot of unnecessary suffering for him.

So Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish, and took passage in a ship going to that destination.

“But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken” (i. 4).

It was a storm of such intensity that even the seasoned mariners were afraid: the expression translated “mariners” has something of the significance of our “old salt”. Even the “old salts” were afraid of this storm. But Jonah “Was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep”. Asleep in such a storm? It must have been the sleep and peace of resignation. For a little later he had no hesitation in condemning himself to death:

“Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you” (i. 12).

He was prepared to sacrifice life itself to save his people, and perhaps it is in this point that Jonah begins to assume the role of a type of Christ. All honour to the seamen that they did their best to save him, and rowed hard to bring the ship to land, and only when they were unsuccessful did they cast Jonah into the sea. They were unsuccessful because the “sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them”, and into such a sea was Jonah cast. What happens to a man in such a raging sea? He drowns, and that, surely, must have been what happened to Jonah. Then the Lord prepared the great fish, and for three days and three nights Jonah was there in the belly of the fish. Then he was given life again, and “Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly” (ii. 1). Resurrected in the bowels of the sea creature! It is worth noting the tense of the verbs he used in his prayer: they are all in the past. “Thou didst cast me into the deep”, “the waters compassed me about”, and so on. It was not a prayer he uttered whilst he was in the water, in response to which the Lord prepared the great fish: the words are those of a

man looking back to an experience in the past, and he has been brought back “from corruption”, or the pit or grace. This is in full accord with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matt. xii. 40,

“For as Jonas as three days and nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

For *just as*, in the same way as Jonah was in the belly of the fish: *in this manner*, in this way the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth. If Jonah was not three days and three nights dead in the bowels of the sea creature, he was no type of what was to happen to the Lord.

For our purpose in this article there are two points in the prayer of particular interest. “Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight”: Jonah was quite prepared to flee from the presence of the Lord, but it was quite a different matter when he thought Jehovah had cast him off! But he continued “Yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple”, and in the context of Solomon’s prayer this strongly suggests repentance on the part of the prophet. Verse 8 would indicate that he had learned his lesson: “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy”. This perhaps becomes clearer if put thus: “They that regard idols do not heed their chastisement”. Jonah revered Jehovah, and so gave heed to the chastisement he had undergone.

Now, when the word of the Lord came the second time, Jonah obeyed; perhaps not whole-heartedly, for he made no call to repentance, and when Nineveh did repent he was clearly displeased with the result of his message. He was an unwilling man whom God called, yet he became a type of Christ. Nothing and nobody can or will frustrate the will of God, not even for what we may consider to be the best of reasons. How much unnecessary trouble and suffering Jonah brought upon himself as he rather reluctantly fulfilled his calling.

## **No.16. Joseph the Carpenter.** **pp. 21 - 24**

Such scant attention is paid to Joseph normally, that some may wonder why he should be the subject of this study. Yet it may be there is more said concerning him than we sometimes think, and, indeed, his role is as important as any “man God called”.

The historical background to his story is of particular importance, for it was a time of very great Messianic expectation. The reasons for this are twofold: on the one hand the Jews’ religion was as pure as it had even been, and on the other and contributing to the former, their land was occupied by the Roman conquerors. Yet the very desire for purity in religion had resulted in a dead formality. The Pharisees, the leaders in seeking purity, had become over sensitive and exaggerated comparatively unimportant details, yet at the

same time left undone the more weighty matters of the law. The Lord had to say to them in this connection, “these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone” (Matt. xxiii. 23). Yet their religious national awareness coupled with the presence of the conqueror in their land cultivated in them a great yearning for the coming of their Deliverer, the Messiah.

Into this scene Joseph is born and clearly born for a purpose in God’s plan for His people. He was a humble man, obedient and faithful. What we know about him suggests he was rather slow, ponderous. But when given a clear lead, he acted without hesitation. He was a very human man, yet “just”, and like many of his contemporaries, desirous of keeping the law: the law, both of God, and of man. This is made clear in passages such as Matt. i. 19,

“Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.”

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed . . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city . . . . And Joseph also went up . . . . unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem” (Luke ii. 1-5).

“And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord: . . . . and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke ii. 22-24).

Similar stress is also found in Luke ii. 39, 41, 43. Joseph: kind, just and law abiding.

The circumstances of his call must have been rather traumatic. Matthew records the call in chapter i. 18-25. Joseph had learned that Mary was with child, and Mary was his betrothed wife. In those days, and in that society, betrothal was treated as binding as was marriage, and the consequences of disloyalty were literally fatal (Deut. xxii. 23, 24). The fact that Mary “was found with child of the Holy Ghost” was unknown to Joseph at that point, and he was as troubled and concerned as any man of his day and race would have been. Matthew tells us Joseph “thought on these things”. Bullinger’s *Critical Lexicon* defines the word “thought”: “thought, as being the result of a commotion of the mind”. Joseph’s mind was in a turmoil. He eventually made up his mind what to do: He would “put her away privily”. He would quietly divorce her, and so avoid the degrading publicity any other course would entail. He wanted to obey the law, yet he did not wish to expose Mary to all the shame of “taking her to law”.

It was at this point the angel appeared to him while he slept, with this message for him:

“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. i. 20, 21).

On hearing this Joseph obeyed, and evidently without question; he “did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife” (verse 24).

Why did not God spare Joseph all the worry and concern? Why did not the angel appear to him immediately he had found that Mary was expecting? It may be difficult for us to find a satisfactory answer to such questions; yet an answer is given: “now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet” (22). Literally it is “the *whole* of this”, which strongly suggests that even the worry and concern experienced by Joseph had some place in the fulfillment of prophecy. How often we tend to think that if we are doing the Lord’s will, and are well pleasing to Him there will be no worry or concern, but even such experiences have a place in God’s purpose for His own.

Luke records the events attendant upon the birth of the Lord Jesus at Bethlehem, and all the way through, Joseph is there beside Mary. Luke tells in chapter ii. 4, 5, how Joseph was there on the journey to Bethlehem, and after the account of the revelation to the shepherds, and of their visit to Bethlehem, faithful Joseph is still there (verse 16).

Throughout the childhood of the Lord, Joseph is present. He was told by the angel to name the Child “Jesus”, and in Luke ii. 21, it is clear that Joseph faithfully carried out this part of his commission. Joseph ensured that He who was to fulfil the law kept the law during His infancy (verses 22-24). What would have happened, had Joseph not been faithful in this? How could the Lord Jesus have fulfilled all the law, had Joseph been neglectful at this stage?

When the wise men from the east came to do homage to the young child, Joseph only comes into the account when Herod presents a threat to the life of the Lord Jesus. And Joseph becomes His protector. Again Joseph obeys the angel of the Lord when Herod has died, and the time has come for the young Child to return to the Holy Land, and to Nazareth, and again Joseph’s part is to ensure that prophesy is fulfilled (Matt. ii. 23).

Once more Joseph appears on the scene recorded by Luke ii. 40-52. His task on this occasion being once more to ensure that his charge fulfilled the law:

“And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast” (Luke ii. 42).

At twelve years old, a Jewish boy becomes a “son of the law”. If, as seems to be implied in the words “after the custom of the feast”, all things were done according to the law, Joseph paid the redemption money of five shekels (Numb. iii. 46, 47), again ensuring that the law was fulfilled for “the Child Jesus”. Religiously He was now an adult, responsible for His own actions, hence His freedom in remaining behind at Jerusalem: He was now free to do His Father’s business:

“And His mother said unto Him, ‘Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing’. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke ii. 48, 49).

However, in spite of His freedom to do His Father’s business, He respected their failure to understand, and returned with them to Nazareth “and was subject unto them” (verses 50, 51). From this point Joseph’s work was done, his commission fulfilled.

Joseph was a just man, concerned to fulfil the law: He was a kind man not wishing to make Mary a public example: He was obedient and faithful to all that God required of him. His call was for the protection of God's purpose in Christ in the early part of the Lord's life on earth when He was most vulnerable; it was to ensure that Christ, Who came to fulfil the law, fulfilled the law as a child until He became a "son of the law"; it was to ensure the fulfillment of prophecy. The whole of this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord.

Just, kind, obedient, faithful, protector of the Living Word: Mary was "highly favoured", was not Joseph highly privileged?

### **No.17. The Woman---Mary. pp. 54 - 58**

Why, in a series devoted to "Men God called", introduce a woman? In the last study we considered the part Joseph had to play in the early days of the Lord Jesus Christ: yet his part is hardly complete without that of Mary, and no man could possibly have fulfilled the commission given to her. Her calling is unique.

From the reformed point of view, there is no question that in some quarters far too much is made of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Perhaps, in reaction against this, there is a tendency to ignore the part she played in God's purpose of redemption.

The background to her history is the same as for Joseph, her husband. It was a time of great "religiosity", the Jews were under the dominance of the conquering Romans, and as a result of these two factors, there was a great Messianic expectation. Indeed, there was at least one in Israel who knew the Messiah was about to appear:

"It was revealed unto (Simeon) by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke ii. 26).

Mary, like Joseph, was "of the house and lineage of David". Her age is unknown. She is described as "a virgin" (*parthenos*), a word meaning a maiden, virgin; when used as an adjective it signifies virgin, pure, chaste. She was, then, a young unmarried woman who was pure. More than this concerning Mary we do not know. It seems probable that the genealogy given in Luke iii. is that of Mary, and if this is so we know that her father's name was Heli. Of her mother nothing is known at all from Scripture; her name may have been Anna, but as the Word of God has nothing to say about it, it is clearly unimportant. Neither is there anything to indicate that she was born sinless, a theory which only complicates even more the problem it is supposed to solve. For then there is not only the "difficulty" of accounting for the Lord's sinlessness, but also of Mary's! It is surely sufficient for us that the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was the activity of God, and that the "power of the Highest" which "overshadowed" her preserved Him from the

contamination of sin. The word power (*dunamis*) has the significance of “ability”. In this power was all the ability to perform everything necessary: both the conception and the sinlessness.

When Gabriel appeared to Mary he said:

“Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among woman” (Luke i. 28).

Of this greeting it might be said, all is of grace, although it is not apparent in translation. Rejoice! was a normal everyday salutation, but one, like our “goodbye” which derives from ‘God be with you’, had the deeper significance of ‘Rejoice! Be glad!’ It is a word (*chaire*) which derives from grace (*charis*), for all true gladness and rejoicing has its roots in the grace of God. “Thou that art highly favoured” is also “full of grace”. It is literally “having been graced”, and is the same word used in Eph. i. 6 where the A.V. translates it “*accepted* in the Beloved”. The believer who is a member of the church which is Christ’s Body is “highly favoured” having “been graced”, and like Mary, for a special purpose. Mary was uniquely “united” to the Lord Jesus Christ as His human mother in a way no other human being can possibly be united to Him: it is surely significant that this same word is applied to those who are united to Him as members of His Body, God had made Mary acceptable for His purpose: no natural qualification, nor human attribute could do so. Similarly those who comprise the Body of Christ have no quality or attribute to make them acceptable to God for this great privilege, it comes to them only as they are united to the Beloved.

The blessing which concludes the greeting is doubtful, and is omitted from a number of the critical Greek texts. *The Companion Bible* note says “Probably brought here from Luke i. 42, where it is unquestioned”. Even if it is correctly placed here, the expression has not quite the force given to it by some. For the word translated “blessed” (*eulogeo*) simply means “to speak well of”, and nothing more. It can have the sense of “blessing” to the extent that in a blessing one is “well spoken of”.

“She was troubled at his saying” (verse 29). Gabriel’s saying threw her into great confusion, she was confounded by it. The result was “She cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be”. This might be expressed as “she argued with herself” about it. Yet at this point she had not been told of the great privilege which was to be hers. Many extraordinary things were to happen to Mary before her commission was fulfilled; things which would be confusing to her, and always she considered them carefully. Following the birth of Christ, and the visit of the shepherds, Luke tells us:

“But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke ii. 19).

Mary *kept* all these things: the primary meaning of “kept” is “to watch closely”, or, as Bullinger’s Critical Lexicon puts it “to have one’s eye upon in conjunction . . . .”. She viewed all that befell her, not as separate incidents, but as a part of the whole, and “kept her eye open” not to miss anything. Then she pondered them in her heart: she *brought them together*. Both words are compounds, both beginning with *sun* which bears the thought of being united. Although the various incidents were mysterious, inexplicable,

extraordinary, she looked upon them as a part of a united whole and sought to see how each fitted in to God's purpose for her. Following the visit to the temple when the Lord became a son of the law, Luke records she "kept all these sayings in her heart". Here the word is slightly different, meaning "to have one's eye upon *throughout*": not one item escaped her notice. How good it would be for us to pay such close attention to the events in our lives, carefully looking in every detail for the hand of God!

"Fear not Mary: for thou hast found favour with God" (Luke i. 30). This is Gabriel's response to Mary's confusion. Fear (*phobeo*) while having the usual significance of "fear, terror, dismay", can also mean "put to flight". Perhaps, in the circumstances, it conveyed to Mary something of "Do not run away from this". There are circumstances in the life of every believer, at times, from which he would like to "run away", and it is just at such times we need to look very carefully to ensure that what we do is in accord with the will of God. "Thou hast found favour with God", is, literally, "thou hast found *grace* with God". Grace is favour to the unworthy, and however good Mary may have been, for the great task to which she was called neither she, nor any other woman, would have been "worthy". All, for Mary, was of grace. It might well be said of Mary that she was called "to the praise of the glory of His grace", as it is said in Ephesians of those, who, united to Christ, comprise the church which is His Body.

The message the angel brought to Mary was of such a tremendous character, that, but for Gabriel's reassurance, she might well have wished to "run away from it". Chosen to be the means whereby God Himself entered into the history of man, to redeem man! But with the reassurance of God's grace and enablement, Mary's response was "Behold the handmaid (bond servant) of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word". How often we forget "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

In her call Mary received the Gospel in miniature:

- (1) Thou shalt bring forth a Son: corresponding to Luke's Gospel, behold the Man. For He came the second Man and last Adam, to be the beginning of a new, redeemed human race.
- (2) His Name shall be called Jesus: the Saviour and Servant, corresponding to Mark's Gospel, behold the Man. For He came as Jehovah's Servant, becoming obedient even unto death.
- (3) He shall be great . . . . the Son of the Highest: corresponding to John's Gospel, behold your God. For He came to be the source of the new eternal life.
- (4) He shall reign: corresponding to Matthew's behold your King. For He came to be the One in Whom is fulfilled God's purpose that man should have dominion over the earth, and to be the King of the chosen people.

It is not surprising that Mary's question was "How shall this be?" (Luke i. 34). Gabriel told her "Holy Spirit (power from on high) shall come upon thee, and the ability of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (verse 35). "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (verse 37).

It would seem that Mary having kept all these things and pondered them in her heart, had learned that with God all things are possible. For in John's account of the wedding at Cana, Mary points out to her Son that there is a shortage of wine, and it is worth noting that she makes no suggestion to Him concerning what might be done. A lesson we would do well to learn! Often, when we see a need, we think we see the answer, and tend to pester God for our solution. Mary presented Him with the need, and left it with Him. Her last recorded words, her instructions to the servants on that occasion sum up all her experiences: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John ii. 5). It is the only safe way for all who are "highly favoured", "accepted in the Beloved":

"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

### **No.18. Nathanael.** **pp. 77 - 80**

We hear of Nathanael only twice, at the beginning, and again at the end of the Lord's earthly ministry (John i. 15-51 and xxi. 2). Nathanael is not mentioned in either of the other Gospels; but the other Gospel do mention one Bartholomew, while John never mentions him. In John i. "Philip findeth Nathanael", which suggests, perhaps, a somewhat closer link between them: in the other Gospels Bartholomew and Philip are always "paired", with the result that Nathanael and Bartholomew are usually identified as the same man. However, for the purpose of this study it is perhaps not very important as all the references to Bartholomew are in lists of names, where Bartholomew always occurs second to Philip.

The immediate background to Nathanael's call is the testimony of John the Baptist to the Lord Jesus Christ, as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 28, 36). There was, it seems a little group from Bethsaida, consisting of Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip and Nathanael. These men were keenly looking for the coming of the Messiah. Two of this group who heard John's testimony, followed the One the prophet had pointed out: one was Andrew, and possibly the other was John (John i. 36-40). Andrew found his brother, Peter, saying to him "we have found the Messiah", and brought him to the Lord. The following day the Lord went into Galilee and found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me". Philip then finds Nathanael telling him:

"We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (i. 45).

This little group of men were concerned with the Word of God, they were searching for the Truth, and for the Messiah. Philip identifies the Messiah as "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph". Evidently Joseph was well known in the district from which they came: Cana was roughly ten miles from Nazareth in the south, and also from Bethsaida in the east. If Joseph was known, it is highly probable that his "son" would also be known in the district, and, in part, accounts for Nathanael's rather less than enthusiastic

response! “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” he asked. Nazareth was looked upon, as some one has put it, as a “sink of iniquity”. Certainly there are statements which suggest Nazareth was not all it might have been:

“And He marveled because of their unbelief” (Mark vi. 6).

“And all they in the synagogue . . . . rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong” (Luke iv. 28, 29).

To Nathanael, Nazareth was a most unlikely place of origin for the Messiah. However, Philip was not to be put off by the pessimism of Nathanael, and said to him “Come and see”.

As Philip and Nathanael approached, the Lord said of Nathanael, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Literally “Behold a true Israelite”. Frequently in Scripture a distinction is made between “Israel” and “Jacob”, the former representing the spiritual seed, and “Jacob” the seed “according to the flesh”. If the distinction is maintained here, the Lord marked out Nathanael as a man of the Spirit, one in whom was no guile, deceit, cunning, or treachery. There was no subtlety about Nathanael as his replies, both to Philip, and to the Lord show. “Whence knowest Thou me?”, said Nathanael. “Know” (*ginosko*) get to know. To this the Lord replied “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee”. The word for “saw” being *eidon*, to see and *perceive*. “When did you get to know me?”, “When you were under the fig tree I saw and *perceived* you”. This convinced Nathanael, for no mere man, could, not only have seen him under the fig tree, but also have perceived the kind of man he was. Being one who was acquainted with Moses and the law, and the prophets, Nathanael would know “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. xvii. 10). So Nathanael’s reaction was in accord with the revelation given to him:

“Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel” (John i. 49).

It is an emphatic statement, with slightly more emphasis on the first clause than the second.

It may be questioned just how much did Nathanael mean and understand by this affirmation, and it is difficult to be quite certain. What did Philip really understand by his affirmation in verse 45? It seems clear that Nathanael went further than that. There are other similar affirmations of faith by others of the apostles: Peter’s “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”, yet very shortly after, the Lord referred to Peter as a satan. How far did Thomas go in understanding his great statement “My Lord, and my God”? It would seem, and experience seems to confirm it, that it is possible intuitively to grasp some great fact of revelation, and yet fail to grasp the full implication of it. Yet Nathanael said it! *THOU* art the Son of God! *THOU* art KING of Israel!

Often the Lord’s reply is taken as a rebuke. Yet it is quite possible to translate it: “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, thou believest. Thou shalt see greater things than these”. To existing faith, greater things are revealed. It is not clear to

what “these” refers: does it mean that Nathanael will receive revelations greater than that the One Who spoke to him is the Son of God, and the King of Israel, or that he will receive greater revelations than the others who were with him? Having made this statement to Nathanael, the Lord then turns to the others and says to them all:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (verse 51).

This might be an indication that they all would see this, yet Nathanael even more. Whether this is so or not, it is clear that the exercise of faith leads on to the apprehension of yet greater truths.

Those who seek the Truth, will find. Genuine doubt is no real hindrance, and it has been said with some truth, that the one who has never doubted, has never really believed. At the commencement of the Lord’s earthly ministry it was the one who began by doubting who made the greatest statement of faith: at the close of His ministry it was the one who has become known as “doubting Thomas” who made the declaration of faith: “My Lord and my God”. The Lord never despises honest doubt, indeed it would seem that to those who are “without guile”, who are anxious not to be deceived, are given the greater insights to the “deep things of God”.

# The Miracles of the Apostles

## No.1. Miracles, Miracles Everywhere.

pp. 145 - 149

In this series we intend, D.V., to look at each of the miracles of the apostles *in detail*. In modern Christendom much is heard about miracles but it seems to be based on the principle of “picking and choosing”. If, and admittedly it is a very big “if”, the miracles of the apostles are in evidence today then *all* of those miracles should be seen, not just two or three! Also, close scrutiny of the twentieth century phenomena and a comparison of them with those spectacular events described in the Acts of the Apostles show that something is amiss . . . . but we are getting ahead of ourselves. What exactly is a miracle? In the King James version (A.V.) two Greek words are translated miracle:

- (1) *Dunamis* = power, inherent ability, is used of works of a supernatural origin and character, such as could not be produced by natural agents and means (Vine).  
= power, in the singular, power in the abstract; but in the plural it means mighty works, i.e. the manifestations of power (Bullinger).

This word comes into English language in such words as dynamo, dynamite and dynamic, and it occurs some 119 times in the N.T. (10 in Acts) where it is translated: ability, abundance, meaning, might, mightily, mighty, mighty deed, worker of miracle, power, strength, violence, mighty work and wonderful work (Strong). A typical usage of the word is found in Acts x. 38 where it is translated power.

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with *power* . . . .”.

- (2) *Semeion* = a sign, mark, token (akin to *semaino*, to give a sign; *sema*, a sign), is used of miracles and wonders as signs of divine authority (Vine).  
= a sign. This word has regard to the *significance* of the work wrought, whether in itself, or in reason, object, design, and teaching intended to be conveyed by it (Bullinger).

This word, used chiefly by John, occurs some 77 times in the N.T. (13 in Acts) and is translated: miracle, sign, token and wonder (Strong). A typical usage of the word is found in Acts ii. 19 where it is translated signs:

“And I will show wonders in heaven above, and *signs* in the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke.”

The English word *miracle*, however, comes from the Latin *miraculum* which means “a wonder”, from the verb *mirror*, to wonder at. Thus the word *miracle* should be used, strictly speaking, to translate the Greek word *teras*.

- (3) *teras* = something strange, causing the beholder to marvel, is always used in the plural, always rendered “wonders” (Vine).  
 = a wonder. This word has regard to the *effect produced* on those who witnessed the mighty work. It is always translated “wonders” (Bullinger).

This word occurs 16 times in the N.T. (9 in Acts) and a typical usage of it is found in Acts ii. 19, quoted above.

Thus in the N.T. three aspects of miracles are presented by the inspired writers. *Miracles* are signs; they are the results of great power and they are wonderful. We should never forget this. Although the displays of great power were wonderful, *they also signified something*. So often, nowadays, that aspect is forgotten.

These three words come together in at least two verses of the N.T.

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs (*semeion*) and wonders (*teras*), and divers miracles (*dunamis*), and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Heb. ii. 4).

Thus the miracles of the apostles, those signs, wonders and displays of power were a witness, to testify that *God* was working with those who exhibited the phenomena. This was also true of *The Apostle*, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Ye men of Israel, hear the words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles (*dunamis*) and wonders (*teras*) and signs (*semeion*), which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (Acts ii. 22).

But to whom were these signs a witness? To whom were the displays of power a testimony? Are all wonders a proof that God is working through the performer? Do all miracles prove that God is behind the miracle-worker? These are questions we shall have to deal with later but for now we should note that the *Acts of the Apostles* is “full” of miracles; signs, wonders and displays of power. The words *dunamis*, *semeion* and *teras* occur over 30 times in its 28 chapters and there are accounts of many marvelous events, even though miraculous, which do not include one of these words. If we look at these events in more detail we shall see great diversity.

Acts	Types of Miracle	Acts	Types of Miracle
i. 26	Casting lots	ii. 3	Holy Spirit Baptism
ii. 4	Tongues	iii. 7	Healing
iv. 13	Knowledge	iv. 31	Physical wonders
v. 5	Judgment	v. 10	Judgment
v. 15	Shadow Healing	v. 16	Healing
v. 19, 20	Angelic Help and Ministry	vii. 55	Visions
viii. 7	Healing the sick and demonic	viii. 26	Angelic ministry
viii. 29	Instruction from the Holy Spirit	viii. 39	Physical wonders
ix. 3	Physical wonders	ix. 9	Blindness
ix. 10	Visions	ix. 18	Healing
ix. 34	Healing	ix. 40	Raising the dead

x. 3	Visions	x. 11	Visions
x. 19	Instructions from the Holy Spirit	x. 46	Tongues
xi. 28	Prophecy	xii. 7, 8	Angelic ministry
xii. 23	Angelic judgment	xiii. 11	Judgment
xiv. 10	Healing	xiv. 19, 20	Healing
xvi. 9	Visions	xvi. 18	Casting out demons
xvi. 26	Physical wonders	xix. 6	Tongues and prophecy
xix. 11	Special miracles!	xix. 12	Healing
xix. 12	Casting out demons	xx. 10	Raising the dead
xxi. 10, 11	Prophecy	xxiii. 11	Divine visitation
xxvii. 23, 24	Angelic ministry	xxvii. 24	Divine protection
xxviii. 5	Divine protection	xxviii. 8, 9	Healing

Now this list of over 45 miracles is *not* exhaustive but it is more than sufficient to show the wide variety of miracles recorded in the book of Acts. However, to the above we must add such general statements as:

“Many wonders and miracles were done by the apostles” (ii. 43).

“By the hands of the apostles were *many miracles, signs and wonders* wrought among the people” (v. 12).

“And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought *great wonders and signs* among the people” (vi. 8, A.S.V.).

“The Lord . . . . granted *signs and wonders* to be done by their (Paul and Barnabas) hands” (xiv. 3).

“Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what *miracles and wonders* God had wrought among the Gentiles by them” (xv. 12).

Having seen the above list of over 45 mighty miracles we may be perplexed over what would constitute the “*great wonders and signs*” of Stephen (Acts vi. 8), or the “*special miracles*” of Paul (Acts xix. 11)! However, in the 28 chapters of the book of Acts there are well over 30 references to wonders, signs and displays of power. Also we have been able to list over 45 references to specific miracles and a further 5 general references have been given—and no doubt we have missed some! So—miracles, miracles, everywhere! Why were there so many? To answer that question we need to locate the Acts of the Apostles in its context in the great plan of God. However, we should just note that *teras*, wonder, which occurs 16 times in the N.T., including 9 in Acts does not occur once in those seven epistles written after Acts xxviii. 28 (viz., Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon). The word *semeion*, sign, with 77 occurrences in the N.T. including 13 in Acts, again does not occur once in those seven epistles written after Acts xxviii. 28. The word *dunamis*, power, however does. It comes 119 times in the N.T. and 11 of them fall in the post Acts epistles. The references are as follows: Eph. i. 19, 21; iii. 7, 16, 20; Phil. iii. 10; Col. i. 11, 29; II Tim. i. 7, 8; iii. 5. We would recommend our readers to look up each of these and note that in *none* of the contexts is there any hint of evidential miracles, signs and wonders or the displays of power as seen in the Acts of the Apostles.

## **No.2. Hast God cast away His people Israel? pp. 165 - 171**

Last time we asked such questions as: to whom were the signs a witness? To whom were the displays of power a testimony? And we also asked why were there so many wonders exhibited during the Acts period? We can answer such questions as these only if the Acts of the Apostles is seen in its proper context in God's plan and purpose.

The theme of the book is summed up in the question recorded in Acts i. 6:

“When they therefore were come together, they asked Him, saying, Lord wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”.

Readers who think that the Jew was set aside by God at the cross may find this question perplexing. A careful reading of the book of Acts reveals that the Jew had not been set aside but was still there, right in the centre of events. In God's sight, that nation was still very much alive.

The word *Israel* or *Israelite* occurs some 21 times in the Acts of the Apostles and a further 21 in the epistles written during the Acts period but it occurs only *twice* in those seven written after the close of the Acts dispensation—(namely Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon). These two references are:

Eph. ii. 12—where the Gentiles are reminded that in times past they were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”.

Phil. iii. 5—where Paul describes himself as “of the stock of Israel”.

The last reference, Phil. iii. 5, also contains the only occurrence of the word *Hebrew* in the seven epistles written after Acts xxviii. 28. There Paul describes himself as “a Hebrew of the Hebrews”.

We see a similar pattern with the words *Jew*, *Jews*, *Jewish*, etc. These occur some 81 times in Acts, 29 times in the epistles of the Acts period but again, only twice in those seven post Acts period epistles. The two references are:

Col. iii. 11—where the Colossians are reminded that “there is neither Greek nor Jew”.

Titus i. 14—where Titus is warned against “giving heed to Jewish fables”.

Thus the book of the Acts is full of the Jews, the people of Israel—as well as being full of mercies! This people had crucified their Messiah and they were held responsible for that deed. Peter, speaking to the Jews, said:

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye (the Jews) slew and hanged on a tree” (Acts v. 30).

Again, in Acts x. 39, Peter said:

“And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem, Whom they (the Jews) slew and hanged on a tree.”

We are not trying to absolve the Gentile world from the blame they deserve for their part in crucifying our Lord. Indeed, we cannot do that because Acts iv. 27 states:

“For a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.”

Certainly they all played their part in the rejection of the Son of God but Scripture records that Pilate was “willing to release Jesus” (Luke xxiii. 20). It was the Jews who “cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him” (Luke xxiii. 21). But more than that! Worse than that, they also said:

“His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. xxvii. 25).

Did they know what they were saying? Did they know what they were doing? No! Acts iii. 17 tells us that they did it in ignorance and from the cross, as His garments were being parted, the ever-gracious One, the ever-forgiving One prayed:

“Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do*” (Luke xxiii. 24).

They didn’t know what they were doing so He prayed for their forgiveness and that prayer was answered. The all-powerful, resurrected Christ told the disciples:

“That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*” (Luke xxiv. 27).

As a corporate body, for their corporate sin, the nation had been forgiven. Now repentance and remission of sins were available to the individual members of Israel but did the disciples obey Christ’s command of Luke xxiv. 47? Yes! Acts iii. 19 records Peter’s plea to the “men of Israel” (verse 12):

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts iii. 19).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter had said:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts ii. 38).

But to whom was Peter speaking?

“They were dwelling at Jerusalem, *Jews*, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Acts ii. 5).

Acts ii. 9, 10, 11 lists the nations from where the Jews had come. These are lists *not* of Gentiles but of “Jews and Proselytes” (Acts ii. 10). The occasion was the feast of Pentecost which would not have attracted Gentiles to Jerusalem . . . . but Jews would have been there in their thousands. Thus the book of Acts opens with Jews in abundance and the first Gentile, Cornelius, does not appear until chapter x. and the next Gentile

converts are not mentioned until Acts xiii. 42. But why were these Gentiles brought in then? Had the Jews then been set aside?

A close reading of Acts x. reveals Peter's reluctance to go to the first Gentile believer and when he met Cornelius he didn't seem to know why he had been sent!

"Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore *for what intent ye have sent for me?*" (Acts x. 29).

Before the ascension the Lord Jesus Christ had told the disciples that they should be witnesses of Him "in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). Peter knew this, he knew Jerusalem was the starting point (Luke xxiv. 47) and then all Judea. After that, when the nation had repented, they, as a kingdom of priests, were to take the message of the Messiah to Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. That was God's revealed plan but . . . . the Jewish nation was not committed to Christ. The vast majority had still not repented. There was still opposition so . . . . why go to a Gentile? The answer to that question is, of course, found in the writings of the one who is called the Apostle to the Gentiles, namely Paul. Romans was one of the last epistles written during the Acts period and Rom. xi. 1, 2 makes it very clear that, even then, the nation of Israel had not been cast away.

". . . . Hath God cast away His people? God forbid . . . . God has not cast away His people" (Rom. xi. 1, 2).

In Rom. xi. 11-25 Paul explains the position of the Gentiles and the reason for their being brought in during the Acts period, before the nation of Israel had repented:

". . . . but through their (Jews) fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them (Jews) to jealousy (emulation or fruitfulness is a better rendering of the word 'jealousy')" (Rom. xi. 11).

This chapter of Roman goes on to explain that *some* of the natural branches (the Jews) had been broken off and some branches of a wild olive (the Gentiles) had been grafted in (Rom. xi. 17). This was done to stimulate the cultivated olive tree (the Jews) to bear fruit and the very use of this illustration shows that the olive tree of Israel had not, at that time, been cut down. The metaphorical application of this horticultural practice is exactly what we see in the Acts. For instance, at Antioch Paul went to the synagogue of the Jews, (Acts xiii. 14), and afterwards to the Gentiles. What was the effect on the Jews when they saw the multitude of Gentiles?

". . . . they were filled with envy . . . . then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts xiii. 45, 46).

The Jews were provoked but sadly not to fruitfulness nor emulation, but to envy. Thus this *group* of Jews were cast away, this unfruitful branch broken off. This event must be seen in the context of Rom. xi. It was *not* at Acts xiii. that the Jewish nation was set aside. Here just one of the branches had been replaced. This is obvious from the next chapter which opens with:

“And it came to pass in Iconium that they went into the synagogue of the Jews”  
(Acts xiv. 1).

But note the next verse:

“But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles.”

The great council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem, recorded in Acts xv., clearly indicates that Israel are still dominant and they maintain that position throughout the whole period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Acts xviii. 19 records that Paul “entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews”. In Acts xxviii. 20 Paul states “that for the hope of *Israel* I am bound with this chain”. In that chapter he “called the chief of the *Jews* together” (Acts xxviii. 17) but having listened to Paul’s exposition of the kingdom of God, some believed and some believed not, and “they agreed not among themselves” (Acts xxviii. 23-25). Only after that, after the third pronouncement in the N.T. of Isa. vi. 9, 10 (found in Acts xxviii. 26, 27) do we read:

“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles,  
and that they will hear it” (Acts xxviii. 28).

At that time, at the end of the books of Acts, the Jewish nation was set aside. From *that* time was salvation sent to the Gentiles *independently of the Jews*. From *then* on things changed. Not only do we see a sudden decrease in the use of “Israel”, “Israelite”, “Jew” and “Jewish” in those seven epistles written after this time but there is a complete absence of the type of miracles which fill the Acts period. More than that there are three clear testimonies to the gift of healing having ceased:

“For he (Epaphroditus) longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow” (Phil. ii. 26, 27).

“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (I Tim. v. 23).

“Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick” (II Tim. iv. 20).

In the Acts period a handkerchief or apron from Paul cured diseases (Acts xix. 12) but all that was sent after Acts xxviii. 28 was good advice! In the Acts period Paul healed all who came to him. On Malta, all who came to him were healed (Acts xxviii. 9). He left none ill but after Acts xxviii. 28 he could not cure Trophimus and he left him at Miletum sick. In the Acts period Paul could easily have healed Epaphroditus and if he still possessed the gift after Acts xxviii. 28 there was no need for Paul to have sorrow, but he no longer could heal. Thus, like us, Paul could but pray and wait on the Lord. In the case of Epaphroditus he was, eventually, restored but not until he had been “sick nigh unto death”.

Thus the book of Acts is dominated by the Jews and contains an abundance of miracles. At Acts xxviii. 26-28 that people as a nation before God are set on one side and the miracles cease. Is this surprising? No! Next time we shall look at the way in which God has dealt with the people of Israel right from the birth of the nation. We shall

see that signs, wonders and displays of power have always had a prominent place for this people.

**No.3. Setting the scene --- The Old Testament:  
“Then believed they His words”.  
pp. 186 - 192**

We have seen how miracles—signs, wonders and displays of power—and how the Jews, the people of Israel, dominate the book of Act. If we know the O.T., we should not be surprised to see the close association of these two. Neither should we be surprised to find that when the Jewish nation was set aside by God at the end of the book of Acts (see Acts xxvii. 26-28), the evidential miracles, the *external* signs, wonders and displays of power, also ceased.

The first occurrence, in English, of the word *miracles* in the O.T. comes in Exod.vii.9:

“And when Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying Show a *miracle* for you, then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.”

Here, the Hebrew for miracles is *mopheth* of which there are two occurrences earlier in the Bible. In Exod. iv. 21 and vii. 3 where it is translated *wonders*:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all these *wonders* before Pharaoh” (Exod. iv. 21).  
“I will . . . . multiply My signs and *wonders* in the land of Egypt” (Exod. vii. 3).

The first occurrence, in English, of the word *sign* is not in Exod. vii. 3, quoted above, but in Exod. iv. 8. Please read Exod. iv. 1-9 and note:

“And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first *sign*, that they will believe the voice of the *latter* sign” (Exod. iv. 8).

The Hebrew word for sign is *oth* and occurs several times previous to Exod. iv. 8, being translated signs (Gen. i. 14), mark (Gen. iv. 15) and token (Gen. ix. 12, 13, 17 and xvii. 11 and Exod. iii. 12). Please read each of these references.

The first occurrence, in English, of the word *wonder* in the O.T. is found in Exod.iii.20:

“And I will stretch out My hand, and smite Egypt with all My *wonders* which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.”

The Hebrew word for *wonder* in this verse is *pala* which occurs but once previously in Gen. xviii. 14. There it is translated *too hard* and the context of the first occurrence of this word is significant:

“And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Sarah and Abraham were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything *too hard* for the Lord?” (Gen. xviii. 9-14).

Thus the very existence of the seed of Abraham depended on a miracle. The origin of the Jewish nation, the people of Israel, *was* a miracle. When that nation had grown, their deliverance from Egypt, so vividly described in the opening chapters of Exodus, was accompanied by a multiplicity of miracles. (The words *mopheth*, *oth* and *pala* occur some twenty times in the first thirteen chapters of Exodus).

Throughout the whole of the O.T. we see miracle after miracle, sign after sign and wonder after wonder associated with this people. We see God guiding them, protecting them, teaching them and disciplining them by using signs, wonders and external displays of His power. It would be impossible to give them all but we list *some* of the *main* ones.

### (1) The Beginning of the Nation.

Genesis	xv. 12-16	Abram's deep sleep
	xv. 17	Fire on Abram's sacrifice
	xvii. 17; xviii. 12; xxi. 2	Conception of Isaac
	xix.	Destruction of Sodom
	xix. 26	Lot's wife
	xx. 17, 18	Closing the wombs of Abimelech's household
	xxi. 19	Opening Hagar's eyes
	xxv. 21	Conception of Jacob and Esau
	xxx. 22	Opening Rachel's womb
	xxxvii. 5-11	Joseph's dreams
Exodus	iii. 2	Flaming bush
	iv. 3-30; vii. 10, 12	Transforming rod into a serpent
	iv. 6-30	Leprosy on hand of Moses

### (2) The Plagues of Egypt.

Exodus	vii. 20-25	Water into blood
	viii. 5-14	Frogs
	viii. 16-18	Lice
	viii. 20-24	Flies
	ix. 3-6	Murrain of pestilences
	ix. 8-11	Boils and blains
	ix. 22-26	Thunder and hail
	x. 12-19	Locusts
	x. 21-23	Darkness
	xii. 29, 30	Death of firstborn / Passover

### (3) The Exodus and the Wilderness.

Exod.	xiii. 21, 22; xiv. 19, 20	Pillar of cloud and fire
	xiv. 21-31	Parting the Red Sea
	xiv. 23-30	Destruction of Pharaoh and his army
	xv. 25	Sweetening the waters of Marah
	xvi. 4-31	Supplying manna
	xvi. 13	Supplying quails
	xvii. 5, 7	Water from the rock at Rephidim
	xvii. 9-12	Moses held up rod
	xix. 16-20; xxiv. 10-17	Thunder and lightnings on Sinai and fire
	xxiv. 29-33	The shine on the face of Moses
Lev.	ix. 24	Fire on Aaron's sacrifice
	x. 1-2	Death of Nadab and Abihu
Numb.	xi. 1-3	Judgment by fire on the outer camp
	xii. 10-15	Miriam's leprosy
	xvi. 31-40	Destruction of Korah and Company
	xvi. 46-50	Plague on the people
	xvii. 1-9	Budding of Aaron's rod
	xx. 8-11	Water from the rock of Meribah in Kadesh
	xxi. 6-11	Judgment by serpents
	xxi. 8-9	Healing by the brazen serpent
	xxii. 21-35	Balaam's ass speaks
Deut.	xxxiv. 7	The preservation of Moses

### (4) The Initial Years in the Land.

Joshua	iii. 14-17; iv. 16-18	Parting the Jordan
	vi. 6-25	Fall of Jericho
	x. 11	Hail on the confederation
	x. 12-14	Sun and moon stand still
Judges	vi. 21	Fire on Gideon's sacrifice
	vi. 37-40	Dew on Gideon's fleece
	vii. 16-21	Destruction of Midianites
	xiii. 19-21	Fire on Manoah's sacrifice
	xiv. 6; xvi. 3-20	Samson's strength
	xv. 19	Samson supplied water

### (5) Under the Kings --- some examples

I Samuel	v. 1-4	Fall of Dagon
	v. 9-12; vi. 1-18	Plague of Haemerods
	vi. 7-14	Cows return the ark
	vi. 19, 20	Destruction of Beth-Shemesh
	xii. 16-18	Thunder and rain
II Samuel	vi. 1-8	Destruction of Uzzah
I Kings	xiii. 3-6	Jeroboam's hand
	xvii. 6	Elijah fed by ravens
	xvii. 9-16	Multiplying the widow's meal and oil
	xvii. 17-24	Raising the widow's son

	xviii. 39	Fire on Elijah's sacrifice
	xviii. 41-45	Rain in answer to prayer
	xix. 1-8	Elijah fed by an angel
II Kings	i. 10-12	Fire on Ahaziah's army
	ii. 7-8	Elijah divides the Jordan
	ii. 11	Elijah's translation
	ii. 14	Elisha divides the Jordan
	ii. 19-22	Sweetening the waters of Jericho
	iii. 20-22	Water appeared as blood
	iv. 1-17	Increasing the widow's oil
	iv. 18-37	Raising the Shunammite's son
	iv. 38-41	Elisha renders the poisoned pottage harmless
	iv. 43, 44	Feeding 100 men
	v. 1-19	Curing Naaman's leprosy
	v. 26, 27	Smiting Gehazi with leprosy
	vi. 6	The floating axe head
	vi. 12	Elisha reveals the counsel of the Syrian king
	vi. 17	The eyes of the young men were opened
	vi. 18	Blindness on the army of king of Syria
	xiii. 21	Restoring dead man to life
	xix. 35	Destruction of Sennacherib's army

**(6) Some examples from the prophets.**

Isaiah	xxxviii. 8	The sun-dial of Ahaz
	xxxviii. 21	Hezekiah cured
Ezekiel	i. 1-28	The Theophany
Daniel	iii. 19-27	The fiery furnace
	vi. 16-23	The lion's den
Jonah	i. 15	The calming of the sea
	i. 17; ii. 10	In the belly of great fish
	iv. 6, 7	The gourd

Now please note that we do not claim that the above list of nearly 100 miracles is anywhere near complete. To the above could be added the many visions and visitations, the many dreams together with their interpretations, the many prophecies and their fulfillments. If we read the context of these diverse miracles we shall see that throughout the Lord is guiding, protecting, teaching and disciplining His chosen people, the Jews. Miracles were for the people of Israel and, generally speaking, the only time Gentiles benefited from miracles were when they came into direct contact with the Jews and were involved, in some way, with God's plan for that people. For example, in Gen. xx. 3-8, God came to the Gentile king of Gerar, Abimelech, "in a dream by night". This was to warn Abimelech and to protect Abraham's wife, Sarah, and the purity of the promised seed.

Again in Gen. xl., the Egyptian baker and butler had dreams which Joseph interpreted. Gen. xli. records Pharaoh's two dreams and, following the butler's testimony, Joseph was brought from prison to interpret. This resulted in Joseph being promoted to second-in-command in the kingdom, sufficient food being stored for the

seven year famine and Jacob and his family coming to Egypt to be fed and protected from that famine. Thus the seed of Israel was preserved thanks to the dreams of Gentiles.

Similar features can be seen in the case of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel who interpreted his dreams. There again Jews were promoted to high positions among the Gentile rulers, and thus, even in exile, the chosen people were protected.

I Kings xvii. 10-24 records how Elijah went to a Gentile, the widow of Sarepta. There he made her supply of meal and oil inexhaustible and raised her son to life. II.Kings.v.1-19 records how Elisha cured the captain of the Syrian army, Naaman, of leprosy. It is significant that the Lord Jesus Christ refers to these two miracles on His first day of ministry. Luke iv. 16-19 records how the Lord Jesus went into the synagogue at Nazareth and read from Isa. lxi. 1, 2. When he finished He closed the book and said:

“This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke iv. 21).

But although they wondered at what He said and asked “Is not this Joseph’s son? He knew exactly what they were thinking. Luke iv. 23, 24 implies that they will *not* accept Him and the Lord then says:

“But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleaned, saving Naaman the Syrian” (Luke iv. 25-27).

How did the people react to being reminded of these miracles which had been bestowed upon the Gentiles by the two Jewish prophets?

“And *all* they in the synagogue, when they heard these things were filled with wrath” (Luke iv. 28).

The Jewish people came to expect, even to demand and require signs from those who claimed to speak on behalf of God. They guarded such miracles jealously for they considered them to belong exclusively to their nation. Thus we can understand why the Lord allowed the gifts and blessings of the Acts period to fall upon *some* Gentiles—“for to provoke them (the Jews) to jealously (i.e. fruitfulness or emulation)” (Rom. xi. 11).

Sadly this did not happen during the Acts period, as we saw in the previous article, and neither did it work in Luke iv. where verse 29 records that the people wanted to throw the Lord Jesus from the brow of the hill. Thankfully they did not succeed but regretfully it was a shame that they, unlike a previous generation, did not take notice of the speaker’s credentials.

“And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord Who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron *spoke all the words* which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, *and did the signs* in the sight of the people. *And the people believed*” (Exod. iv. 28-31).

“Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Thy mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. *THEN believed they His words*” (Psalm cvi. 7-12).

“And *Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses*” (Exod. xiv. 31).

Thus to the Jews the miracles of the O.T. were not merely wonders or empty displays of power, they were signs. They were evidence not only of God’s existence and His will but were also a witness to the Jews that God was with the miracle-worker. The people of Israel could be expected to listen only to those who had the signs but was that still the case in the Gospels and in the Acts?

#### **No.4. Setting the scene --- The Gospels: “Many believed when they saw the Miracles”. pp. 206 - 211**

We have seen in previous articles that miracles abound in the book of Acts and that the book is dominated by the Jews. We saw in our last study how in the O.T. God had taught, disciplined, protected and guided the people of Israel by using miracles, signs, wonders and displays of power. The Jew looked for, even demanded, miracles and could not be expected to believe that anyone spoke on behalf of God *unless* he had the accredited signs and wonders.

One night, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus and said:

“Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do those miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him” (John iii. 2).

Nicodemus, being a master and teacher of Israel, would know his Scriptures, the O.T., and would know what the prophets had foretold.

On another occasion, when John the Baptist was in prison, he sent two of his disciples to the Lord Jesus Christ to ask:

“Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached” (Luke vii. 19-22).

John the Baptist would then know that Christ was the Messiah for this was *exactly* what the prophets had foretold; see, for example, Isa.xxix.18; xxxv.5,6; xlii.7; lxi.1,2. In fact, at the very start of His ministry the Lord Jesus Christ quoted from Isa. lxi. 1, 2:

“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias (Isaiah). And when He had opened the book He found the place where it is written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke iv. 16-21).

The first recorded miracle of Christ is found in Matt. iv. 23, 24 and there we can see the close association between miracles and teaching:

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, *teaching* in their synagogues and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with demons, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He *healed* them” (Matt. iv. 23, 24).

The result of these miracles of healing was that:

“There followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan” (Matt. iv. 25).

These miracles were not mere exhibitions of pointless power. They attracted people from all parts of the country and were a complement to the teaching and preaching. Again, as in the O.T., God was using miracles to help the people, to guide them, and to teach them. This is so throughout the Gospels. For example, in Matt. x. 7, 8 we find the same principle demonstrated in the Lord’s words to the twelve:

“As ye go, *preach*, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. *Heal* the sick, *cleanse* the lepers, *raise* the dead, *cast out* devils” (Matt. x. 7, 8).

Even the last reference in the Gospels, to miracles states exactly the same thing. Here the risen Christ instructed the disciples and . . . . .:

“They went forth and *preached* everywhere, the Lord working with them, and *confirming the word with signs* following” (Mark xvi. 20).

Throughout His ministry on earth, the Lord Jesus appealed to the miracles—signs, wonders and displays of power—that He performed. For instance:

“But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works bear witness of Me that the Father sent Me” (John.v.36).

Here again, we see that the miracles were a witness. Similarly, when He met opposition, He said:

“If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him” (John x. 37, 38).

Sadly, however, the majority would not “believe the works”. They would not accept the signs as a witness or testimony that He was the One.

“Then He began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not” (Matt. xi. 20).

Others were more than glad to accept the benefit of the signs but not the consequences.

“Verily, verily I say unto you, ye seek Me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled” (John vi. 26).

We may well be puzzled as to why the Jews did not accept the evidential miracles performed by the Lord Jesus Christ as a testimony to His Messiahship. The prophets had foretold what He would do and, after all, He did perform so many miracles. For example, in Matthew’s Gospel alone we read of the following miracles:

viii. 2-4	The leper cleansed	viii. 5-13	Centurion’s servant healed
viii. 14, 15	Peter’s mother-in-law cured	viii. 23-27	The storm stilled
viii. 28-34	Demonics cured in Gergesenes	ix. 2-7	Paralytic cured
ix. 18-20	Ruler’s daughter raised	ix. 20-22	Issue of blood cured
ix. 27-31	Two blind men cured	ix. 32, 33	Dumb spirit cast out
xii. 10-13	Withered hand cured	xii. 22	Blind and demonics cured
xiv. 14	Many healed	xiv. 15-21	Five thousand fed
xiv. 22-33	Walking on the sea	xiv. 36	Many made perfectly whole
xv. 21-28	Woman of Canaan cured	xv. 29, 30	Many healed
xv. 31-39	Four thousand fed	xvii. 14-21	Lunatic boy cured
xxi. 1-7	The ass and colt	xxi. 14	Blind and lame cured
xxi. 18-22	Fig tree withered	xxvii. 52-xxviii. 8	The resurrection

There are, at least, another two miracles in Mark’s gospel, not mentioned in Matthew:

vii. 31-37	Deaf and dumb man cured	viii. 22-26	Blind man cured
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And there are, at least, another six in Luke, not recorded in either Matthew or Mark:

v. 1-11	Draught of fishes	vii. 11-17	Widow’s son raised
xiii. 11-17	Woman loosed from infirmity	xiv. 1-6	Dropsy cured
xvii. 11-19	Ten lepers cleansed	xxii. 50, 51	Malchus’ ear healed

John records just eight miracles, or signs as he calls them, and six of these are unique to his gospel:

ii. 1-11	Water into wine	iv. 46-54	Healing the ruler’s son
v. 1-9	Healing the impotent man	ix. 1-7	Healing the man born blind
xi. 38-44	Raising of Lazarus	xxi. 1-14	Draught of 153 fishes

After such display of power and with such an array of signs before them, we are left even more perplexed as to why the Jews did not accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

“But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him” (John xii. 37).

We may never know the true reason for their unbelief but a possible explanation is that, in Jewish terms, there were two pictures of the Messiah in the Old Testament; The *Messiah-ben-David*, the all powerful One, the great King and the *Messiah-ben-Joseph*, the holy and humble One, the suffering One. Some schools of Jewish theology taught that the *Messiah-ben-Joseph* was not a picture of the Messiah Himself but of His people, the Jews, because the Messiah and His people were so close, were so united. The people of Israel had suffered much under the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans so the picture fitted and, not only that, they could not see how it was possible for the Messiah to suffer. They looked only for the *Messiah-ben-David*, the mighty One whom they desired to see so much; He would free them from the Roman oppression. But when Jesus came “lowly, and riding upon an ass” (Zech. ix. 9), the vast majority of them did not see His signs as a testimony to His Messiahship simply because they were not looking for the lowly One. They wanted the mighty One. However, not all of that generation were like that. As the miracles in the O.T. had led some of those living at the time to believe in Jehovah and to listen to the servants who did the miracles, so in the gospels we read:

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana in Galilee, and manifested forth His glory: and *His disciples believed on Him*” (John ii. 11).

“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many *believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did*” (ii. 23).

“And when He thus had spoken He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin . . . . Then *many of the Jews* which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, *believed on Him*” (xi. 43-45).

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that *ye might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (xx. 30, 31).

Thus John recorded his eight signs to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah! The miracles and wonders performed by the Lord Jesus were signs to the people of Israel to encourage them to believe. They testified to the Jews that the One Who performed them was their Messiah but were these wonders a witness to every nation? No! They could be a blessing to a Gentile but they could not be a witness to him of the Lord Jesus' Messiahship. They could only be a testimony to the nation that held the key to them. That key was the Scriptures and that nation was Israel.

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because *unto them were committed the oracles of God*” (Rom.iii.1,2).

[NOTE: For those who are interested, the 26 Miracles of Matthew and the signs of John are dealt with fully on pages 152-214 of Charles H. Welch's *Parable, Miracle and Sign*.]

**No.5. Setting the scene --- The Acts:  
“Jews require a Sign”.  
pp. 225 - 229**

In our previous studies we have seen the close relationship between the people of Israel and God’s use of miracles in dealing with them. Thus we should not be surprised to read in an Acts period epistle:

“The Jews require a sign” (I Cor. i. 22).

The resurrected Christ, just before His ascension, had told the disciples that they were to be . . . . .:

“. . . . witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts i. 8).

He had told them that . . . . .:

“. . . . repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke xxiv. 47).

If the disciples were to start in Jerusalem, if they were to go throughout Judea, they needed credentials. If they were to go to the Jews, they had to have confirmation of their ministry: “the Jews require a sign”. The Lord Jesus Christ knew this and for this very reason had told them . . . . .:

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover . . . . . And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and *confirming the word with signs* following” (Mark xvi. 17-20).

If we read the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles written during the Acts period (viz. all *except* Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon which were written afterwards) we shall find records of all these miracles, except the drinking of poison, taking place. The signs of Mark xvi. were an important feature of the Acts period.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed* unto us by them that heard Him; God also *bearing them witness* both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His will?” (Heb. ii. 34).

Thus these signs, wonders, diverse miracles and gifts were a witness and testimony to back up the ministry of those who spoke about that “great salvation”. In many ways,

such outward displays of God's power provided confirmation to those Jews who did believe.

“Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift . . . .” (I Cor. i. 6, 7).

But to the Jew who did not believe, they signified that God was at work. The miracles were a divine testimony and a wonderful witness to the unbelieving Jew, especially the gift of tongues.

“In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear Me, saith the Lord. Wherefore *tongues are a sign*, not to them that believe; but *to them that believe not*” (I Cor. xiv. 21, 22).

Notice the words, “In the *law* it is written”. These words would mean little to a Gentile of that time. Tongues were a sign to the unbelieving Jew of his unbelief and the above reference would bring to his mind such passages as Isa. xxviii. 11, 12; xxxiii. 19 as well as, possibly, Deut. xxviii. 49,

Unto the Jew “were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. iii. 2) and so only they could understand the significance of the signs. How did the Israel of the Acts period react to these miracles of God? Initially the response was good.

“. . . and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts ii. 41).

“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed, and the numbers of the men was about five thousand” (Acts iv. 4).

“. . . and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts v. 14).

Sadly, however, just as they had refused to accept the miraculous credentials of Christ, the Jewish leadership refused to be satisfied with the signs of the disciples. After Peter and John had healed the man at the Beautiful Gate, the Jewish council conferred, saying:

“What shall we do to these men? For that a *notable miracle* hath been done by them *is manifest to all* them that dwell in Jerusalem: and *we cannot deny it*” (Acts iv. 16).

They could not deny the mighty miracle and asked “What shall we do to these men?” What did they do? Do they accept the sign? Did they believe? No! They called in Peter and John,

“. . . . and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (iv. 18).

What hardness of heart! What hypocrisy! They could not deny the miracle, yet they would not accept it. They refused the miraculous testimonials of the divine authority of the disciples just as they had refused the witness of the Lord's work of His Messiahship.

As we progress through the book of Acts the unbelieving Jewish leaders actively oppose the disciples first with imprisonments (Acts v. 18), next with beatings (Acts v. 40) and then with the stoning of Stephen (Acts vii. 59). But that was just a start.

“And at that time there was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts viii. 1).

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went into the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts ix. 1, 2).

The result of the opposition, instigated by the Jewish leadership, was that the bulk of believers were scattered abroad. Even though the miracles continued, they failed to convert large numbers to the truth of Christ. They continued, however, to have some success.

“And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord” (Acts ix. 41, 42).

“Many believed” but the days of several thousands or, occasionally multitudes of converts were over. There was “a great number” (Acts xi. 21) at Antioch and “much people were added” (Acts xi. 24) but the persecution increased:

“Now about this time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also” (Acts xii. 1-3).

Even the outstanding conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus did not stop the persecution. He suffered it himself.

“But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas” (Acts xiii. 50).

“And there came thither certain Jews . . . . who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead” (Acts xiv. 19).

If God had not already cut off the Jewish nation for rejecting and crucifying the Messiah, surely He would finish with them now! But, “Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness” (Neh. ix. 17) “The Lord . . . is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. iii. 9). Thus in an attempt to stimulate the olive tree of Israel into bearing fruit (Rom. xi. 11) some of its branches were broken off and parts of the wild olive (the Gentiles) were grafted in.

“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches” (Rom. xi. 17, 18).

Thus the Gentiles who were to stimulate Israel were to partake of “the root and fatness of the olive tree”, part of which consisted of the miracles of that period. The second half of the book of Acts sees the Gentiles participating in the wondrous blessings of Israel but did that stimulate the Jewish nation to bear fruit? Did it provoke them to emulation? No! Sadly they were provoked to envy, as in, for example, Acts xiii. 45, 50 and xiv. 19.

With the unbelief of the Jewish leadership in Rome, God's patience with them came to an end. The third reference to Isa. vi. 9, 10 in Acts xxviii. 26, 27 saw the temporary end of the Jews as a nation before God, and they will remain so throughout this present dispensation. At the end of the Acts period Israel was set on one side and the miracles, wonders and displays of power which were a sign to them ceased.

We have now considered the background. We have set the scene and have looked at the Acts in its context in relation to the O.T. and the Gospels. We have seen that throughout the O.T., the Gospels and the Acts, the Jew is dominant and miracles abound. We have seen the close relationship between the Jewish people and these miraculous signs and we have seen how God used the wonders and displays of His power to guide, protect, teach and discipline His chosen people, the people of Israel.

In future studies we shall look in great details at each miracle done by the apostles. Next time, D.V., we shall look at the casting of lots, after that Holy Spirit baptism, after that tongues, then healing and so on.

# The First Epistle of PETER

No.4b. ii. 12 - 17.

pp. 39, 40

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (I Pet. ii. 12).

Visitation comes from *episkope* a bishop or overseer, one who visits and keeps an eye on his flock. In the text it would refer to the moment we come under scrutiny from the outside world and are then a recommendation to the gospel and Christ or the reverse.

The Ephesian calling has special reference to us as an advertising medium for the grace and wisdom of God influencing us, setting us (we hope) as a good example to principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. iii. 10). Honest conversation (manner of life), implies a livelihood and day to day dealings with others that are just, fair and have no appearance of evil or double dealing. Paul writes “recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Rom. xii. 17).

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God” (verses 13-16).

Our Lord also showed the involvement of God in the affairs of men in the matter of government. Christ quotes from Psa. lxxxii. 6 in John x. 35. In verse 1 we read:

“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He judgeth among the gods.”

Here gods although *elohim*, is used of earthly judges as representatives of God. It is significant of the divine inspiration given to Peter that he can write with assurance “for so is the *will* of God”. “As free” was misunderstood by many even as they were when Christ said “the truth shall make you free” (John viii. 33). Even though the believers had come under the law of the Spirit from the law of Moses and man, yet their perfect conduct gave their critical onlookers (who were ignorant of this new position of the believer) no excuse for pointing the finger of judgment and condemnation. Their behaviour, obedient to and consistent with, their faith would redound to the glory of God. We should remember that the law is for those that know not God.

“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (ii. 17).

“Honour all men” is an injunction much emphasized in Philippians. God alone knows the opportunities, handicaps, circumstances of each man; the tasks allotted to them by their Maker. We therefore in our ignorance must accord them respect whoever they are

and in humility reflect the love of God in our dealings with them. “Love the brotherhood” Paul echoes the sentiment when he writes:

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto men who are of the household of faith” (Gal. vi. 10).

When one thinks of the love of God for all those who are His children there must be even greater overshadowing concern for some who are faithful under special difficulties. We may be ministering to or alas failing to support unknowingly such a chosen vessel. “Fear God”, the proverb (ix. 10) says “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”. note that fear is allied to reverence and it is only the *beginning* of wisdom. The degree of awe and respect we offer God may well be in proportion to our faith, for at the other extreme it is written “The fool has said in his heart there is no God” (Psalms xiv. 1 and liii. 1).

**No.5. ii. 18 - iii. 2.  
pp. 59, 60**

The remaining verses of this chapter touch on the sublime behaviour expected by the Father from His children, namely the patient endurance of undeserved evil of varying degrees from others and moreover loving concern offered to the offender rather than evil for evil. This is a hard lesson to learn yet our blessed Lord gave us an outstanding example to emulate and follow:

“When He was reviled He did not revile in return; when He suffered He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him Who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (ii. 23-25, R.S.V.).

This quotation is from Isa. liii. 5. This chapter of Isaiah has only 12 verses and it would be a good thing if we often read it and pondered on all the hurtful things He had to endure from His own people, quite apart from the physical torment of His last hours. Despised, rejected, esteemed or thought to be smitten by God, oppressed, yet with all this it is recorded “He opened not His mouth in rebuke”. Was there ever such an example to us? Paul also declared how God has demonstrated His love towards us:

“God commended His love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. v. 13).

It is in this spirit we are to meet all the unfair buffets of the world and being on the alert for such a moment of testing we may witness to the quality of our life in Christ, causing, we trust, our offender to pause and consider our unworldly response. See the gospels where Christ taught this lesson and gave the new spiritual recipe for the O.T. law ‘an eye for an eye’. When we really consider the amazing example our Lord set us on the cross, shall we hesitate to make a little gracious gesture when we think we are ill-used?

### **Chapter iii.**

“Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands; so that some though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behaviour of their wives” (iii. 1, 2, R.S.V.).

The relationship of men and women as well as between husbands and wives has varied from nation to nation and from century to century. Many view Paul was wanting to lower the position of women in society. Peter perhaps escapes this criticism: Patient examination of the words and times for which these men of God wrote will illuminate the fact that their leading was God-given and did not originate from their own ideas. God in His love and concern for us has in His word given commands and advice for every conceivable human problem of relations, attitudes and behaviour. In Gen. iii. when Eve was the one who was deceived by the wiles of Satan God decreed “. . . . thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (verse 16). There is then this decreed relation laid down by God. It will work perfectly all the while both parties act with respect and true love for each other. The word “likewise”, the first word in this chapter links the expected behaviour of wives to their husbands to follow the faithful obedience of Christ to the will of His Father, and by their daily behaviour in so doing follow the example of Christ in patient endurance. Here let it be said we are pointing to the Scripture. How each reader applies this to his or her day to day circumstances is a personal matter. It is not kind to spoil or indulge a selfish child, neither is it kind or profitable to ignore thoughtlessness or selfishness in an adult. It is the way the correction is attempted that is the test. The faultless and patient example of the good partner should always help to win the other to a true life in Christ.

### **No.6. iii. 3 - 18. pp. 93 - 96**

“Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the unperishable jewels of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you” (iii. 3-6, R.S.V.).

Again dress and adornment has varied from nation to nation, century to century and occasion to occasion so that specific suggestions cannot be made. What is constant and necessary is that for all, the dress, appearance, adornment should express the mind and character of the person. Thus adornment will be appropriate for the occasion expressing a unity and sympathy with the expected company. Cleanliness, neatness and tidiness will exhibit and reflect a well ordered mind and habits. If this is done there should be no envy or jealousy or a slip into lazy habits. At all times our appearance should back up our verbal witness and thus glorify the Lord.

“Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honour on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered” (iii. 7, R.S.V.).

The A.V. gives “husbands dwell with them according to knowledge” which means in harmony with the life you experience with your wife, the giving and allowances being made when necessary as the wife is the one God has put in the man’s care. When I asked my father-in-law if I could marry his daughter, he said with a twinkle, “don’t forget to bear and forbear”. We have often laughed about the bears but what good advice it was.

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one for another, love as brethren, be pitiful (tender hearted), be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing (injurious speaking): but contrariwise (rather) blessing (speaking well of); knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (iii. 8, 9).

The calling of Ephesians specifically states that the response in their lives would redound to the glory of the grace that God had bestowed upon them. In the words “ye should inherit a blessing” (be well spoken of in resurrection) it would seem that those who followed this ideal attitude to others, whether friends or enemies, would have their share in glorifying our wonderful God of grace and love and justifying to others the patient long suffering and mercy He had extended to Peter’s brethren even as He does to us today. Paul’s injunction to the Ephesian in iv. 2 has a similar appeal “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. Harmony and love towards each other is a training ground for that future unity with God the Father in whose presence all discord and enmity is banished.

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew (turn from, refrain from) evil, and do good, let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (iii. 10-12).

As we have traced our way through this letter of Peter we see him continually pointing his brethren to the Father, His Son and His Word, feeding the sheep as his Lord asked. These three verses he has quoted from Psa. xxxiv. 12-16. The Psalmist introduces these verses by saying:

“Come ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

How appropriate for Peter to extract these verses from David’s psalm. In Peter’s day as in David’s day God had His people continually in view, chastening, succouring and rewarding. James had much to say as to how the tongue could offend (iii. 5). It is salutary that God thought it wise to repeat these three verses after 1000 years had elapsed from David’s day. We might ask too how appropriate they would be today. As we look out of our window on the world through our daily newspaper, we read into every headline the lack of peace and understanding between all sorts and classes of people. Political views and economic panaceas are mostly not truthfully expressed and are not without bias. There is often no desire to understand those with whom we disagree.

If we want to love life and see good days for ourselves and others (and who doesn't)? we shall listen to the Lord's words through David and Peter seeking peace which is unity and concord. Endeavour by knowledge to find understanding and sympathy with others and so still the lips of ill-advised comment. If our heart is right the Holy Spirit will put the words into our prayers that will purify our desires and give a new direction to the day before us. Sadly where the heart is not right our prayers feel dead and God seems far away.

“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled” (iii. 13, 14).

Paul in his letter to the Romans echoed these sentiments in the closing chapters on this triumphant note:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

Persecution and martyrdom became progressively more rife in those days and words of comfort and encouragement were very necessary. What sort of opposition do we meet today? I think perhaps it is more insidious. The preacher at my church had in passing, sought to rationalize miracles saying they were not unique, leprosy might have been eczema! etc. I discussed it with the parish clerk who said “What did it matter, it happened so long ago”. The fact that the miracles had to be supernatural as proof of Christ's Messiahship was unknown to this official but the preacher, who was a qualified schoolmaster should have known better. Defence of the truth often brings ostracism but let our defence of the truth await an appropriate opening lest the word be out of season and we close a door both to ourselves and others in Christ who may follow us.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness (gentle of temper) and fear: having a good conscience” (iii. 15, 16).

To sanctify the Lord God in our hearts is to so let the Holy Spirit have free run in our hearts that we are separated from the world unto Him and His purposes for us in Christ. This separation from the world only refers to those aspects of our daily experience of life that are not in harmony with God as judged by our conscience. It is one thing for me from retirement in old age to write these things, it is another to those caught up in the process of earning a living and perforce meeting people often of questionable and amoral character. But this is the test of our faith and trust in Him for guidance and strength. We cannot and are not intended to withdraw ourselves. Rather as our text says prepare ourselves to give an answer to every man as to the hope we hold. And this is to be as opportunity allows. This whole concept can be epitomized as “set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts”.

This witness to the Lord and His Word is most important. There is not one believer who should say as Moses did at first “I am not eloquent . . . . and the Lord said unto

him, Who hath made man's mouth?" (Exod. iv.10, 11). Get a pad of paper and practice writing articles on basic themes like "redemption", "salvation". It will give you practice in self-expression. It will aid your memory and reveal the gaps in your knowledge. The precious Word of God deserves this close attention and the Holy Spirit will reward your efforts.

The good conscience that opens verse 16 suggests that if we offer ointment we should not show spots on our own skin.

"Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation (manner of living) in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 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 (made alive in Spirit)" (iii. 16-18).

**No.7.   iii. 19 - iv. 4.  
pp. 117 - 120**

Peter returns to the example our Lord set in His trial and crucifixion, the innocent suffering for the guilty in meekness and silence. Peter's brethren were to follow this example meeting every unjust accusation with patient endurance, putting their opponents to shame inasmuch as believers in Christ, they exhibited no evil, neither any appearance of the same.

The transition of the Saviour from the flesh through death into the life of the spirit was the assurance to His followers that they too would follow the same path to God. Moreover even as the Lord had ascended to glory they too if they suffered for His sake would reign with Him. Verse 19 gives a further aspect of the Lord's glory in His spiritual resurrection body.

"By which (in which condition) He went and preached (heralded the victory over sin and death) unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein a few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (iii. 19, 20).

Of the 'spirits in prison' there is an interesting explanation in *The Companion Bible*, appendix 194. Spirits here are angels (created not born) of whom Jude writes:

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

These angels assuming human flesh had intercourse with women producing giants in some instances, polluting the line from Adam to such an extent that it is recorded that only Noah and his family were perfect in their generations. It was to these spirits

awaiting judgment that Christ came and heralded His victory. Those to whom Peter wrote who would prove overcomers could look forward to, for them, an appropriate glory and justification for their victory over persecution and trial.

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (iii. 21).

Verse 21 presents difficulties inasmuch as we have the waters of the flood and the mention of the word baptism. In the days of Peter there was a baptism in water which was undergone by one who have turned from his previous way of life (repented=changed his mind) wished to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. Christ was baptized in water to complete the identification of His adherents with Himself. There is no question of washing away sins but identification with Christ. Having cleared the ground, we hope, of what is not connected with verse 21 let us put it in structure form to see the parallels more clearly.

Waters of the flood. 8 (number of resurrection) souls left, and were saved from corruption (by the fallen angels) in the world. Saved from death by the ark (which was pitched “*kopher*” inside and out) brought to a new start.

Water of (John’s) baptism. Repentance from dead works. (Putting away the filth of the flesh).

The believer ransomed (*Kopher*) by Christ.

Christ’s baptism of death	\	Imputed to the believer in Christ.
burial	\	
resurrection	}	
	/	
Christ’s righteousness	/	Thus presenting him before God with a good conscience.

“Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him” (iii. 22).

Here is one of those statements of fact revealed by the Holy Spirit to Peter. It was a statement very necessary in those days. As we have previously noted during the Acts period, but not afterwards, believers received various gifts of the Spirit such as knowledge, prophecy and tongues. Satan, always ready to attack where truth might gain ground, had sown false prophets.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out . . . every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (I John iv. 1-3).

The statement by Peter effectively established the earthly advent and heavenly environment of the Christ, a written authority to confront the heresies of false prophets.

## Chapter iv.

“For as much then as Christ hath suffered (for us – text omits) in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that no longer he should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (iv. 1 and 2).

These words of Peter are written to those who had or were already suffering for their faith and looked for the early return of our Lord. During air-raids in the war we all concentrated on keeping alive and the country surviving. The pleasures and fripperies of peace days were willingly given up and ignored. The mind was set on victory. Something of this nature was urged in those days of crisis. Having suffered so much for their faith they were not to look back and indulge again in all the excesses that once had been their wont.

The word ‘mind’ in verse 1 has the sense of intent or purpose and is linked to Heb. iv. where it occurs in verse 12. It is in a similar context. Paul is pressing Jewish believers, now that the moment of their rest was so near, not to fail at the last moment for:

“The Word of God (here viewed as synonymous with Christ) is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, . . . . a discerner of the thoughts and *intents* of the heart” (Heb. iv. 12).

Their hearts were an open book to the One Who was now at God’s right hand and so the appeal for faithfulness to the end of the road. Again the ‘two-edged sword’ in the last reference looks forward to John’s message from Christ in Revelation.

“And He had in His right hand seven stars (seven angels): and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword . . . .” (Rev. i. 16).

The message to each of the seven churches in Asia at the time of the end was one of correcting certain faults and sins before it was too late and the coming of Christ was upon them. Peter’s exhortation was: they were never to return to their excesses, of which they were guilty before conversion.

“Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you” (iv. 4).

The sanctification or separation of the believers’ lives was apparent to their old cronies and the latter did not like it. There is always the tendency for the unbeliever to impute hypocrisy to the followers of Christ, often seeing no fault in their own moral standards. Paul wrote “Christ crucified . . . . unto the Greeks foolishness” (I Cor. i. 23) and this opinion must have activated the minds of the past friends of Peter’s readers for Peter to use the word ‘strange’. There must also have been much Satanic opposition in those days seeking to claw back those who had been saved.

**No.8. iv. 5 - 11.**  
**pp. 139, 140**

“Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick (those living at that time) and the dead. For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (iv. 5 and 6).

These words of Peter are solemn words. They are addressed to those who looked for the kingdom of heaven, that is to those who had heard the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and to those later in the dispersion who had heard the same gospel from the lips of the twelve apostles and their disciples. There was in those days the imminent return of Christ to set up His Millennial Kingdom prior to which there would be a judgment of men for, amongst other things, qualification to enter this Kingdom. For this particular resurrection *those who had heard the gospel* would be raised and judged whilst those who were alive at the time (the quick) would also be judged and changed in the twinkling of an eye (I Cor. xv. 52). The point is made in verse 6 that although both quick and dead would be judged as men under conditions of the flesh in those days, yet judgment by Christ would have in mind their future life as spirits, that is in changed conditions unknown to us today. We now know that this moment is postponed to the not too distant future.

“But the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober (of a sound mind, balanced), and watch unto prayer” (iv. 7).

Even as Peter repeats his warnings so we say again that at the time this epistle was written every attempt by Satan was being made to deceive and confuse, and that by many in the church at that time (even as today). Hence we find the injunction to keep a clear head, a balanced judgment, to watch for deception, and with all pray to the One Who had the power to garrison their hearts for the truth.

“Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another” (iv. 8, 9, R.S.V.).

There is no suggestion we balance out our sins with love. The love here is that shown to the sinner. Peter was no doubt quoting from Prov. x. 12:

“Hate stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.”

Where we are out of sympathy with others or have even stronger antipathy, we shall have difficulty in being pleasant or helpful to them and if they are discussed with third parties the danger of slander in some degree is always present. On the other hand if we have a mature love towards an offender remembering our own wretched past, we shall seek to direct to that one an understanding and constructive advice that will lead to his or her change of heart.

Hospitality is a marvelous opportunity to recommend the life in Christ to others. If they come into your home and find tranquility and open handedness without ostentatiousness it will always be noted and remembered.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (iv. 10, 11).

Peter and his disciples were in that dispensation blessed with special gifts of the Spirit. Some had prophecy, some tongues and some healing and it would seem all had knowledge of the Word. They were to exercise these gifts to the full and at all times were to acknowledge the Giver. Peter at the very threshold of his ministry, having performed a miracle with the lame man, said to the crowd:

“Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look so earnestly on us, *as though by our own power or holiness*, we had made this man to walk . . . . His name (the Lord Jesus) hath made this man strong” (Acts iii. 12-16).

**No.9. iv. 11 - v. 7.  
pp. 156 - 160**

In our own day the Holy Spirit illuminates the Word to us as we honour it in faith and diligence of study. We are still called to exercise and acknowledge in living the truth revealed to us. The channel of truth received and given out should always thrill our hearts and lead us to voice often the eulogies of Peter and Paul, as Peter does here:

“. . . . that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, To Whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.”

There have been many saints of God in the Bible story who in the face of severe adversity have been bewildered at the turn of events. We think of Job, Jeremiah, John the Baptist in prison, and here persecution already striking this new church. Peter knowing that Satan was already busy going round as a roaring lion encouraged his followers to endure, telling them that these trials were to be expected:

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (iv. 12, 13).

There will be no one who suffers on behalf of God or for the witness to His truth who will not be overwhelmingly rewarded. God will be in no man’s debt. “The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job xlii. 12). Paul adds his contribution to this theme:

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. iv. 17).

Peter make several references in this letter to the Jews being evil spoken of and we may wonder at this when we think of their gospel of love, unity and peace. Yet we know there has been unreasonable blame or reproaches put on the Jewish nation from blame for the fire of Rome to the troubles of Germany before Hitler took over. History sees them repeatedly blamed without a cause throughout the years since Calvary.

“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, on your part He is glorified” (iv. 14).

What comfort it must have been to those beleaguered saints to be assured by Peter that God knew and had His reward in hand.

Peter now turns again to his followers with warning of judgment relative to the kingdom of heaven being very close. Already in those days punishment for wrong doing amongst the saints was swift, as for example Ananias and Sapphira in Acts v. Peter is to write, if you are going to suffer for Christ, rejoice but see you do not suffer in the role of a sinner. They had to be above reproach or any appearance of evil. God was turning His attention to those about to be given positions of authority in the earthly kingdom of His Son.

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (iv. 15-18).

Verse 18 is a quotation from the Septuagint version of Prov. xi. 31 “Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner”. It is in a context of works producing rewards and punishments. “Scarcely be saved” is not the life of the believer but rather his reward. Something of the trial they were enduring can be imagined by Mark xiii. 22:

“For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce if it were possible, even the elect.”

No wonder we find so many texts of this period stressing “watch and pray”. We may well find ourselves entering into a time when even more attacks on the truth will abound. Already many political laws and arrangements lead to the breakdown of family and parental responsibility. What should be the duty of the individual is pushed on to the teacher and state. The attitude of the press, literature, schools and organized religion, to the place, truth, and daily use of the Bible, is again a matter of watchfulness and prayer. These are the evils that are destroying our wonderful nation and heritage.

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of your souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (iv. 19).

If you can see it, this verse is altogether lovely. It is one of those that impress one that it was God the Holy Spirit feeding these words to Peter's hand. Those who were enduring and patiently suffering for their faith, seeing the pattern of events falling as the guiding words of Peter had warned; for them Peter now says, relax, trust and commit your souls to God. The word 'commit' is *paratithemi* the very same word their Lord uttered from the cross as He died: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit". Those that were suffering and persisted in well doing were setting their lives along the will of God even as did their Saviour. God, the Creator Who had all these things in mind before this particular world (that is its furnishings, its plant and animal life) was formed, would keep their souls so that they would find their appointed place in the fulfillment of the Father's eternal purpose. Like so much Scripture that is not addressed to us, yet it has a strong message of comfort to us today for we indeed have a most important place in God's plan as Paul's letter to the Ephesians indicates. Let us commit our lives to Him in obedience, trust and full assurance of His knowledge of us and His backing to our service for Him.

### Chapter v.

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (v. 1).

Elder is a general term for one in authority either for church or business or preaching. We find it in the O.T. and in the N.T. applied to members of the Sanhedrin and to the Christian churches. It is to these overseers of the flock that Peter makes his final appeal basing it on his mutual position with them of having the responsibility of authority and spiritual equipment for the task before them.

With the words our Lord commissioned him, he now addresses these elders: "Feed the flock". For them the O.T. was waiting as it was for Christ and Paul to declare the position, message and sacrificial role of God the Father's Son.

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind (readily)" (v. 2).

In these early days of the church there was evidently no organized ordination or choice of these overseers but as today in churches in the home, it is convenient for one person to be the leader, to pray, convene and be the one to encourage others to speak and express themselves and above all to study the Word. Again the person who does this leading may find himself in the position quite fortuitously. Peter is stressing that this responsibility be taken on willingly and not of grudging necessity. Peter in his second epistle has much to say on false teachers being amongst other things, covetous and making merchandise out of the saints. It was to this danger that he made reference to "filthy lucre". He makes many references to money and he must have experienced in his day the evil that comes from, not money, but "the love of money". How up-to-date is this evil in an age of industrial strikes!

“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (v. 3, 4).

How Christ from glory must have loved Peter who had learnt so well the lesson of his Lord washing his feet (John xiii. 1-17). The picture used by our Lord of the eastern shepherd leading his flock by the knowledge of his voice rather than the brandishing of his crook was so apposite for the gospel teacher.

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder, Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (v. 5, 6).

Humility is a hard lesson to learn and to hold. It is bad enough in commercial life when we have to deal with a “know all” who is not so clever. But when it comes to knowledge of the Word, we have always to remember that we should know nothing if it was not for the gracious mercy of the Lord. The same applies if we think we are morally or spiritually better than another. We know not the heart or handicaps of any man neither the specific role, however high or low to which God has called him. We have been plucked from death and given the opportunity of a most glorious hope. Failure to rehearse these facts will often cloud our judgments in the service of God.

“Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you” (v. 7).

This is a most precious recipe for the troubled mind. John wrote the words of the Lord Jesus:

“If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John xv. 23).

**No.10. v. 8 - 14.  
pp. 178, 179**

Peter now gives a last warning to be watchful for the attacks of Satan and to hold fast to their faith for it was their faith and teaching that Satan would assail by contrary deceptive counterfeits. Men, the dupes of Satan were already operating, preaching heresies and showing false signs.

“Be sober (watchful), be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished (experienced by) in your brethren that are in the world” (v. 8, 9).

Paul had also to give the same warning to the Corinthians:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (II Cor. xi. 13, 14).

Make no mistake, that lion is still very much alive and hungry for the weak in faith, the one unlearned and unprepared by the Word. The Scriptures understood and taught by the Holy Spirit to the faithful seeker will be the only weapon to resist this lion and we need only to stand steadfast in our faith in the One Who has already overcome the enemy. The Word alone can put new heart and direction into our nation. Fellowship and hymns have their place but they will not on their own lead us to a knowledge of God, His will, and the all sufficient means He has supplied for us to accomplish it.

“But the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (I.Pet.v.10).

Peter makes a final summary of his letter a prayer to God (the Dispenser of unmerited favour) Who had called them to a place in that millennial age in which Jesus as the glorified Christ will reign. Peter’s prayer is:

- (1) They may be made perfect—completely fitted for a purpose. Other usage of *katartizo* ‘perfect’ by the Holy Spirit will help our understanding: Matt.xxi.16 “Out of the mouths of babes . . . . Thou hast perfected praise” single minded sincerity; Luke. vi. 40 “Everyone that is perfect shall be as his master” (an idea of identity of purpose and character).
- (2) They may be stablished—made firm, confirmed. They were to be unmoved by all the deceptive false prophets, false Christs, and false doctrines that were then prevalent.
- (3) Strengthen you.
- (4) Settle you. The idea of being fixed on the right foundation. Contrast is shown by Col. i. 23 “Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”.

As with much of this valuable epistle we can find pertinent application of this prayer to us today, having in mind however our goal set forth in the letter to the Ephesians or that set forth by John in his gospel.

The closing verses of postscript end on a note of brotherhood and love in the gospel.

## **The Second Epistle to Peter.**

**No.1. i. 1, 2.  
pp. 179, 180**

This epistle was written to the same people as his first epistle namely Christian Jews of the dispersion (see iii. 1). As with all the Word of God whilst it is essential to note to whom a letter is addressed, yet all Scripture is useful and necessary for us. God's dealing with and treatment of Israel provides a wealth of knowledge of God, His wisdom, love, righteousness and longsuffering amongst many other attributes. It is fitting and profitable therefore that we come to this short letter from Peter to his compatriots expecting to find much that has relevance to today's conditions and needs.

Some of the words that we find in Scripture fail to convey all their meaning if by frequent everyday use they carry only a fleeting and shallow impression to our minds. If however when we find them in the Scriptures we give them a patient and quiet consideration with a concordance and a dictionary they will yield much richer knowledge and help to us.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”  
(II Pet. i. 1).

Peter opens his letter by acknowledging and recognizing on behalf of himself for those believers to whom he writes the righteousness of God's salvation of mankind through the work of His Son on the cross. Paul could write of this event “. . . . Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness”. This was a reaction of misunderstanding by two large groups then. Today many fail to see the need or understand what took place at that time. Peter had been brought to see God's plan as correct, needful, and all-sufficient, or by God's standards, utterly righteous. We shall see that man's willing recognition and acceptance of the righteousness of all God's acts and dealings with men is a necessary concomitant of unity and harmony with the Father. The Greek's summary of the Cross as being foolishness finds its counterpart in the minds of many today who see no need for the shed blood or the life poured out.

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (i. 2).

Knowledge here is the word meaning precise, mature or acquired knowledge. The Word and commands of God, understood and acknowledged by the believer in his way of life bring in their turn blessing and inward comfort and confidence, for we are aware that we have the backing and guidance of God through His Son.

**No.2. i. 3 - 9.**  
**pp. 198 - 200**

After his introduction in verses 1 and 2, the Apostle now continues by saying:

“According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (i. 3, 4).

These verses are difficult to paraphrase or clarify their meaning. Peter and the eleven and the elect believers to whom these words were addressed had in varying degrees been blessed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and these for rapid dissemination of the gospel. Their divine power had its birth in the knowledge of Christ and His words from the Father, and was the subject of our Lord’s prayer in John xvii. In Luke xxiv. 49 our Lord refers to the promise of the Father’s gifts of the Holy Spirit, giving enabling power to the ministry to which they were directed.

Paul in I Cor. xii. gives a useful summary and analysis of these spiritual gifts, which we remember spread to some Gentile converts in order to spur the Jewish faction to greater Christian zeal and participation. It is interesting to note that these gifts to that early church were not only supernatural powers such as healing, but men called of God for special functions of ministry such as prophecy and teaching (two separate functions remembering prophecy is not necessarily speaking of future things but speaking for God). The desires of the world and their fulfillment have no enduring profit, savouring of the corruption of death, while in contrast the life of the spirit with its goal—the knowledge of Christ and the Father, bespeaks true life in all its aspects.

We have to recall that Paul’s ministry to the Jewish dispersion (supplementary to Peter’s ministry in the land) closed at Rome (Acts xxviii. 28), where nationally the Jews failed to assume their destined role as a kingdom of priests to the world, (but taking up that role some time in the still distant future at the Lord’s Second Coming). With the postponement of that role the attendant miraculous acts of the Holy Spirit ceased, namely tongues, untaught (by men) knowledge, prophecy, healing. This is a truth that so many today cannot or will not perceive and point to evidences of the same gifts being in use today. What are we to say to this apparent witness to their continued part in the purpose of God? There are two answers. If they are in truth being practiced by believing Christians they are not being used by God as divine witness to a new revelation of truth as happened in the first days of the apostolic ministry to Israel. Secondly Satan attacks in a religious context by signs and wonders to deceive, especially at times imminent to our Lord’s return. Read II Thess. ii. for the warning Paul gave them and which we need to keep before us.

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience

godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (love)”  
(i. 5-7).

Peter specifies a spiritual ladder of experience for the believer, each characteristic or attitude building up the child of God to the bearing of good works and most precious of all the developing knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. To savour each step and examine each word as we suggested before would be profitable and would honour God’s Word.

*Faith.* A personal conviction of the truth of an unproveable statement. Our personal agreement with a way of life we believe is in harmony with the will of God as understood from the Scriptures. From another angle we could say faith is belief in acceptance of the standards of the righteousness of God and hence the intention and aim of such a believer to let his life be in harmony with those standards. This should lead to:

*Virtue.* Moral strength and excellence. The moral refinement and loyalty to established good principles leads to acquisition of even more mature spiritual knowledge.

*Knowledge.* The retained memory of facts and experience having for the believer special reference to the Bible and truth revealed by the Holy Spirit. Knowledge will always carry with it a secondary yet more important feature which can only be described as a closeness or awareness of God the Father through His Son. This can vary from day to day but is a precious experience that cannot be shown or proved to others.

*Temperance* is moderation with an element of personal restraint. The believer will reflect the love of God and remember the frailty of man and his own sinful background in facing the problems of others and his own personal witness.

*Patience* is the quality of being able to endure calmly: suffering, affliction, frustration; the weakness, failings and obtuseness of others. Practice and success with these qualities leads to:

*Godliness.* This is the ultimate character of one who seeks to conform to or be in harmony with the character of God, the which he has discovered from the Scriptures.

*Brotherly kindness and charity.* These are the final outward fruits of applied Christian knowledge and experience by the believer to the world. Such exhibit love in its highest aspect and fulfillment—a reflection of God’s attitude to His creation, of which the gift of His Son was the supreme proof and example of His love towards us.

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (i. 8, 9).

The whole emphasis of God’s plan of salvation is that it is *unto* good works. The parable of the talents in Matt. xxv. shows we are expected to exercise and make profitable the freedom from bondage, with the access to spiritual power that salvation in

Christ supplies. There is no place for equilibrium or inertia, either we go forward in fulfillment or retreat into that area of waste and blindness that verse 9 envisages.

**No.3. i. 10 - ii. 2.**  
**pp. 238 - 240**

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (i. 10, 11).

The Jews here had a hope and a calling to which they were exhorted to be diligent and make their election sure. The world about us is a constant snare, whispering there is plenty of time later on for things of the spirit, giving a false urgency to the affairs of the world. Martha (Luke x.) was gently corrected by our Lord for this tendency to make the wrong choice. An athlete disciplines his life for months and perhaps years before the event which is his goal. It is today and every day we should go into training for the Lord’s use.

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance” (i. 12-15).

Peter was exceedingly anxious that his ministry should bear fruit. He was fearful that the seed might not fall on good ground and that the birds of the air (those of the evil one) would snatch it away. Paul had the same tragic premonitions before his departure:

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ . . . .)” (Phil. iii. 17, 18).

We need a constant rehearsal of the tenets of our faith, a fresh examination of the Word of truth for in this way the Holy Spirit can speak to us of some element lacking in our lives, some doctrine He would have us emphasize to others. When this is done how often we find things we have forgotten or misunderstood.

Peter is now going to turn his attention to the Word of God itself which, for Peter, was in those days the Lord Jesus Christ, His words and also the O.T. A ministry that has as its aim to lead men to know and worship God, must teach from, and accept, that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore truth. Peter is going to witness to the origin of this record of truth.

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount” (i. 16-18).

Here was one of the twelve witnesses who had been with our Lord during His 3½ years public ministry. They had seen His miracles, they had heard His words and moreover Peter with two others had seen the Lord Jesus in a glorified form talking with Moses and Elijah. They had heard the voice of God the Father witnessing to His beloved Son and confirming His pleasure in the work of the Christ of God. What greater witness do men require as to this divine personal link between God and men? Our Lord when He was leaving this realm said that He would send the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. The N.T. writers were all led in this way to record the words and deeds of the Son of God. Others, especially the Apostle Paul were inspired to reveal to us God’s interpretation of these events and how they were intended to condition our lives and determine our future in resurrection.

#### What of the Old Testament?

“We have also a more sure (firmly established) word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (i. 19-21).

Peter beautifully describes the record as a light placed in the darkness of the world’s thoughts, beliefs and superstitions. Even as the written Word so is the Living Word “Jesus said I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John viii. 12). Peter uses our Lord’s title “Day Star” in his imagery. The Greek for Day Star is *phosphorus* a name given to the “morning star” of the heavens and also to a chemical that glows in the dark. What happy and apt associations!

So much could be written in support of the inerrancy of the Bible but let us confine ourselves like Peter as to the aspect of how it originated. Verse 20 makes the negative point—it did not originate in the mind of man. Popular comment on the Scriptures both in and out of church circles refers to the record “according to the writer of”, sometimes they even hedge and doubt even the name of the stated amanuensis. Seldom do they imply that it was God speaking. Peter points to the Holy Spirit as the driving force behind the writers of the O.T. A prophet is a spokesman for deity and may not necessarily be speaking of the future. The word ‘moved’ in verse 21 is from the same Greek word as ‘driven’ in Acts xxvii. 17 the involuntary movement of Paul’s ship that was wrecked at Malta. We do not know how each prophet was activated but we are asked to accept that they were controlled by God. All communication by God to us depends on faith and we have to recognize that nothing of this can be proved by human senses. If however we let the Day Star arise in our hearts the brilliance of truth will also shine there and illumine every dark corner of our earthly path.

Peter now deals with the results that come from the neglect and then departure from the words and commands of God. Here is demonstrated the great value of the O.T. The example of Israel's backsliding is a lesson to us today. Their sins find a counterpart in today's supposed progress in evolution of the species and rationalistic Bible Textual criticism. Some textual criticism is good and scholarly, but to write off the O.T. as myths and legends is to brush aside the warning and guiding hand of God.

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (ii. 1, 2).

# The Epistle to the ROMANS.

No.1. i. 1 - 5.

pp. 81 - 85

If there is one part of the N.T. that is essentially basic to Christianity, it is the epistle to the Romans. While other portions deal with the gospel of God's grace, it is in this great epistle that the profound need of failing man and God's saving remedy for his condition is brought forward and expounded in depth and detail with inescapable logic. Great leaders of former generations such as Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley, have been irresistibly drawn to this letter and have given their exposition to it.

We should remind ourselves that the risen Christ specially made known His gospel to the Apostle Paul in what was probably Paul's first epistle, namely Galatians, and it was presented by the Apostle in no uncertain language:

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. i. 11, 12).

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. i. 8).

But here there is no *reasoned* exposition of the good news except where the question of keeping the law was concerned. The atmosphere is tense, for the challenge of Paul's apostleship was in the forefront and this burning question had to be settled first and the opposition of the Judaizers defeated.

When we come to Romans the condition is entirely different. These problems have been resolved and there is a calm in the later epistle which is absent in Galatians, although in some respects they are covering the same ground from a doctrinal standpoint.

*Authorship.* There never has been any serious problem over this. The stamp of Paul is on it from the beginning to the end. As to the church at Rome, we have few details to help us. Certainly Paul did not found it. Neither the Acts or his other epistles form any basis for this, and we can say the same about Peter in spite of Roman Catholic doctrine.

The Apostle Paul declared that he did not build on another man's foundation (Rom.xv.20), yet he regards the church at Rome as within the sphere of his commission. We know for certain that Peter was still in Jerusalem at the time of the council (c.50A.D.) whereas it is almost certain that a church existed in Rome before this. There is no reference to Peter in the Roman epistle and it is difficult to imagine that Paul wrote as he did if Peter had founded the church there. Moreover Acts xviii. 2, 3 shows that Aquila and Priscilla were already believers when they arrived at Corinth from Rome and there they became Paul's companions. This means the church existed before 40A.D., since they were banished under the edict of Claudius and this date is before Peter moved from Jerusalem.

There is evidence that in later years both Peter and Paul were martyred at Rome, but even if this is true, it tells us nothing about the origin of the church in this city. In Acts ii. 10 we read of visiting Jews and proselytes from Rome and some could have been numbered amongst those who were saved on the day of Pentecost. In which case they would have taken the message of the gospel back to Rome. In any event, all roads led to the metropolis, and when we remember the rapid spread of the gospel in the Acts, the message of Christianity must soon have reached the capital where there had been a contingent of Jews for a considerable period.

As to the date of the comparison of the Roman epistle, it seems evident that it was written towards the close of Paul's third missionary journey when he was in Corinth, or possibly Corinth's port, Cenchrea, where there was a church and Phoebe was one of its servants (Rom. xvi. 1). The year could be between 57-59A.D., though Prof. C. K. Barrett gives reasons for 55A.D. What is important is that this epistle was the last one which the Apostle wrote during the Acts period, and its middle section (chapters ix.-xi.) gives a most valuable divine commentary on the momentous things that were happening during that time, specially as they affected the people of Israel and their spiritual condition.

Broadly speaking the epistle is divided into three sections:

- (1) Chapters i.-viii. Basic, dealing with justification by faith and the gospel of grace.
- (2) Chapters ix.-xi. The attitude of Israel to the gospel. Their failure and final restoration.
- (3) Chapters xii.-xvi. Practice. The daily Christian walk and witness.

A more detailed structure is as follows:

- A | i. 1-17. The Gospel promised before,  
for obedience of faith among all nations.
- B | i. 18 - iii. 20. Jews equally with Gentiles guilty before God.
- C | iii. 21-31. Come short of the glory of God.
- D | iv. 1-25. Abraham's body now dead.
- E | v. 1-11. Reconciliation—basic.
- F | v. 12-21. Condemnation in Adam. The secret (mystery)  
of Rom. xvi. 25-26.
- G | vi., vii. Question, repudiation and answer.
- F | viii. No condemnation in Christ.
- E | ix.-xi. Reconciliation—dispensational.
- D | xii., xiii. Present your bodies a living sacrifice.
- C | xiv. 1 - xv. 7. Received to the glory of God.
- B | xv. 8 - xvi. 23. Gentiles equally with Jews acceptable before God.
- A | xvi. 24-27. A mystery (secret) silenced before.  
For obedience of faith unto all nations.

The balance between the sections is fairly clear and will become more apparent as we study the epistle closely.

## Salutation and Introduction.

The letter to the Romans commences with a prologue of 15 verses. The salutation at the opening is similar to Greek letters as a whole, but Paul expands it to give fuller details of himself than he usually does. In fact it is the weightiest of all his introductions:

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures), concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead” (i. 1-4).

The Apostle describes himself as a *slave (doulos)*, a seeming paradox coming from one who was the apostle of liberty! (Gal. v. 1). Yet this description was profound truth, for just as a human slave was the property of his owner in every respect, and completely at his master’s disposal, so Paul by redemption belonged to Christ. He was ‘not his own’, but “bought with a price” which was nothing less than the life and sacrificial death and resurrection of the Son of God (I Cor. vi. 19, 20). Such a condition is likewise true of every believer in Christ and these tremendous practical implications the Apostle sought to impress upon all the members of the churches.

He was a “called apostle”. There is no need for the extra words “to be” supplied by the A.V. He had been set apart by God at his birth (Gal. i. 5), even as Jeremiah (Jer. i. 5) and the risen Lord’s words recorded in Acts ix. 15 confirmed this, “he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles”. In the earlier letter to the Galatians, Paul had made it quite clear that his ministry was centred in the gospel of God’s grace, which the risen Christ had revealed to him quite independently of any human source. It was not “after man” declared the Apostle, “I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. i. 11, 12). Not only this, but it was the divine standard for all gospel preaching and still is, so much so that if even an angel from heaven preached any other gospel, God’s curse would be on him (Gal. i. 8, 9). This good news is explained in I Cor. xv. 1-4:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . . for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received (i.e. from the risen Saviour), how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

The Scriptures here, refer to the O.T. and such passages as Isa. liii. 12 dealing with Christ’s sacrificial death, Psa. xvi. 10 (quoted in Acts ii. 23-32), Jonah i. 17 (referred to in Matt. xii. 40), setting forth His resurrection make this clear. Moreover the epistle to the Romans revolves round a verse in the prophet Habakkuk, “the just shall live by his faith” (ii. 4), and the tremendous implications of this verse are brought forth and elaborated all through this letter.

This “good news” is “concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. i. 3). The Lord Jesus Christ is central in this gospel and without Him it would be no gospel at all, but just an empty shell. The word “gospel” is one of the commonest words used in

Christian circles today, but in what sense is it used? Too often the One Whom it is all about seldom get mentioned, the word merely describing the acts of men with a religious veneer to improve things. We need to be on our guard against these sort of ideas which are widespread, and in view of the verses of Holy Writ quoted above, are sheer deception.

The Apostle states that the Lord Jesus Christ “was made (or better ‘was born’) of the seed of David according to the flesh” (i. 3). This does not mean that He was so, merely by human judgment, but rather as regards His humanity. He was a true descendant of David. There are two spheres in this context. “In the flesh”, He was born of the family of David. “In the Spirit” (the Holy Spirit), a divine sphere, He was declared to be the Son of God with power. The verb *horizo* rendered “declared” also has the force of “defined” or “appointed”. This is its meaning in Acts xvii. 31 where it is stated that a day of judgment for the world has been *appointed* by God. At Bethlehem the Lord Jesus was born and appointed to be the Son of God. But this was in weakness and lowliness. In resurrection the same appointed Son of God was with power—“all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. xxviii. 18) and His exaltation was “far above all” (Eph. i. 18-23; Phil. ii. 8-11). This was “according to the spirit of holiness”. The latter phrase is a Hebraism for the Holy Spirit. The stupendous miracle of the resurrection is based upon the activity of the whole Godhead, Father (Gal. i. 1), Son (John x. 17, 18) and Holy Spirit (Rom. i. 4; I Pet. iii. 18).

Paul proceeds to state:

“By Whom we have received grace and apostleship, for (or ‘to’ margin) obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name” (i. 5).

His apostleship was a gift of grace as he declares in chapter xv. 15, 16 “because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles”, hence the words “among all nations” of chapter i. 5. The object of his witness was with a view to *believing obedience*, that is to bring about the obedience that is based on faith in Christ. Belief without such obedience is barren and does not accord with the teaching of the N.T.

**No.2. i. 6 - 17.**  
**pp. 113 - 117**

The Apostle Paul, having stated the divine origin of his apostleship, declares that “faith obedience” of the gospel was to the Gentiles. The Greek *ethne* (like the Hebrew equivalent *goyim*) can be rendered Gentiles, nations, or heathen; the context must decide. Some rightly attempt to render it “nations” in all its occurrences but this restriction only leads to difficulties and errors in interpretation. The Apostle here is confirming the fact that he was the Christ-directed apostle to the Gentiles, whereas Peter, James and John were primarily Christ’s representatives to Israel. The fact that Paul goes on to state, “among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ”, seems to clearly indicate that the majority of the Roman church were Gentiles, but the word cannot obviously mean ‘nations’ as a whole. Such were the “called of God” and designated ‘saints’ or holy ones, that is, called to be God’s holy people separated for Himself. The word ‘saint’ looks back to the O.T. Exodus xix. 6 describes Israel’s call by God to be, amongst other things, “a holy nation”, a nation chosen by Himself to carry out His earthly purpose for them. The Roman believers were likewise called to fulfil God’s will.

To them was given the greeting:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (i. 7).

This united the Greek and Jewish modes of salutation. The Greek would say *chaire*, rejoice, and the Jew *shalom*, peace.

The reader should note the weighty points contained in this introduction to the epistle:

- (1) Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.
- (2) The gospel as it relates to Christ.
- (3) Christ considered according to the *flesh* and according to the spirit.
- (4) The sphere of Paul’s ministry, “all nations”.
- (5) The nature of his testimony “faith obedience”.
- (6) The incentive, both for him and the believers to whom he wrote, “for the sake of His Name”.

These opening verses speak directly to every minister of the Word of God. Charles H. Welch’s words to modern readers are to the point.

“You are not your own master, nor your congregation's servant. You like Paul are the bond-slave of Christ. Whether you labour with your hands in the work-a-day world, or whether your whole time is devoted to the ministry, you are separated unto the gospel of God. You cannot preach that Gospel and doubt the O.T. Scriptures. Neither can you preach that Gospel and fail to preach Christ. Even though you preach Christ, you will not preach a full Gospel without Christ risen. Your own obedience and the obedience enjoined by you upon others is not a legal obedience, but an obedience of faith. Grace and peace be with all such” (*Just and the Justifier*, p.9).

Paul now goes on to explain to the Roman believers the reason for his writing to them. Like the Thessalonian saints (I Thess. i. 8), those at Rome had given such a fine witness that their faith was “spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. i. 8). For this the Apostle gave deep thanksgiving and assured them of his continued intercession for them:

“For God is my witness, Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers . . . .” (i. 9).

Paul’s service for Christ made continual searching demands on him day and night. Yet the great ministry of prayer for others was not neglected. Over and over again he records the fact that he never ceased from interceding for fellow believers (Eph. i. 15, 16; Col. i. 3, 9; Phil. i. 4; I Thess. i. 2; Philemon 4; II Tim. i. 3). Prayerless Christian service is fruitless Christian service. The Bible is full of the records of those who were outstanding men of prayer and what that constant prayer accomplished when it was based on the will of God.

The Apostle Paul sought God’s will always and he seeks to relate that will to visit them that they may both receive benefits:

“Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you (or encouraged) by the mutual faith both of you and me” (i. 10-12).

It is well to note that the Apostle did not expect to be a benefactor only, but also to receive some help from the Roman Christians himself. For some while Paul had wanted to visit them but had been hindered from doing so (verse 13). He does not say whether this was due to the activity of Satan or to restraint by the Lord. The old English “let” used in the A.V. in this sense is quite archaic and survives only in the semi-legal phrase “without let or hindrance”. We know from what he tells us later on in the epistle that the visit to Rome was part of a longer journey that he had in mind which would involve Spain (Rom. xv. 24, 28).

His aim was for lasting spiritual results from his Roman visit:

“. . . . that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (i. 13),

and this again (see verses 5, 6) confirms the probability that the church at Rome was for the most part Gentile.

Not only did the Apostle desire to make personal contact with the Roman saints but above all he longed to preach the gospel of God’s grace, and one reason that he gives for this is that he is *a debtor*:

“I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians (this term was used of all who were not Greeks); both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (i. 14, 15).

In saying this he stresses his responsibility, for the knowledge of the truth always brings such responsibility. It is a perversion to regard grace as a release from all obligation, giving a liberty which is nothing more than veiled licence. Later in the epistle he reminds the Roman saints that they were debtors too (Rom. xv. 27). When we realize what grace really means, we shall be glad of such responsibility, for it is a profound privilege to seek to “work out” in practice what God has graciously “worked in” us. So Paul goes on to say:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (i. 16).

Here Paul uses a figure of speech which seems to *lessen* his real feelings towards the gospel. Actually he means that he glories in it, because in the gospel the very power and righteousness of God is revealed savingly to those who do not deserve it, that is, to sinners, and he goes on to show later that there is not one person who does not come under this heading (iii. 9-18, 23).

If we are ever going to understand this great epistle in any measure, we must have the conception of righteousness revealed in the O.T., for upon this the Apostle Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, bases his argument and links it with a verse from the prophet Habakkuk (ii. 4). This is the dominating theme of this letter, which is more or less an exposition of the prophet’s words.

“The ideas of right and wrong among the Hebrews are forensic ideas, that is, the Hebrew always thinks of the right and the wrong as if they were to be settled before a judge. Righteousness is to the Hebrew not so much a moral quality as a legal status. The word ‘righteous’ (*saddiq*) means simply ‘in the right’, and the word ‘wicked’ (*rasha*) means ‘in the wrong’. ‘I have sinned this time’ says Pharaoh, ‘Jehovah is in the right (A.V. righteous), and I and my people are wrong (A.V. wicked, Exod. 9:27)’. Jehovah is always in the right, for He is not only sovereign, but self-consistent. He is the fountain of righteousness . . . . the consistent will of Jehovah is the law of Israel” (W. R. Smith, “*The Prophets of Israel*”, p.71).

God is the personification of righteousness or rightness in thought, word and deed, human beings can only be called righteous, when, in His sight, they can be accounted absolutely and consistently right in these three respects. It should be obvious that no such person exists with such a standard of conduct.

“The gospel tells us first how men and women, sinners as they are, can come to be ‘in the right’ with God; and second how God’s personal righteousness is vindicated in the very act of declaring sinful men and women ‘righteous’ . . . . the principle on which God brings people into the right with Himself is the principle of faith, and for this statement the O.T. authority is adduced in the words of Hab. 2:4 ‘the just shall live by his faith’.” (F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, p.78).

A word of equal importance to righteousness is the word “faith”. This can mean in English, faith, belief or trust in anything, but the faith of the Old and New Testaments is something deeper than an intellectual nod. The Greek words *pistis*, faith, and *pisteuo*, meaning, I believe, are profound words indicating more than just credence. In addition to this, they mean personal commitment to the extent of handing over one’s self to another

person. Thus it is not mere intellectual assent, but rather wholehearted involvement in the truth believed. To believe in Christ is not only to accept what He says as being true, but to commit one's self to Him and to become totally involved in the truths that are revealed in the N.T. concerning Him.

What does the Apostle Paul mean by the phrase "from faith to faith"? (Rom. i. 17)—literally "by or out of faith, unto faith". Various ideas have been put forward by expositors, but it would seem, judging by Paul's usage of the word faith, to express the fact that in order to personally experience the eternal benefits of salvation, it is on the basis of faith and trust in Christ *from start to finish*, apart from any works or merit on the recipient's part.

**No.3. i. 18 - ii. 11.**  
**pp. 121 - 126**

God's righteousness then, is revealed on the basis of nothing but faith or complete trust in Him. This faith is like a three-fold cord; it is (1) a *conviction*, that is, it rests upon the truthfulness and faithfulness of God; (2) it is a *cleaving* to Him, its outcome being love and hope, and (3) it is a *confidence* which controls the walk and manner of life.

Before he goes any further Paul is constrained to relate the gospel to the need of the pagan world around him. If God is a God of righteousness, then he was bound to take account of its terrible condition. The ugly picture which the Apostle draws is more than confirmed by contemporary pagan literature. It merited nothing less than the wrath of God:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (i. 18-20).

Many do not like associating "wrath" with God, probably because they think of Him only as love, and anger as it exists in human life, sinful spite and uncontrolled passion. But this is not so with God; His anger is the response of His holiness to deliberate wickedness and rebellion. It is a principle of retribution that must operate in a moral universe.

Moreover if we study carefully the wrath of God as it is revealed in the Bible we shall find that it is not poured out on sinners indiscriminately, but rather reserved for the Satanic system called "the lie" summed up in Babel of the O.T. and Babylon in the N.T. In the book of the Revelation this Satanic system is seen at the end time in all its naked horror and it is in this book that God's wrath and the day of wrath figure so prominently.

Can it be that men have no responsibility, and that they are drawn by a force which they cannot resist into this terrible system of darkness and corruption? The answer is “no”, this is not true. Some may object and say that the Gentile world was in ignorance of God and therefore they could not be held responsible, but Paul proceed to make it quite clear that the opposite was the truth. Men could have known God in a measure, for *God had manifested Himself in creation* as Rom. i. 19 and 20 clearly shows.

Moreover the knowledge that they possessed, they deliberately suppressed, they *held* the truth in unrighteousness. *Katechein*, to hold, means to hold fast (vii. 6), and then to suppress. God had manifested Himself as Creator, but rebellious man deliberately suppressed and ignored this revelation. As long as there has been a created universe the invisible attributes of God can be clearly seen, so that as the Apostle says, “they are without excuse” (i. 20).

This revolt against the truth of God resulted in idolatry and then men plunged deeper and deeper into darkness and the moral depravity that goes with it. When they failed to honour God as Creator, their minds became infected and debased till at last they were not capable of truly rational thought about Him:

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts and creeping things” (i. 21-23).

Idolatry touches the realm of worship and there is only One Who has the right to receive worship from created beings and that is God. Directly He is dethroned His place is quickly taken by Satan and the powers of darkness, demon spirits under his control. The Apostle Paul showed that behind all idolatry is demonism (I Cor. x. 20 where “devils” should be rendered “demons”) and this gives Satan what he longs for, namely God’s position and the worship of mankind.

Three times we read that men deliberately took a terrible downward step, by changing what was truth, into a lie, in order to gratify their lusts (verses 23, 25 and 26) and because of these actions three times we read that God “gave them up” (verses 24, 26, 28). In other words they were left by God to experience to the full the terrible consequences of their backsliding. Israel too, in the past, had been temporarily “given up” by God, as Acts vii. 42 reveals, and for precisely the same reason, namely idolatry. The result for the Gentile world was a reprobate or depraved mind (i. 28). It is significant that the same list of vices which follow, are repeated in Paul’s last epistle, in the context which deals with the end of this age (II Tim. iii. 2-5).

On the surface it seems impossible that, after nearly 2000 years of Christianity, mankind will sink into such a state once more, but God’s Word is truth and never exaggerates. As we look at the conditions of the world around us we cannot help but notice how standards are constantly being debased and the slide downward quickens as men get further and further away from God. The conclusion of the Apostle is found in verse 32:

“Who (the backsliders of the context) knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

Such was the terrible condition of the pagan world in Paul’s day.

The Apostle now turns to the Jew and examines *his* condition. There was no doubt that the people of Israel had been placed by God in a position of great favour. They had been chosen by Him to be the premier nation of the earth, the channel through which the knowledge of God and His gospel could spread to all mankind. This will explain why both the gospel and divine judgment for its rejection was “to the Jew first” (i.16; ii.8-10). It was recognition of Israel’s highly favoured position, and explains the custom of the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys recorded in the Acts, always going first to the synagogue [Acts xiii. 14 (and note verses 46, 47); xiv. 1; xvii. 1, 2, 10; xviii. 1, 4; xix. 1, 8; xxviii. 16-28]. The importance of Israel’s place in the earthly purpose of God can scarcely be over-estimated and it becomes the central theme in the middle chapters of Roman, namely ix.-xi. A fuller consideration will be given to this when those chapters are reached.

In proceeding to deal with the Jew, Paul bases his argument on the most important fact, that greater knowledge of God leads to deeper responsibility. And it is impossible for it to be otherwise. This is a fact that we should always bear in mind, for it is just as true today as it was in the Apostle’s lifetime. The Jewish moralist found ample scope in criticizing the pagan world. But what was his own life and environment like? He had forgotten such a verse as Amos iii. 2:

“You (Israel) only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

The first half of the verse he would revel in, but what about the other half? The Apostle now adopts the so-called diatribe style, used by philosophical teachers of the time. He imagines a critic intervening in the argument and is given replies which are searching in the extreme:

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, *thou condemnest thyself*; for thou that judgest doest the same things . . . . and thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” (Rom. ii. 1-3).

In other words the critic and judge is involved in the same acts as the man he condemns. As we have seen, behind all the sin and failure of chapter i. lies idolatry, which results in man putting himself in the place of God, and in this, as past history had shown, the Jew had been equally guilty with the Gentile.

The human critic by his condemnation of his fellows, not only abrogates to himself God’s position but sets a standard for his own conduct. If he can see wrong in the actions of others, then he has no excuse if he indulges in the same things himself.

He may belong to the privileged people of God, but fails to realize that because of this, God demands a higher standard of conduct from him than from the darkened Gentile world. In ignoring this, declares the Apostle, he is only storing up for himself wrath in the future day of judgment, instead of the goodness and long-suffering of God leading him to humility and repentance now:

“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (ii. 3 and 4).

One thing that cannot be questioned is the righteousness of God’s judgment. It is absolutely impartial and fair; it is “according to truth” (verse 2). There are no favourites with God where sin and failing are concerned. To the sinning Jew Paul asks, do you think that you, one of the favoured people, will escape? Especially when you despise the riches of His kindness, forbearance and long-suffering (4). The answer is definitely “no”. In fact, the Apostle says, with your impenitence and false judgment you are storing up for yourself God’s wrath which will be made known in the future day of wrath:

“. . . . after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up (stores up) unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (ii. 5).

This righteous judgment will take into account a man’s environment, the limit of his responsibility and his works:

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. ii. 6-11).

The Apostle does not quote any passages of Scripture, for the O.T. is perfectly clear on this point. He doubtless had in mind such passages as Psa. lxii. 11, 12; Prov. xxiv. 12; Jer. xvii. 10; xxxii. 19. The N.T. emphasize the same truth (Matt. xvi. 27; II Cor. v. 10; Rev. ii. 23; xx. 12; xxii. 12), although most of these Scriptures have the believer in view primarily.

The emphasis on human works here may raise a problem. On the surface it looks as though Paul is teaching salvation by works. If he was doing this, then it runs contrary to the consistent testimony of his witness as well as this epistle itself, namely that salvation is by grace and not works or merit. The Apostle was not the sort of man to indulge in such contradictions. The Apostle here is stressing the impartiality of God as between Jew and Gentile. The continuance in well doing of the genuine seeker is but the outward expression of his inward desire for the eternal things (glory, immortality, eternal life) which are resident only in God and not in man.

Did not the Lord say “By their *fruits* ye shall know them”? The “fruits” are the external evidence of persistent inward longing and appreciation of the truth of God.

*Taken by themselves* and not as a result of internal desire they prove nothing. This explains a similar passage relating to the Apostle Peter (Acts x. 34). The sincere seekers that Paul is referring to, do not trust in their works alone, but in God Who is the only source of glory, honour and eternal life. Their continual seeking in action is only the practical outward expression of their inward sincerity.

But in it all, as we have seen, God is no “respector of persons”, that is, He never indulges in partiality or favouritism. Above all He is absolutely righteous and fair whether dealing with the believer or unbeliever, Jew or Gentile.

**No.4. ii. 12 - 29.**  
**pp. 141 - 145**

The absolute righteousness or fairness that the Apostle Paul is stressing in the context we are considering, is now shown in God’s dealing with those who have never had a written revelation from Him, or for that matter a preacher to make known the gospel of salvation by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ:

“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another); in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. ii. 12-16).

What this passage makes clear is that the Gentile who never had the standard of the law of God given through Moses, will not be judged by that standard. Nevertheless he is not without law entirely, for inwardly, he has a law which should be the regulator of his thoughts and actions, and this is *his conscience*. This is the moral law in miniature as it were. Conscience either condemns his wrong doing (accuses him) or witnesses that he is right (excuses him), and all this is open to God Who, unlike man, knows the thoughts and the intents of the heart in every person and in every particular.

Furthermore we are assured in Scripture that the righteous Judge of all is able to do what no human judge can, that is, He assesses what an individual would have done if his circumstances had been different. God’s judgment is dependent upon the amount of light a person has had and what the circumstances surrounding him were like. In other words guilt is proportionate, and God is able to make a righteous comparison with the favoured and those who were not so favoured.

In the O.T. God’s earthly people, Israel, were compared with Sodom, which, on the surface, is surprising to say the least:

“As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters . . . . *they (Sodom and her daughters) are more righteous than thou*” (Ezek. xvi. 48-52).

It would be difficult to make any valid comparison between the Israelite and the inhabitants of Sodom, except to say that, with all the revelation and light contained in the law of Moses, the Jew was in a vastly more favourable position than the people of this city. This being so, their responsibility was much greater. Added light inevitably brings added responsibility in God’s sight. Would that this was continually impressed upon the minds of all believers.

The same principle is expressed by the Lord Jesus in Matt. x. 14, 15:

“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.”

In the next chapter of Matthew, the Lord continues:

“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you” (Matt. xi. 21, 22).

In addition the Lord refers to “the men of Nineveh” and “the queen of the south” in Matt. xii. 41, 42. Tyre and Sidon did not repent. This is an historic fact. Tyre and Sidon would have repented if . . . .! That is the verdict of One Who will judge the secrets of men, the One Who “tries the heart and the reins”, Who therefore can righteously evaluate inner desire and outward performance. He may see triumph where others see disaster, and failure where others see success. It is in the light of these revelations concerning the principles of future judgment that we must read Rom. ii. 4-16.

Nor must we forget that nothing that is written in this passage or elsewhere in the Scripture can alter the privilege of hearing the gospel and the heavy responsibility resting on those who, having heard, do not believe.

On the other hand this passage does help in the great problem of dealing with the destiny of the unsaved in lands that are far removed from Christian revelation. When one thinks of the millions that have been born in past thousands of years in vast countries like China and Africa who have never had the privilege of hearing the good news of salvation, one is staggered. In addition to this we should remember that they had no responsibility for inheriting a sinful nature from fallen Adam, nor for being born in a place where it was impossible to hear the gospel. Does not Rom. x. 14 recognize the limits of their responsibility?

“How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”.

The clear answer is they cannot do any of these things and a righteous God will recognize this. A crude orthodoxy may consign them to hell for eternity, but the teaching of the passage we are considering in Romans does nothing of the kind. It deals with them along the lines of conscience and the circumstances that surround them and states that they are a “law unto themselves” (ii. 14). They are a special case in other words, and the “faith obedience” to the gospel to which chapter i. refers, cannot apply to them.

However, the Apostle goes on to deal with the Jew who *did* have a knowledge of God and His truth. He points out to them that it was useless for such to rest in the fact that they were the custodians of God’s law. This law was only of use *if it was obeyed*. Apart from this it could only condemn him. A Jew who breaks the law is no better than a Gentile. In fact a Gentile who carries out the spirit of the law will condemn a Jew who breaks it, no matter how well versed he may be in the O.T. Scriptures, or how much he rests upon the law revealed therein.

He imagined that this provided him with a sure standing before God as did the fact that he was born one of the chosen people. The Apostle proceeds to strip from the Jew these false props:

“Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know His will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?

You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Rom. ii. 17-24, N.I.V.).

The law of God was only profitable if it was obeyed and carried out in practice, otherwise it could only condemn and render guilty. So Paul continues “Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised” (ii. 25 N.I.V.).

It was futile for a Jew to look on circumcision as though it was a passport to salvation. It had an internal meaning without which it was an empty rite. The putting off of the flesh stood for the abandonment of human effort and merit, and in its place was put a complete reliance (faith) in God and His provision of righteousness. Regarding the law, Galatians reinforces the argument of Romans, “every man that is circumcised . . . . is *a debtor to do the whole law*” (Gal. v. 3). Without this, the law became man’s enemy, not his friend, for a broken law could only lead to God’s curse (Gal. iii. 10), and moreover it made the sacrifice of Christ valueless:

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. v. 4).

But what of the Gentile who, though uncircumcised, pleased God? He would certainly show up the shortcomings of the disobedient Jew and judge him even though he

had kept the letter of the law (Rom. ii. 27). Now the Apostle gives a description of the true Jew which was more than just outward conformity to ritual:

“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God” (ii. 28, 29, N.I.V.).

There was an internal attitude of mind, which was essential if one wished to be recognized by God as the true seed of Abraham. Circumcision of the heart is an O.T. doctrine as much as the fleshly rite (Deut. x. 16; Jer. iv. 4) where it means man’s humble response to God’s gracious love and the absence of boasting and indulgence in some supposed superiority over others. On the other hand one cannot rule out the physical side altogether, for later on in the Roman epistle the Apostle Paul is going to state that the true seed came only through Isaac, and not through any other child of Abraham (Rom. ix. 7, 8)—“In Isaac shall thy seed be called”. In other words there is an internal as well as an external side to the real seed of Abraham and both are essential to the purpose of God.

### **No.5.   iii.  1 - 9. pp. 161 - 165**

When we come to chapter iii. of the epistle, the presentation of the Apostle’s theme in the form of an argument still continues. We can imagine someone reading his conclusion of chapter ii. and saying: “if it is being a Jew inwardly that really matters, is there any real advantage in belonging to the Jewish nation and being circumcised?” Paul’s reply to the question, “what advantage has the Jew?” (Rom. iii. 1) is definite:

“Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God” (iii. 2).

Among the many privileges bestowed by God upon Israel was the fact that He had made them the custodians of His written Word. This was an honour indeed, such as no other nation had received. Later on the Apostle gives an imposing list of Israel’s privileges in Rom. ix.:

“. . . . my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption (sonship), and the glory (the external symbol of God’s presence with them), and the covenants (every covenant in the Bible pertains originally to Israel except the covenant with Noah), and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and his twelve sons to whom so many divine promises were made), and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen” (ix. 3-5).

We shall have to consider this list of high privileges in detail when we reach chap. ix., but when we take them all together, the answer to the query as to whether there was any

advantage in being an Israelite is overwhelming. The evidence of the O.T. makes it clear that God planned the Jewish people to be the premier nation of the earth through whom this truth was to reach to the ends of the world (Exod. xix. 3-6; Deut. xxviii. 1), and for this reason the Psalmist concludes Psal. c. lxxvii. by saying:

“He sheweth His word *unto Jacob*, His statutes and His judgments *unto Israel*. *He hath not dealt so with any nation:* and as for His judgment, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord” (Psa. c. lxxvii. 19, 20).

At the same time Israel should have remembered what has already been stressed, namely that God’s light and truth bring great responsibility, and even though they were unfaithful yet this did not alter or make void the faithfulness of God:

“What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar” (iii. 3, 4-, N.I.V.).

The untruth or the failure of man only sets into relief God’s absolute faithfulness and reliability. In a court of law God will always prove to be in the right.

“As Scripture says, That Thou mayest be proved right when Thou speakest and be victorious when Thou enterest into judgment” (iii. -4, C. K. Barrett).

Another objection now follows. Someone may argue: “If my failure shows up God’s faithfulness, why should He find fault with me, because if this is true He is the gainer by my sin? So, is God just in exacting retribution for sin?”. The Apostle apologizes for bringing in such a human argument. The sentence in Greek is so worded as to expect the answer, No. If this accusation was true it would be impossible for God, as the moral Governor of the universe, to execute judgment upon mankind. “For then how shall God judge the world?” (verse 6). And it is quite clear from Scripture that this is precisely what He will do (Acts xvii. 30, 31; Rom. ii. 14-16), and the fact that man has been created a moral being in the image of God brings responsibility and demands it. The only alternative is to regard man as a puppet with no responsibility for his actions, which is unscriptural and completely untrue.

The objector however persists:

“If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases His glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?” (iii. 7, N.I.V.).

As a matter of fact this argument was certainly made by Paul’s enemies against the gospel which he preached. If human works do not enter into the scheme of salvation, if it is just by faith only, then one can live just as one likes and forget about sin and failing. But this was complete falsification of the truth. In a later epistle, the Apostle expresses the good news of salvation in this way:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (salvation by faith) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works, which God hath before ordained (margin: before prepared) that we should walk in them*” (Eph. ii. 8-10).

Thus Paul did not teach antinomianism, and this is reinforced by the first two verses of Rom. vi.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin (after salvation), that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. vi. 1).

This being so, those who slandered the Apostle and misrepresented the gospel that he preached, came under God’s condemnation (damnation A.V.) and this condemnation was just. They said in effect that Paul taught that doing evil was permissible if good came from it (iii. 8). This is a highly dangerous and deceptive statement that still creeps into human affairs, and even into the religious world. How often do we hear that wrong doing is allowable if some good springs from it? And there are some who do not hesitate to say that even God can take this attitude in His purposes, that He wills evil in order to show up His love and kindness in forgiveness!

Such slander comes perilously near blasphemy. We can be assured of one thing: a thrice-holy God does not need to bring sin into His plans in order to further them and bring them to a glorious conclusion. God may and does permit sin. The very fact that He has made man a moral being allows this. He can also over-rule sin, but this is something entirely different. God’s permissive will must not be confused with His direct will.

Chapter iii. continues with another argument from the foregoing. If it is a great advantage to belong to the nation of Israel, then surely Jews are superior to Gentiles? The Apostle’s answer is clear. Jews are sinners equally with Gentiles and in some respects worse than them because of their greater enlightenment and failure, so from the standpoint of sin and failing there is no difference:

“What then? are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (iii. 9).

This contrast with the opening verses of the chapter may be set out in this way:

- A | iii. 1. What advantage and profit has Israel?
- B | 2. Much every way—chiefly because God had given them  
the revelation of the Word.
- A | 9. Are we (Israel) then better than they Gentiles?
- B | iii. 9. No, because Israel together with the Gentiles  
are sinners and guilty before God.

This guilt, says the Apostle, is the verdict of Scripture and he goes on to cite six passages to prove the point:

“We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written,

‘There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one’ (Psa. liii. 1-3).

‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit’ (Psa. v. 9).

‘The poison of vipers is on their lips’ (Psa. cxl. 3).

‘Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness’ (Psa. x. 7).

‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know’ (Isa. lix. 7, 8).

‘There is no fear of God before their eyes’ (Psa. xxxvi. 1).

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin” (Rom. iii. 9-20, N.I.V.).

The ‘law’ here means the O.T. Scriptures as a whole.

Having now dealt with all mankind in the two-fold division of Jew and Gentile, and shown that *all* are sinners and are therefore guilty in the sight of God—the Judge of all the earth, the Apostle Paul returns to the implications of the wonderful gospel of grace which he stated in i. 17. Man is not only a sinner but is unable to rescue or save himself from this condition, no matter how much he tries. Since the fall, men have been struggling to do this very thing, but have never attained to it, and as Scripture reveals, never will. Max Muller, as he considered the many religions in the world, observed the fact that although they differed in many respects, in one thing they were all united, that man must *do* something to achieve salvation. He must make his contribution or work it out for himself, in other words. The idea of salvation as a free gift, perfect and complete, being brought before men and received personally by faith or trust never enters their conceptions, but this is the heart of the gospel made known to Paul by revelation of the risen Christ (Gal. i. 8-12).

We have reached a point in Romans where God now steps in to meet the deepest needs of man and provides with that righteousness or absolute rightness which completely nullifies his guilty condition, so much so, that if he accepts it by simple faith, in God’s court of law he now can be pronounced “not guilty” by the Judge of all the earth, the very opposite of the “guilty” verdict declared in Rom. iii. 19:

“*But now* a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom. iii. 21-24, N.I.V.).

**No.6. iii. 10 - 31.**  
**pp. 181 - 186**

In the section we are studying we have seen that God's answer to man's sin is the provision of His own righteousness, resting on the basis of Christ's redemptive work on the cross and received personally by the sinner on the ground of faith or trust in Him. There can be no doubt that 'righteousness' & the verb 'to make righteous' are key words in this great epistle, and they run right throughout like a golden thread as the following summary shows:

God's righteousness <i>revealed</i> in the gospel	i. 17
God's righteousness <i>required</i> and found wanting in human attainment	i. 18-iii. 20
God's righteousness <i>provided</i> through faith in Christ	iii. 21-31
A <i>concrete</i> illustration of this—Abraham.	
How God reckons righteousness to a sinner	iv. and v.
God's righteousness and the <i>freedom it brings to serve Him</i>	vi. and viii.
<i>Israel's attitude to this righteousness</i> and their failure through not receiving it	ix.-xi.
God's righteousness <i>in practice</i> in the daily life	xii.-xvi.

As stated before, the terms "righteousness" and "make righteous" are terms of the law-court. These words do not mean "to make virtuous" or "to make sinless", as is evidenced by the fact that the redeemed sinner is still capable of sin and does not attain absolute perfection until resurrection glory when he is then presented "holy and unblameable and unproveable in His (God's) sight" (Col. i. 21, 22). In the exposition of Galatians we pointed out that the process of justification is expressed in terms of law in the Old and New Testaments. We repeat it here:

1. God is set forth as the Judge of all the earth (Genesis xviii. 25; Isaiah i. 7, 8; Romans viii. 33).
2. The person to be justified is guilty. He is looked upon as exposed to the righteous judgment of God (Rom. i. 32). The sinner's mouth is shut (Rom. iii. 19).
3. There are three accusers: (i.) the law of God (John v. 45); (ii.) Conscience (Rom.ii.15); (iii.) Satan (Zech. iii. 2; Rev. xii. 10).
4. The charge is drawn up in legal handwriting (Col. ii. 14).
5. The gospel provides the guilty person with a plea (Rom. iii. 23-25).
6. The Lord Himself is the Advocate (I John ii. 1, 2).
7. The sentence for all believers is one of complete forgiveness, justification, and acceptance by God, and title to eternal life and inheritance (Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34; II Cor. v. 21).

Such are completely cleared and acquitted by God, Whose righteousness is beyond question. This is done on the principle of *grace*, since men, being sinners, cannot be acquitted on the grounds of any merit of their own. It is God's gracious favour that meets

all their needs, at the same time satisfying the demands of justice, His holiness not being compromised in any way, and this is all because of the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ Who bore the penalty for the sins of all His people.

The Apostle Paul says more about grace, God's favour to the unworthy, than any other N.T. writer. This wonderful redemption and justification is based upon the "riches of His (Christ's) grace" (Eph. i. 6, 7), leading to "exceeding riches of His grace" in the ages to come which will be experienced in resurrection glory. The Apostle knew in his own experience what it was to be the recipient of the grace and mercy of God, as he looked back on his pre-conversion days and described himself as the "chief of sinners" (I Tim. i. 12, 13, 15). And this can be true of every sinner who puts his trust in the redemptive work of Christ alone. It matters not of what race, nationality, class or colour he belongs to, this infinite grace and mercy can be his on the grounds of trust in Christ Jesus:

" . . . . this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One Who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 22-26, N.I.V.).

It is clear from the foregoing wonderful facts which stress that justification and forgiveness are God's acts alone, and achieved solely through the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus on the sinner's behalf, that human boasting must be excluded. What has any sinner, thus forgiven, to boast about? If he boasts at all, it must be in the Saviour Who has given His life on the cross on his behalf and borne the penalty of his sins.

It is this perfect offering "once for all" (Heb. x. 9, 10, 12), that God continually looks at where sin is concerned and it is because of this that He could overlook the sin of previous generations and be forbearing, holding back His hand in punishment. Christ's redemptive work can be retrospective as well as looking to the future. Compare Paul's proclamation to the Athenians ". . . . the times of ignorance God overlooked; but now commandeth . . . ." (Acts xvii. 30 R.V.). Yet at the same time, in forgiving the sins of His people, God's holiness was not compromised in doing this. "He was just" and at the same time "the *Justifier* of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26).

Sin had not been ignored by Him or swept under the carpet so to speak. It had been fully borne by God Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ "For He hath made Him (the Lord Jesus) to be sin (or a sin offering) for us, Who knew no sin (He was sinless Himself); that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. v. 21).

How wonderful that the God Who pronounced the penalty for sin to Adam, namely death (Gen. ii. 17), bore it Himself so that His creature should not have to bear it for eternity! This is surely love beyond our comprehension. No wonder in the N.T. the love of God is so often described in terms of the giving of Himself in the person of Christ for

us (John iii. 16; Gal. ii. 20; Eph. v. 25). Even in the human realm the Lord said “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John.xv.13). It is all beautifully expressed in the children’s hymn:

“It is a thing most wonderful,  
Almost too wonderful to be,  
That God’s own Son should come from heaven,  
And die to save a child like me” (Bishop W. W. HOW).

Some have judged from verse 25 that we have the pagan idea that God needed to be appeased. The word ‘propitiation’ *hilasterion* is related to the verb *hilaskomai* which in pagan Greek did mean “to placate”. In the Septuagint the word is parallel to the Hebrew *kipper* (“Make atonement”) and among cognate words we find *kapporeth*, “mercy seat”. These words acquired a new meaning from their Biblical context. We should note carefully in Romans, it is not man who is trying to placate God, for Paul insists that it is God, not sinful man Who has provided this mercy seat (verse 25), as He did typically in the O.T.

Some modern translations seek to avoid the word “propitiation” and substitute “expiation” and “the means of expiating sin” (R.S.V. and N.E.B.) which means to wipe it out. This is certainly true of Christ’s redemptive work. God has so dealt with His peoples’ sin and removed it, so that it can be said with truth, “their sins and iniquities I will remember no more” (Jer. xxxi. 34); “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psa. ciii. 12); “Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah vii. 19).

On the other hand we cannot Scripturally remove the wrath of God from the problem of sin. Has not Paul already said that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?” (Rom. i. 18). How then is this wrath to be removed? It can only come through the *hilasterion*, “propitiation” that *God has provided* whereby *through Christ* men’s sins can be righteously cancelled, in which case retribution (the wrath of God) does not arise. The wrath of God is not a popular theme in modern theology but it is inevitable in a moral universe and is one of the revelations of Holy Writ.

The Apostle sums up this section of the epistle by saying:

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law” (iii. 28-31).

Is any distinction to be made in the prepositions ‘by’ (*ek*) and ‘through’ (*dia*) faith? It appears that the Apostle uses them interchangeably. *Ek* is used in Rom. i. 17, *ek* & *dia* in connection with *law* in iii. 20: and *dia* in iii. 22, 25 joined with faith & in Gal.ii.16. Likewise in English the words ‘by’ and ‘through’ can have the same meaning.

One thing is certain, and that is, from the Apostle's argument, there is only one way to justification for Jew and Gentile, namely the way of faith in Christ's work of redemption.

He asks, do we do away with the law if we stress faith? Paul uses the word law in more than one sense; sometimes with the definite article and sometimes without it. But in every sense that he uses it the declaration that law is established, not made void by faith, is true. If it means the O.T. as a whole, it is true, for justification by faith contradicts not one of its statements nor is inconsistent with its doctrines or promises. If it refers to the O.T. typology then these were but shadows of which Christ was the substance (Heb. x. 1) and they were *fulfilled* in Christ, not proved spurious. If it means the moral law then again this is not weakened by the law of faith, for by it no moral obligation was weakened or penal sanction disregarded. No, the law is established by faith, for the O.T. teaches that both Abraham and David were justified gratuitously by faith and without works on their part.

Having come to this point, the Apostle is now going to give a concrete illustration of what justification by faith means, and he found in Abraham an excellent example of this truth. Several N.T. writers refer to Abraham to prove their points of doctrine for the very good reason that in this man's life all the basic truths of Christianity are illustrated. We find justification, sanctification, the power of prayer, fellowship with God, consecration, and the goal of maturity all exhibited in his walk before God. To the Jew, Abraham was their father and their supreme human example. No more telling practical setting forth of the foundational doctrine of justification by faith could be made to an Israelite. Thus it is that the fourth chapter of Romans which follows, shows how faith in God and His promises forms the very basis of Abraham's life and witness.

**No.7. iv. 1 - 11.**  
**pp. 201 - 206**

The Apostle Paul now proceeds to set forth the case of Abraham and he continues to use the style of question and answer. If ever there was a man whom the people of Israel revered it was Abraham, for not only was he their human father, but his character was such that even God Himself could say:

"Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen. xxvi. 5).

This was high commendation indeed, and if a man's works could justify him in God's sight, then Abraham could go further than most. But Paul has clearly shown that even the best of human beings cannot reach God's standard of perfection by their own efforts:

"What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by work, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom. iv. 1-3, R.S.V.).

It will be well to pause here and consider the word translated 'count' in this context as it is vital to the argument. The word in the Greek is the verb *logizomai* which occurs no less than eleven times in this chapter. It is translated 'count' in verses 3 and 5, 'reckon' (verses 4, 9, 10), 'impute' (verses 6, 8, 11, 22, 23, 24). Looking carefully at the context we note that it is used in two different ways (1) of imputing something, (2) imputing one thing for another. The former sense occurs in verses 6, 8, 10, 11, 23, 24. In these passages one thing is not imputed for another, wages, righteousness and sin are actualities. But in verses 3, 5 and 22 faith is imputed *for* righteousness. We have the same thought in ii. 26, "therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be *counted* for circumcision?"

The principle of faith is of extreme importance, but we must not go to the length of making it another "work". If we do, then we empty the gospel of the grace of God of all its meaning. Faith is not a work, although it leads to works, but this is another matter. We have a comparatively modern example of these two expressions. There was a time in the history of our country when the standard coin of the realm was the golden sovereign. One could never have said with truth that the golden sovereign was *reckoned for* twenty shillings for it actually was worth twenty shillings. Whatever happened to it! Today we have a pound note. Its purchasing power is exactly the same as that of a golden sovereign, but it would be very unwise to conclude that the note itself was *actually* of the same value as the gold; it was and is merely "reckoned for" £1. The intrinsic value of each would be evident if both were dropped into the fire. The sovereign would survive, but the note would quickly be reduced to ash. On the other hand we must not think that the value of the £1 note is fictional, for behind it are the resources of Great Britain.

So it is with faith or trust. Faith is *not* righteousness; but is reckoned by God *for* righteousness. The real righteousness is found only in the Lord. Nevertheless faith is precious and is the one thing necessary to please God (Heb. xi. 6), but we must not magnify it into a procuring cause or a work of merit on our part. As Charles H. Welch expresses it so aptly, "there, in the great capital Bank of Heaven, is the genuine gold of perfect righteousness, wrought by Another (the Lord Jesus) on our behalf, that alone makes our faith of any value" (*Just and the Justifier*, p.77).

The section of the epistle we are now dealing with stresses three things:

- (1) The relation of circumcision to the argument;
- (2) The nullifying of God's promises if the law and human works are introduced; and
- (3) The supreme example of Abraham and the way he was justified by God.

Romans iv. 3 reads:

"For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

The Apostle is clearly quoting Gen. xv. 6, but we have a problem here because in the Genesis record we are assured that Abraham believed God some time before this. Hebrews xi. 8 states that "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out unto a place

which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went”, and this takes us back to Gen. xii. 1, so why is this passed over? The answer is found by considering the background of Gen. xv. At this point Abraham had come to an end of himself. He said “I go childless” (Gen. xv. 2). Yet God assured him that, in spite of this seeming impossibility, he would nevertheless have a son: “He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir” (Gen. xv. 4). Abraham was then told to look towards heaven and attempt to number the stars. This command was followed by the promise, “so shall thy seed be” (Gen. xv. 5). Next we have the statement of the sixth verse “And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness”. The remaining verses in Rom. iv. stresses that Abraham did not believe God in a general way, but that he believed *the God of resurrection*. He was the “God Who quickeneth the dead” (Rom. iv. 17). This aspect of Abraham’s faith is seen further in connection with the offering of Isaac “Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. xi. 19). That the great basic doctrine of resurrection is linked with justification is clear from the conclusion of Rom. iv.:

“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for (because of) our justification” (iv. 23, 25).

The debt incurred by our sins was paid by the Lord’s death. Our acquittal was received in resurrection and it is for this reason that Gen. xv. 6 is the place where Abraham’s justification is revealed. He most assuredly believed in a God Who was able to give life to dead people when he believed the promise of a literal seed, at a time when both he and his wife were physically unable to have children owing to their old age (Rom. iv. 17-22).

Looking more closely at the section of the epistle before us we find the Apostle Paul commenting on the fact that Abraham’s works were not the basis of his justification:

“Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God Who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (iv. 4, 5, N.I.V.).

The argument is obvious; a workman earns his wages by his works. His pay is not a gracious gift! If Abraham could earn his justification before God by his own efforts then faith was not necessary. But it has been made abundantly clear that neither Abraham nor any other human being has the capability of doing this (though alas, thousands imagine that they have). Justification or acquittal must come from God Himself. All human sources or attempts are useless. It is God alone Who can justify the sinner! The phrase that God “justifies the ungodly” is surely startling, for it is in direct contradiction to the O.T. Scriptures:

“. . . . I (God) will not justify the wicked” (Exod. xxiii. 7).

“He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination unto the Lord” (Prov. xvii. 15, R.S.V.).

So here, in Romans apparently, we find God doing what He absolutely prohibited! Yet God's way of justifying a sinner is such that His own holy character is untarnished. He can be "just" and yet the "justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 23-26), for, as we have seen, He, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, has paid the penalty for the sins of the believer. For He was made sin for us Who Himself had no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. v. 20, 21).

The force of the verses quoted above from the O.T. clearly indicate that "to justify" is a forensic term, a term from the law-court, which does not mean to make perfect or holy, but "to acquit" as innocent.

The Apostle now introduces David as a further example:

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (iv. 6-8).

The conclusion to be drawn from this is, "the counting of righteousness" is equivalent to "the not-counting of sin". What a joy and relief this was to David as the Psalm which he wrote testifies and from which this quotation is made (Psa. xxxii.). David had grievously sinned, but he was dealing with a merciful God Who would cover and put away his sins on the basis of the future sacrifice of Christ (Rom. iii. 24, 25). No wonder he finished that Psalm by saying:

"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psa. xxxii. 11).

Paul now deals with the question as to whether this glorious forgiveness and acquittal was the privilege of the Jew only. Could it extend to the Gentile?

"Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision (Jew) only, or upon the uncircumcision (Gentile) also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision" (Rom. iv. 9, 10).

The answer to the query of verse 9 is settled by noting Abraham's condition when he was justified by faith. Was he circumcised then or uncircumcised? Again the answer is clear. The circumcision of Abraham does not take place until Gen. xvii., at least fourteen years later, and then it was only an external seal of that righteous status which God had given him long before, by virtue of his faith. *Abraham was a Gentile* when he was justified by faith! Thus it is that he could be the true father of all, whether Jew or Gentile, who trust God and take Him at His Word.

The rite of circumcision or its absence is irrelevant to a man's status before God as a Judge:

"And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them

that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (iv. 11).

If circumcision had nothing to do with the justification of Abraham before God, then the law had even less to do with it; for in Galatians Paul had already pointed out that the law was given 430 years later than God’s promise to Abraham and could not either contradict it or set it aside (Gal. iii. 17). Thus it is that God’s dealings with Abraham on the principle of grace is an illustration of what He can do for *anyone, Jew or Gentile*, who exhibits the same trust in God that Abraham showed. It was because of this that God changed his name from Abram as he was formerly called to Abraham, and said “I have made thee a father of many nations” (Gen. xvii. 4, 5) and this must therefore include the Gentile.

**No.8. iv. 12 - v. 5.**  
**pp. 221 - 225**

Thus it is that chapter iv. of Romans, dealing with Abraham show that his case is a practical example of justification by faith on the principle of grace, whichever way it is looked at, either from the standpoint of circumcision, or any kind of law; whether given later through Moses or otherwise:

“For the promise, that he (Abraham) should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through (the) law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of (the) law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations), before Him Who he believed, even God, Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (iv. 13-17).

Sometimes Paul drops the definite article before ‘the law’ and possibly from this he is referring to law generally.

These verses extend the argument set forth in verses 1-12, namely that God’s dealings with Abraham were not on the basis of law *but of promise*, and this was given by grace and received by faith. The title, “the heir of the world”, is an interpretation of the promises which refer to “all families of the earth” (Gen. xii. 3) and “all nations of the earth” (Gen. xviii. 18; xxii. 18). The Apostle argues that if these are received by law keeping, then faith is ruled out, and owing to men’s inability to keep the law, these divine promises can never be fulfilled.

“For if those who rely on the law are heirs, then faith has been emptied of meaning, and the promise has been brought to nothing” (iv. 14, C. K. Barrett).

In addition to this is the fact that the law produces wrath, for it inevitably imposes penalties for failure to keep it. Where no law is there is no transgression. Here the Apostle is anticipating what he expands in chapter v. 12-14. All the law can do is to show up sin in its true colours. It can never save or justify the sinner. Because of this, God's way is the principle of grace which is appropriated by men only through faith in Him and what He has accomplished through Christ on their behalf. Only in this way can God's promise be secure to all the seed (whether Jew or Gentile). If it rests on sinful men it can never be sure and certain, but if it rests on God alone then there can be absolute assurance.

In Abraham's case, as we have seen before, all this was worked out in spite of the fact that both he and his wife, around the age of a hundred years, were beyond the capability of having a son. Abraham looked to and completely trusted the God of resurrection to keep His promise and give him an heir from which a posterity would spring. Verses 18-21 record this. Some Greek manuscripts omit the negative in verse 19 and read "he considered his body now dead", but the sense is not altered. Even if he did consider his aged body, he did not allow this to affect his faith in the promise of God, but looked to the One, Who can overcome death and quicken the dead, to keep His Word:

“. . . . before God, in Whom he believed, God, Who quickens the dead and calls into being the things which do not exist. This, Abraham believed, hoping against hope, so as to become the father of many Gentiles (according to the Scriptures), So shall thy seed be. He considered without weakening in his faith that his own body was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and also the dead state of Sarah's womb. Looking rather to God's promise, he did not waver in unbelief, but gave God the glory, was fully convinced that what God had promised He had the power to do, and grew strong in faith, that is why it was accounted to him for righteousness" (iv. 17-22).

We give Dr. C. K. Barrett's translation here as it makes the sense of the passage more clear than the A.V. The Apostle brings all this to bear on the believers of his day and for those who would follow after. Our justification as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is the same as Abraham's, for it is based and rooted in the free grace of God Who counts faith in Himself as righteousness and this is possible because the Lord Jesus was "delivered up because of the sins we had committed and raised up because of the justification that was to be granted to us" (iv. 25 C. K. Barrett).

Having made clear how it is possible for a holy God to justify sinners, chapter v. starts by enumerating the rich blessings that follow:

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us" (Rom. v. 1-5, N.I.V.).

Some translations (A.V., R.V. margin, R.S.V.) read "We have peace with God". The R.V., and R.S.V. margin, read "let us have peace with God". Some Greek texts read the indicative of the verb, *echomen*; others the subjunctive, *echomen*. One has the short 'o',

the other the long 'o' and both were practically identical in pronunciation. Both readings were attested. However there is no conflict in doctrine. One says we have peace because we are justified; the other, we have peace through justification and let us continue in it and enjoy it. This blessed peace comes from the sin question being completely settled and put away. It is not merely a cessation of hostilities as it is so often in human affairs. Once as sinners we were 'alienated and enemies' to God (Col. i. 20-22). Now, God's justifying work has completely removed the barrier between us. This leads to quietness and assurance and free access to Him. We are brought now into a special place of favour, "this grace wherein we stand" (v. 2). The believer's "standing" is no longer in Adam with its condemnation, but in Christ, and the righteousness provided by His great sacrifice is the procuring cause of this "access". Because of this, we (both Jew and Gentile believers) have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 17, 18), and this gives us "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19, 20) or as Heb. iv. 16 states, "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need". The standing of the believer in Christ is perfect, for he now stands clothed in God's righteousness. All rests upon this glorious fact and in no sense depends upon the believer or his attainments. He can now have "boldness and access with confidence *by the faith of Him*" (Eph. iii. 12).

The distinction must therefore be made with the grace wherein the believer stands, and his *state* apart from this. As such he is still a failing creature, but his position in Christ now gives him strength and encouragement, so that his daily life and walk can begin to approximate to the perfect 'standing' he has been given by God. This glorious position leads to rejoicing "in hope of the glory of God" (v. 2). As a sinner he "comes short of the glory of God" (iii. 23). The glory of God will be the great characteristic of the resurrection life to come, and now the believer has it as a sure and certain hope that can never fail. In all its fullness, those in Christ will enjoy it for evermore in this unending future life.

The Apostle Paul goes on to say:

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations *also*" (v. 3).

This last word 'also' is important, for no sane person boasts in tribulations for their own sake. As Rom. xii. 12 expresses it, we can be "patient in tribulation", because we "rejoice in (this) hope". Afflictions, tribulations, difficulties, are viewed as the normal experience of the Christian in the N.T. Did not the Lord Jesus say "In Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John xvi. 33). And can the servant expect to have different treatment from his Master?

One of the reasons that God permits tribulations to be experienced by His children is because of its salutary effect on their spiritual development. The difficulties of life cause the believer to lean more and more upon the Lord and His gracious promises. They give his faith *exercise*, so that "little faith" grows into "great faith". Heb. xii. declares that chastening and discipline are the necessary accompaniments of true sonship in Christ and although this is not pleasant but grievous, afterwards it yields the "peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them *which are exercised thereby*" (Heb. xii. 6-12).

Thus we see that such experience are not the result of God's displeasure, but rather the wisdom of a heavenly Father Who is concerned about the spiritual development and character of His children and therefore leads them into experiences that will achieve this goal. Once this is realized, the sting is taken out of many of the disappointments of life. When we realize this, we can better understand the words of Peter to Christians who were undergoing severe tests, teaching them, "the *trial of your faith*, being much more *precious* than gold that perisheth . . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. i. 4-7).

Such words remind us of Job, who though sorely afflicted could say:

"When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job xxiii. 10).

Romans v. 4 leads on to "patience", or better "endurance" and in turn this results in "steadfastness of character" (experience A.V.), both of these traits being most necessary in the Christian life, so that the believer does not capitulate under the difficulties that come his way, but, strengthened by the Lord, is able to press on looking to the future glory, knowing that:

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (II Cor. iv. 17, 18, N.I.V.).

# The Use and Abuse of Joel's Prophecy.

## No.3. i. 14 - ii. 11. pp. 1 - 10

**Joel i. 14 - iii. 21** can come under the heading of “call to repent” and as such its structure is as follows:

- i. 14. Call to fast
- i. 15. Reason
  - i. 16-20. Consequences
    - ii. 1a. Call to blow the trumpet \
    - ii. 1b. Reason } PEOPLE
    - ii. 2-11. Consequences /
- ii. 12, 13a. Call to fast
- ii. 13b. Reason
  - ii. 14. Consequences
    - ii. 15-17a. Call to blow the trumpet \
    - ii. 17b. Reason } PRIESTS
    - ii. 18 - iii. 21. Consequences /

In this study we shall look in detail at the first half of this structure; that is at **Joel i. 14 - ii. 11.**

*Joel i. 14.* The call by Joel for a solemn assembly should remind the people of Judah of such events recorded in the law of Moses (Lev. xxiii. 36; Num. xxix. 35; Deut. xvi. 8). At these, the people were told to do no servile work but to bring sacrifices and so there would be food. Here Joel precedes the call for a solemn assembly with the call for a fast probably because the people were unable to supply certain of the offerings (Joel i. 9, 13) but fasting was associated with the forgiveness of sin and the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 29) was a day of fasting. Thus forgiveness may have been behind the call, for Joel does later call the people to repent. Also, bearing in mind that in the past the people had abused the solemn assemblies to such an extent that the Lord had said “it is an iniquity, even the solemn assembly” (Isa. i. 13) and that King Jehu had set up a solemn assembly for the worship of Baal (II Kings x. 19-21), it may be that Joel wanted to emphasize that such an assembly was of no value unless the heart of the people was penitent. Thus a solemn assembly is called and the people told to fast. All the elders and all the inhabitants of the land are gathered into the house of God and told to “cry unto the Lord”. Why?

“Cry unto the Lord,  
Alas for the day!  
for the Day of the Lord is at hand,  
and as a destruction from the Almighty it shall come.”

Now however little we may know of this time called “the Day of the Lord” from this verse alone we can see that it is a time to be feared. This “Day of the Lord” is the theme from here on in Joel’s prophecy and it occurs in i. 15; ii. 1, 11, 31 and iii. 14. From these verses alone we can see that the people are told to tremble on this terrible day. We cannot go into the vast detail of this great subject here (most of Revelation is about the “Day of the Lord”, Rev. i. 10), but suffice it to say that it is characterized by God’s judgment upon the earth when He will again break into the world system and vindicate Himself and His people. The expression first occurs in Scripture in Isa. ii. 10-19 and a good description of it is given there. In the Day of the Lord man will be abased and the Lord exalted, whereas today self exaltation in man is common and God has been almost pushed out of the world He has created. This may be the reason that this age is termed “man’s day”—an alternative reading of I Cor. iv. 3—and demonstrates that the time period for the Day of the Lord need not be 24 hours. Still however bad that day will be for mankind we should note that God’s mercy will always be extended to the humble and repentant sinner (Joel ii. 11-13).

*Joel i. 16.* Having drawn people’s attention to the Day of the Lord, Joel now returns to describe the consequences of this plague of locusts. What he saw left a vivid picture in his mind which formed the basis of his description of the total destructive effect of the army of people portrayed in chapter ii.

In verse 16 the word ‘meat’ (A.V.) is translated ‘food’ elsewhere (R.S.V.; N.I.V.; J.N.D.; Moffatt). Not only has the wine been snatched from their lips (i. 5) but their food has disappeared from before their eyes! There would be no harvest! Thus they could not keep the Feast of Weeks, elsewhere called Pentecost, which was related to the harvest and which was always a time of great rejoicing (Deut. xv. 9-12). Similarly the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. xv. 13-15) was a time of immense celebration which took place after the gathering in of the corn and grapes. This must surely have been in Joel’s mind!

*Joel i. 17.* It is hard to see in verse 17 why the seeds should be ‘rotten’ (A.V.). The R.S.V. and the N.I.V. have ‘shrivels’ and ‘shriveled’ respectively and that does seem more appropriate. Seeds may rot in times of excess water but never in a time of drought followed by a locust plague followed by a bush fire (i. 19).

<p>“The seeds are shriveled beneath the clods. The storehouses are in ruins. The granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up” (N.I.V.).</p>	<p>“Below the clod crumbles the seed, the granaries are standing bare, barns are in disrepair, for what have we to store up there, now that the grain has withered” (Moffatt).</p>
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*Joel i. 18.* However bad man’s plight might be at such a time as this we must never forget that God is the God of *all* creation and feels for *all* His creatures. Thus Joel is inspired to draw the people’s attention to the animals. Moffatt’s “The herds of cattle huddle together” and the N.I.V.’s “The herds mill about” both paint pictures of the behaviour of these poor creatures and this thought is uppermost in Joel’s mind when he cries out unto the Lord.

*Joel i. 19.* Also perhaps, Joel had in mind the words of Asaph in Psa. l. 15:

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble:  
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.”

This exhortation was to those who:

“Offer unto God thanksgiving:  
And pay thy vows unto the Most High” (Psa. l. 14).

Later Joel is to call the people to turn to their God but in i. 19 he is again concerned with the plight of the animals because “fire has devoured the open pastures” (N.I.V.). “Open pastures” is better than “wilderness” (A.V.) for the latter tends to conjure up in our minds poor and somewhat barren land. No! This was the “common pasture” and it had been devoured together with the trees. To see the vegetation ravaged by locusts is bad enough but to see what remains destroyed by fire is totally despairing.

Some commentators think that the fire of verse 19 is another description of the plague. Some locusts are a reddish brown and when the swarm moves over the land it moves just like a fire and what remains is bare and barkless—just as if there had been a fire.

*Joel i. 20.* Joel again reminds the people of the animals and draws attention to the fact that the rivers of water had dried up. These ‘rivers of water’, *aphikim*, were the ‘water courses’ (Moffatt) constructed from rocks and pipes and channels and used throughout the land. *Aphikim* occurs some 15 times in the O.T. and is translated by various words such as channels, brooks, rivers. In mentioning the drying up of these courses Joel may have had in mind Psa. cvii. 33, 34:

“He turneth rivers into a wilderness,  
And the watersprings into dry ground:  
A fruitful land into barrenness,  
For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.”

We have mentioned before that if Joel was written just prior to the Babylonian exile then such words as the last line above are easily appreciated. Many kings did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord and the implication of Joel’s writing is that the calamity which has come upon them is because of the sinfulness of this people and there is now the need to repent.

*Joel ii. 1.* This chapter opens with a call to blow the trumpet in Zion which is another name for Jerusalem, the city of David (II Sam. v. 6, 7). It is accompanied with an order to “sound an alarm in *My* holy mountain”. Again note the “*My*”, and the “holy mountain” is another name for this same city (Joel iii. 17; Psa. xlviii. 1-2). Don’t misunderstand this word holy, *kodesh*. It means something or someone separated for or set apart for God. It does not necessarily mean that that which is holy is sinless or perfect. In Exod. iii. 5 Moses stood on “holy ground” and it may well have contained thistles and thorns but it was “holy” because it had been “set apart” for God.

The blowing of the trumpet and the sounding of the alarm are fully described in Numb. x. 1-9 where the context is preparation for war and the conclusion is “ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies”. The blowing of the trumpet has also to do with convocations (assemblies) and such is described in Lev. xxiii. 23-25. At these, the people came together to “offer an offering made by fire” and are described more fully in Exod. xxix. 18 and its context.

It is perhaps unlikely that the trumpet was blown to gather the people for the “offering made by fire” because of their inability to supply the meal offering and drink offering which often accompanied such. More probably it was sounded to prepare them for the news of the future and its impending battle. They had just been decimated by the enemies drought, plague and fire, what worse enemy could lay ahead of them? Have they much left to fear for? Could anything now cause them greater harm? Well, Joel says:

“Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble”,

and he gives the reason for such fear:

“for the Day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand.”

*Joel ii. 2-11.* Joel now moves into the future. Having painted the past in vivid terms and being able to draw analogies from it he now focuses his attention on events which take place during the “Day of the Lord”.

From now on we shall not find these writings so easy to understand and it will be impossible to write with much precision about many of the verses. Viewing fulfilled prophecy in retrospect is relatively easy but to say exactly how unfulfilled prophecy will come true, how all the different prophecies will be drawn together and completed is above the capabilities of us all. Having just reread Joel ii. 2-11 again, the writer wonders what can he say!?!

<b>Moffatt</b>	<b>N.I.V.</b>
<p>[2] “a dark day in a shroud, a day of fog and cloud here comes a huge vast power, blackening the hills; the like of it never has been, the like of it never shall be, for years upon years to come; [3] before them fire devouring, behind them flames a blazing: before them the land lies     like an Eden paradise, behind them it is a desolate desert-- for nothing escapes them. [4] They look like horses, they run like war horses.</p>	<p>[2] “a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness Like dawn spreading across the mountains, a large and mighty army comes,  such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come; [3] Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. before them the land is     like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste-- nothing escapes them. [4] They have the appearances of horses; they gallop along like cavalry.</p>

<p>[5] as chariots rattle, they leap on the hill tops, like flames that crackle, consuming the straw, like a vast army in battle array. [6] Hearts are in anguish before them, all faces turn pale. [7] They charge like warriors, they advance like fighters, each on his own track-- no tangling of path-- [8] None pushes his fellow, each follows his own line; they burst through weapons unbroken, [9] they rush on the city, run over the walls, climb into houses and enter the windows like thieves. [10] At their advance the land is quaking, the heavens are shaking, sun and moon are dark, the stars have ceased to shine. [11] and the Eternal thunders in front of His army a mighty host is His, and strong are those who execute His orders. For the Eternal's day is great and awful: who can face it?"</p>	<p>[5] with a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountain tops, like crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. [6] At the sight of them, nations are in anguish: every face turn pale. [7] They charge like warriors: they scale walls like soldiers, They all march in line, not swerving from their course. [8] They do not jostle each other: each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defences without breaking ranks. [9] they rush upon the city, they run along the walls. They climb into the houses; Like thieves they enter through the windows. [10] Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, The sun and moon are darkened and the stars no longer shine. [11] The Lord thunders at the head of His army His forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey His commands. The Day of the Lord is great, it is dreadful who can endure it?"</p>
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Thank goodness for verse 11!!! However we may interpret the details of verses 2-10 it certainly strikes fear into the heart of the reader and one can easily imagine that at this time, during this Day of the Lord “every face turns pale” (ii. 6)! So, without getting bogged down with the detail, what is described here? Joel gives us a picture of the greatest army of all time (ii. 2) and very good (!) at its job (ii. 7-9). This army is also totally destructive (ii. 3) and those attacked by it are pale and in anguish (ii. 6)—but who and what does it attack? Joel ii. 9 tells us it is the city. The city in which Joel has gathered all the inhabitants of the land. Thus Joel ii. 1-10 is describing an attack by a mighty army upon the city of Jerusalem and the Jews who live in it and the surrounding land.

Verse 10 should bring us up with a jolt for it shows that the power of this army is much greater than can be imagined and, as we shall see, behind this army is the great adversary of God, Satan.

Here in Joel ii. 1-10 is perhaps his greatest attempt to wipe the Jew off the face of the earth and so make God break promises He had made to various people. There are many, many passages to which we could now turn but the following two will be sufficient to demonstrate the point.

“Thus saith the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the seas when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever” (Jer. xxxi. 35, 36).

However, in Gen. xiii. 14-18 Abraham and his seed were promised a land:

“For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and *to thy seed for ever*” (15).

Thus the land and the seed are going to endure for ever. In the light of this we can see what a tremendous challenge Jer. xxxi. 35, 36 is! If the God Who cannot lie (Titus i. 2) and the God Whose gifts and callings are without repentance (Rom. xi. 29) is made to be a liar and a breaker of promises . . . . then Satan has victory! Thus in attacking the Jew in his land and in his city Satan is attempting to wipe the Jew off the face of the earth—so making God break His promise. It seems also that he and his army may try and affect the sun, moon and stars in an attempt to make God invoke the promise of Jer. xxxi. 35, 36. This is the battle of the ages, God v. Satan! During the Day of the Lord this battle comes to a head and this future period of time is mainly about that great enemy and his defeat.

When dealing with Satan we must *not* think of horns, tails and ‘pitchfork’ but should realize that he was, and in some senses still is, the greatest creature of God’s creation. He was, so to speak, God’s number two—His right hand man, but he wanted more. He was not satisfied. He wanted to be number one but thankfully that will never be and he has also been deposed from his previous position which God now occupies Himself in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord.

We could spend much time in describing Satan but will mention just a few points. He held such titles as the “anointed cherub that covereth” (Ezek. xxviii. 12-19). He is called the “angel of light” and his workers are called “ministers of righteousness” (II Cor. xi. 14, 15) (a title indicating their false façade which sadly deceives men). His main desire appears to be to usurp God’s position and steal worship from Him! Does he succeed? Well . . . . we shall wait and see but although the people of Israel will be no match for his vast army Joel tells us in ii. 11 that there is another army which is mighty and beyond number and at the head of that army is the Lord!

Having got the gist and the flow of this passage we will now have a look at one or two details. The first half of Joel ii. 2 described the Day of the Lord. Amos v. 18-20 expands this:

“. . . . the Day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him: or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the Day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?”

The second half of Joel ii. 2 emphasizes the uniqueness of this still future army with which Satan will pursue the Jew. Rev. xii. is perhaps another description of this battle and related events and now we are better able to appreciate the Lord’s words in

Matt.xxiv.16. Referring to this time He says “Let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains”. When there is war, the mountains are safer than the cities.

The word for weapons in Joel ii. 8 is *shelack* and some commentators maintain this is a ‘late’ word and thus Joel must have been written after the Babylonian exile. However the word is found in Job xxxiii. 18 and xxxvi. 12 and Job is one of the earliest of O.T. writings. Thus we see no reason to move Joel’s prophecy from the days prior to the Babylonian captivity.

Some commentators hold the view that the army described in Joel ii. 2-10 is the same as that described in Rev. ix. 2-11 but a close reading of both passages shows that this cannot be. Whatever is described in Rev. ix. is commanded to “not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree” (Rev. ix. 4). This directly contradicts Joel ii. 3 and thus what are described in the two passages must be different.

Other commentators claim that the army described in Joel ii. 2-10 is the army of the Lord mentioned in verse 11. Knowing how God is to guard and protect this people and feed them as well (Rev. xii. 6, 14) during this Day of the Lord this view seems unlikely. Also in the light of such passages as Isa. li. 3 and Ezek. xxxvi. 35 where we are told “this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden”, we cannot see Joel ii. 3 being the work of God’s army. Thus we continually come to the conclusion that in Joel ii. 2-10 we have a vivid and graphic description of a great attacking force that is to come against Jerusalem and its inhabitants. All seems lost for those people. Their case seems a hopeless one but then . . . . ., we are told simply but firmly and clearly (verse 11) that the Lord has His army and His camp is great for He is strong. The Day of the Lord is great and terrible. Who can endure it? Will any of the people of Israel? Will any of the attacking army?

**No.4. ii. 12 - 20.  
pp. 29 - 38**

We now come to the second half of the structure given for Joel i. 14 - iii. 21:

- ii. 12, 13a. Call to fast
- ii. 13b. Reason
- ii. 14. Consequences
- ii. 15-17a. Call to blow the trumpet \
- ii. 17b. Reason } PRIESTS
- ii. 18 - iii. 21. Consequences /

*Joel ii. 12.* Having painted the picture of the future vast, disciplined and totally destructive army of Satan on the one hand and numberless, great and powerful army of the Lord on the other; having shown the people that whatever will confront them the

Lord, Jehovah, is able to protect them—Joel then returns to his time. He focuses his people’s mind on their present predicament with the call:

“Even now, declares the Lord,  
return to Me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning” (N.I.V.).

Don’t wait for such a disaster before you turn to God—do it now! EVEN NOW! With such words, with a jolt, Joel brings the people back to their present time and he wants a 100% commitment from them. “With all your heart” is but an echo of the Mosaic law (Deut. vi. 5 and xi. 13). The thought which is always behind this phrase is the totality of the response. When the Bible uses heart it means man’s thinking power, his mind. It does not mean his emotions. Thus Joel is demanding a complete change of mind and an active decision to be totally committed.

*Joel ii. 13.* The next verse emphasizes this further with “rend your hearts and not your garments”. This repentance must be inward and not merely outward. Such external shows mean nothing. Mere outward display, not accompanied by an inward change, was the condition of this people when Isaiah began to prophecy, and what the Lord thought of that situation is adequately described in Isa. i. 2-32.

Joel further encourages repentance by reminding the people of God’s character:

“. . . . for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil” (A.V.).  
“. . . . for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity” (N.I.V.).

Descriptions of God as gracious and merciful come from His own words to Moses in Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6. The A.V. “great kindness” is perhaps too meek an expression. “Abounding in love” (N.I.V.), “Rich in love” (Moffatt) are better but the R.S.V. is the strongest, “Abounding in steadfast love”. This was the love He had for His people. It was this love which gave and maintained the covenants which culminated in the New Covenant (Jer. xxxi. 31-34). It was this type of love He looked for in the people of Israel but too often He found nothing more than empty ritualistic worship (see again Isa. i. 2-32 and Hosea vi. 6).

The expression “repenteth Him of evil” is perhaps perplexing. How can God do evil in the first place, let alone repent of it? Well the expression is but a figure of speech and when used of God simply means that He will not carry out a threatened judgment either because of intercessory prayer (see Amos vii. 5) or because of a change of heart in the people involved—as possible here. The N.I.V., “relents from sending a calamity”, makes this clear.

*Joel ii. 14.* So the people are called to fast and turn to the Lord because of His grace and mercy and steadfast love. In verse 14 Joel seems to pose a rhetorical question about the possible consequences if such an action was taken. Again the idea of God ‘repenting’ comes up and here we may learn much from Amos vii. 1-6. Amos received a vision of

what God was thinking of doing but his prayers (Amos vii. 2 and 4) persuaded God to 'repent' (vii. 3, 6) and not follow that course of action. Thus Joel implies that God's immediate actions depended upon what the people did. The balance between God's sovereignty and man's free will is indeed difficult and not the subject of these writings. Let it be said that God is working to a predetermined plan and purpose which nothing can thwart but because His is almighty He is able to get from most points in His plan to the next by an infinity of pathways. Man or Satan may try and block some of these but they cannot block them all. Thus Joel states that if these people will turn to God and rend their hearts then He will "turn and have pity" (N.I.V.).

In Jonah iii. 8, 9 the people there "turned from their evil ways" and God did not cause the proposed judgment to fall. Would these people, the ones to whom Joel was sent, would these repent and turn to God? To encourage them even further Joel develops his rhetorical hypothesis with:

"Who knoweth if He will . . . . leave a blessing behind Him; even a meal offering and a drink offering . . . .?" (Joel ii. 14).

The reference to the Lord leaving a blessing would suggest that Joel was thinking that the Lord would miraculously step in and provide a new harvest. "Blessings" and "harvest" would be linked in the minds of these people as indicated in Isa. lxxv. 8. If another harvest did come about then the people would again be able to go to the priest with their offerings—including the meal and drink offerings. Thus if the people did repent, turn and rend their hearts the subsequent blessing is not only likened to the restoration of the land from drought, locusts and fire but also to the restoration of the people's access to God through their acceptable worship, part of which was the meal and drink offerings.

*Joel ii. 15.* Once again, in verse 15, there is the call to blow the trumpet. Those who know how much this instrument figures in the book of Revelation will not be surprised if it isn't long before Joel is again dealing with future issues but before he does that we should note that Joel is calling *everyone*. No one is to be left out.

*Joel ii. 16.* Here Joel seems to become more urgent perhaps realizing the importance of what he is about to say. One can sense this from the short, sharp statements of this verse:

"Gather the people,  
sanctify the congregation,  
assemble the elder,  
gather the children."

Short, snappy orders. This urgency is however, most exhorted by the call for the bride and the groom. If the trumpet was sounded because of the presence of an 'ordinary' enemy and for a 'normal' war, the groom would not be 'called up' for a year (Deut.xxiv.5). Also the references to the chamber and closet and bridal canopy suggest even 'newly weds'; even those on their wedding day. Such is Joel's urgency for here he

has in mind, once again, the Day of the Lord. Matt. xxiv. 15-22 helpfully describes some of the problems of that time.

“Sanctify a fast”, verse 15; “sanctify the congregation”, verse 16 are both open to misunderstanding. Like the word “holy” the word “sanctify” is often incorrectly understood. In fact these two words are closely connected. Holy is *kodesh* and to sanctify is *kadesh*. Holy means set apart for God and to sanctify means to set aside for sacred purposes, that is to consecrate. Exod. xix. 10, 22 is helpful where we can see it means to make ceremonially clean with respect to the law and this, perhaps, is its most common usage in the O.T.

*Joel ii. 17.* The priests and ministers of the Lord are told to “weep between the porch and the altar”. We include a little sketch of the Temple to show where this would be:

## - - - I l l u s t r a t i o n - - - (BE-LI.33).

These priests are told not only to weep but also to pray and they are told what to pray:

“Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”.

“Thine heritage” (A.V.), “Your inheritance” (N.I.V.) is a reference to the people of Israel (Deut. xxxii. 9) and the great concern is that “the heathen should rule over them”. In most translations this is replaced by the expression “a byword among the nations” (J.N.D.; N.I.V.; Moffatt; R.S.V.) and a byword is a proverb about a place or a person which is taken as a type usually for something bad.

“Do not make your inheritance . . . . a byword among the nations” (N.I.V.).

So there is the call to blow the trumpets and the priests are called to weep and pray because Joel is concerned about the nations mocking Israel and doubting the existence of their God. “Why should the nations sneer Where is their God?” is Moffatt’s effective translation.

### Joel ii. 18 - iii. 21.

Well, what are to be the consequences of such a sneer? We live in the dispensation of the fullness of God’s grace and nowadays many sneer at our gracious God but at this future time, during this Day of the Lord, when Israel’s very existence is threatened and God’s promises to them are in jeopardy . . . . what will He do?

“Then will the Lord be jealous for *His* land, and pity *His* people” (Joel ii. 18).

The land which is referred to here is Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. That land is in much dispute today and will continue to be so right up to and through this Day of the Lord. It is salutary to appreciate that “the heavens are Thine” but so too is the earth (Psa. lxxxix. 11) and if He has decided to give a certain part of it to Abraham’s seed (Gen. xv. 18), then none can object and to fulfil that promise the people of Israel must, one day in the future, receive it *all* and dwell in it.

Sooner or later one would expect the sneering challenge “Where is their God?” to be loudly and clearly answered by the Lord. The consequences of this derisory remark fill the rest of this prophecy, that is Joel ii. 18 - iii. 21, and make up the last member of the structure given at the start of this study. However, to help us deal with what follows we construct a structure for this remaining section:

ii. 18, 19.	Good bestowed; land and people
ii. 20.	Evil removed. Enemy cut off
ii. 21-32.	Good bestowed; land and people
iii. 1-16a.	Evil removed. Enemy cut off
iii. 16b-18.	Good bestowed; land and people
iii. 19.	Evil removed. Enemy cut off
iii. 20, 21.	Good bestowed; land and people

*Joel ii. 18.* The word jealous, *qanna*, is better translated zealous and when applied to God it is intended to show that He is not abstract, neither impersonal, nor cold, but that He is a living, personal, loving God Whose love is intense and exclusive in the sense that it does not tolerate rival gods (Exod. xx. 5). It is because He is the living personal God Who is zealous that Prov. iii. 11, 12 records that “whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth”. Every father knows that his children need discipline administered in love.

*Joel ii. 19.* The Lord speaks and promises that there will be a time when He will send the corn and the wine and the people shall be “satisfied”. The N.I.V. puts it more strongly saying He will send “enough to satisfy you fully”, and Moffatt has “till you have ample”. These show that the Lord will indeed be bountiful and how He accomplishes this is explained more fully in Joel ii. 21-27 which we shall consider in our next study.

However as well as restoring the corn, the wine and the oil to such an extent that the people will be more than satisfied the Lord tells them that they shall no longer “be taunted by the pagans” (Moffatt); they shall never again be “an object of scorn to the nations” (N.I.V.). In such passages as Jer. ix. 13-16 and xiii. 22-24 the Lord had promised that if they forsook Him He would scatter them amongst the nations but Ezekiel xi. 17 looks to the same time as Joel ii. 19 when God promised that He would gather them and give them the land of Israel.

*Joel ii. 20.* How will God set about achieving these promises? First by removing the evil and, in particular, the enemy described in Joel ii. 20. In the A.V. you will note that the word *army* is in italics. This signifies that in the original the Hebrew word of army was not there but the translators felt a word needed to be supplied for the English to be

clear. Certainly it would be a good idea if *all* translations followed this practice and then everyone could see what the translators have needed to add.

The R.S.V. translates without having to supply an extra word; “I will remove the northerner far from you”. Other translations are:

“The foe from the north I will drive out” (Moffatt).  
“I will remove the northern peril far away from you” (N.E.B.).  
“I will drive the northern army far away from you” (N.I.V.).

Perhaps the most significant translation of this verse is supplied by J. N. Darby:

“I will remove far from you him that cometh from the north” (J.N.D.).

With reference to ‘drive *him*’, ‘*his* face’, ‘*his* hinder part’, ‘*his* stink’, ‘*his* ill savour’ and ‘*he* hath done’ a singular noun, rather than a collective one, would best fit the context and the translator’s need.

Who is this northern army? Who is this northerner? The army has been described in Joel ii. 2-10 but who is its leader? Some claim that Joel ii. 2-10 and verse 20 refer to nothing more than a plague of locusts but not only do such verses as ii. 7 and 8 make this highly unlikely, verse 20 makes it impossible. Locusts do not attack the land of Israel from the north. Thus who is this northerner? Who is he “that cometh from the north?”.

Daniel xi. is a difficult chapter and at verse 21 there is a distinct break. The first 20 verses may now be history but “in his estate shall stand up a vile person” (Dan. xi. 21) heralds in the still future “king of the north”. The whole of Dan. xi. 21-45 is about the exploits of this king of the north and a future king of the south—with the people of Israel stuck in the middle. It helps in understanding these passages to remember that north and south are with respect to Jerusalem and the land surrounding it. All nations entering Israel ‘on foot’ must enter either from the north or from the south. Who is this king of the north? Who is this king of the south? That was, and still is, only one nation near Israel to the south and that is Egypt. Thus many agree that the king of the south is Egypt but . . . . The king of the north? which is that? To answer would require another book! Suffice it to say that there are several nations near to the land of Israel which would have to use the northern route. It is one of these but which one is *not* clearly revealed in Scripture. A detailed study will narrow down the possibilities but those alive at that day, during that Day of the Lord, will know.

Note that Dan. xi. 36 says that this king of the north “shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and *magnify himself* above every God, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods and shall prosper . . . .”.

In Joel ii. 20 the expression “he hath done great things” can be translated “he *magnified himself* to do great things”. This expression occurs also in Dan. viii. where his same being is termed the ‘little horn’ but he doesn’t stay little for long!

“. . . . a little horn which waxed exceeding great, towards the south, and towards the east and towards the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground and stamped upon them. Yea, he *magnified himself* even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down” (Dan. viii. 9-11, A.V.).

Our studies so far in Joel allow us to appreciate, but not savour, those words in Daniel viii. and xi., but let us be thankful that we stopped in the middle of a sentence in Dan. xi. 36.

“. . . . and shall prosper *TILL* the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.”

He shall prosper for a time but then he shall be defeated and Joel reveals the extent of that defeat.

“. . . . I will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea (that is the Dead Sea) and his hinder parts towards the utmost sea (that is the Mediterranean Sea), and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up . . . .” (Joel ii. 20, A.V.).

How will this defeat of the king of the north, this ‘little horn’ who is backed by Satan (Dan. xi. 38, 39; Rev. xiii. 4) be accomplished? It is interesting to note that just as Satan has many names (e.g. The dragon, the serpent, the devil, etc.) so too has this puppet of his. Paul describes him as:

“The man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is worshipped: so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (II Thess. ii. 3, 4, A.V.).

So this army of Joel ii. 2-10 manages to overrun the land of Israel, take Jerusalem and occupy the Temple! Satan manages to acquire, via this being of his, the worship he so badly wants.

“. . . . and they worshipped the dragon (Satan) which gave power unto the beast (another name for this king of the north) and they worshipped the beast” (Rev. xiii. 4, A.V.).

The extent of that worship is “all them that dwell on the earth shall worship him” (Rev. xiii. 8) and this is accomplished with the help of another being, “another beast” (Rev. xiii. 11) who is usually termed the “false prophet”. His exploits are fully described in Rev. xiii. 11-18 and he “deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles he had power to do” (Rev. xiii. 14).

Will God tolerate this for long? Thankfully not. For at *most* 3½ years Satan, his beast and his false prophet will enjoy success but then . . . .:

“Then shall the wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (II Thess. ii. 8, 9, A.V.).

Many passages of Scripture can throw light upon this tremendous event. Zech.xiv.1-11 is well worth reading and states that “then shall the Lord go forth and fight”. Matt. xxiv. 1-31 is another valuable passage showing that “except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (verse 22). In this crazy attempt to wipe out the Jew it appears Satan is prepared to wipe out humanity but God steps in. What a tremendous day that will be when God, in the person of Christ, breaks into the world. Rev. xix. 11-21 tries to describe that day but it is far from easy to understand. We could go on for much longer but perhaps we have thrown enough light on to what is behind Joel ii. 20 and what is behind the expression:

“I will remove from you him that cometh from the north” (Joel ii. 20, J.N.D.).

## **No.5. ii. 21 - 32.** **pp. 47 - 54**

We now come to the central part of Joel’s prophecy and will, in this study, deal with the longest section of the ones entitled “Good bestowed; land and people”. To help us we set out the following structure:

- ii. 21-27. Temporal gifts and signs
  - ii. 21a. Words to the soil
  - ii. 21b. Reason
  - ii. 22a. Words to the beasts
  - ii. 22b. Reason
  - ii. 23a. Words to the people
  - ii. 23b-27. Reason
- ii. 28-32. Spiritual gifts and signs
  - ii. 28, 29. Pour out My spirit
  - ii. 30, 31. Wonders in heaven
  - ii. 32. Deliverance

The return of Christ, merely alluded to in Joel ii. 20, heralds in a time when “The Lord shall be King over the earth” (Zech. xiv. 9). However we must remember that His Kingship will not be immediately acknowledged. Initially He is to rule with a rod of iron (Psa. ii. 5) and this is understandable if we appreciate what the world would have just gone through. Rev. xiii. gives us that sad picture, from one point of view, and Matt.xxiv.21 describes that time as “a great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”.

*Joel ii. 21.* After the great battle, swiftly passed over by Joel in ii. 20, there will be the need for food for the animals and the people. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first words of the Lord are addressed to the soil (*adamah*) which is told not to fear because He, the Lord, will do great things. What exactly—we are not immediately told.

*Joel ii. 22.* Then the animals are told not to be afraid for the land will soon recover.

*Joel ii. 23.* Then the people of Israel, the children of Zion are told to rejoice in the Lord their God. They have just been saved from destruction at the hand of the king of the north and the One Who saved them was the One their forefathers crucified! On that day they shall “look on Him Whom they pierced” and the realization would understandably lead to that great period of mourning (Zech. xii. 9-10) but after that the people would turn their attention to the land and see it desolate. However they are told to rejoice in the Lord their God! How will He cure this land? How will it recover? How will He cause it to flourish during His reign on earth? The answer may lie in Lev. xxvi. 3, 4 where the people of Israel are told:

“If we walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments and do them: then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.”

When is this “due season” for the land of Israel? Deut. xi. 13, 14 supplies the answer:

“If you shall hearken diligently unto My commandments . . . . I will give you the rain of your land in her due season, the first rain and the latter rain that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine and thy oil.”

Such passages as these, and also Hosea vi. 3 and Jer. v. 24, may have been in Joel’s mind. This first or early rain falls during October and November and enables the ground to be prepared for the seeds. The normal rainy season is December to February but the latter rain is to fall in March and April, bringing on the harvest. Without such latter rain the harvest is poor. At present it is this restoration of this latter rain that the land of Israel so desperately needs if it is to be bountiful. The many irrigation schemes now undertaken in that part of the world will not be necessary when the latter rain is restored by the Lord after His Second Coming. This kingdom which He is to set up on earth is to last for 1,000 years (Rev. xx. 2), during which time Satan is to be bound and will be prevented from interfering with mankind. Some think that this will be a time of perfection and sinlessness but this is not so. Not all of man’s sin are due to Satan (Matt. xv. 19) and we have read that at the start of this kingdom the Lord is to rule with a rod of iron and Isa.lxv.20 indicates sin is still present! However it is to be the most blessed time on earth and it is often called the Millennial Kingdom or simply, the Millennium—which is the Latin word for 1,000.

Before moving on—just one trivial point. In Joel ii. 23 “the former rain moderately” might suggest that the Lord is not giving as much as He could do. J.N.D. has “the early rain in due measure”. The Lord is to give the due measure, the correct proportion for the abundant fertility of the seeds; not too much—not too little.

*Joel ii. 24.* Thus all is set up in the kingdom in which “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock” (Isa. lxv. 25). The reference in this verse of Isaiah to the serpent eating dust is an allegorical representation of Satan being bound for the 1,000 year duration of that kingdom (Rev. xx. 2).

*Joel ii. 25.* In Joel ii. 23-25 the people are told to be glad and they certainly have much to be glad about. Verse 24 states that “the (threshing) floors shall be full of wheat (corn) and the fats (vats) shall overflow with wine and oil”. No problem now with the meal and drink offerings! Not only are the offerings restored but verse 25 sees the restoration of *everything* to Israel. Everything that was lost to the locusts is restored! Everything that was lost to that great army is restored! No wonder they are told to rejoice and be glad.

Some people have a problem with the words “My great army which I sent among you”. Did God directly cause this catastrophe? No! But because He is the omnipotent, all powerful One Who can do anything and Who can stop anything, He could have stopped the ravaging locusts and He could have stopped that great army of Joel ii. 2-10 even before it had embarked upon its mission—but He chose not to. Thus because He didn’t, because He allowed it; He takes the responsibility and so calls the plague of locusts My “great army”. Thus any catastrophe He allows His people to go through is fully noted by Him and He the righteous One, *more than* compensates them for their suffering with blessings either in this life or after resurrection (Rom. viii. 18 and II.Cor.iv.17 show Paul appreciated this point). Another example of this is found in the opening chapters of Job where Satan wishes to inflict hardship onto Job and his family (Job i. 1-11). The Lord allows *Satan* to do this (i. 12) but later in Job ii. 3 He takes the responsibility for these sufferings upon His own shoulders. The last chapter of Job then shows how the Lord more than compensated Job for what He permitted Job to undergo.

*Joel ii. 26, 27.* This section of the structure closes with verses 26 and 27. The people are told that they “will praise the name of the Lord” and that they will know that He is in the midst of them. There are also two references, one in verse 26 *and* one in verse 27, to:

“My people shall never be ashamed” (A.V.).  
“. . . . never again shall My people be put to shame” (N.I.V.).  
“. . . . never again shall My people be derided” (Moffatt).

This even sees the fulfillment of the promise of Deut. xxviii. 13:

“And the Lord shall make thee the head and not the tail, and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God.”

Many of the promises to the people of Israel are conditional upon the behaviour of that people. Deut. xxviii. 13, above, has “if thou hearken unto My commandment”. Similar conditions are found in such passages as Lev. xxvi. 3, 4 and Deut. xi. 13, 14. However there is a time coming when this people will hearken and will obey. It will be after those days when they shall “look on Him Whom they pierced”. It shall be in those days after the return of Christ. Jer. xxxi. 33, 34 records that:

“After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, every man his brother, saying Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity. I will remember their sin no more.”

Such is the hope of the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer. xxxi. 31). Ezekiel xi. 19, 20 adds further light:

“I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in My statutes, and keep My ordinances, and do them, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”

This comes after the gathering of the people to the land the Lord has given them (Ezek. xi. 17-20) and Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14 shows that the two nations, the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, these two become one. This gathering takes place after the return of the Lord to the earth (Matt. xxiv. 29-31; Zechariah xii. 9-14).

*Joel ii. 28, 29.* Ezekiel xi. 17-20 covers, only more briefly, what is written about in Joel ii. 21-29 and makes clear one point which has perplexed some people. The passage from Ezekiel makes it clear that “I will put a new spirit within you” (verse 19) comes *after* the gathering of the people of Israel into the land (verse 17)—and this gathering we have seen comes after the Lord’s return.

“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaidens in those days will I pour out My spirit” (Joel ii. 28, 29, A.V.).

From these verses alone we may be left asking “afterward”? After what? After the ravaging of Satan’s army in Joel ii. 2-10? After the northern enemy had been destroyed by the Lord’s coming (Joel ii. 20)? After the good bestowed upon the land, the animals and the people (Joel ii. 21-27)? Yes! After all these had taken place. After the Lord’s return; after the nation had been gathered into the land; after the land had been blessed with the latter rain; after the good bestowed had begun to be enjoyed—then . . . . then “I will pour out My spirit on all flesh” (Joel ii. 28). “In *those* days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel ii. 29). Other passages, such as Ezek xxxvii. 1-14 and Zech. xii. 9-14, add details but from all such passages it is clear that the pouring out of the spirit upon these people comes after the Lord’s return.

Passages such as Joel ii. 28, 29 and Jer. xxxi. 31-34 etc. bring us to one of the high water marks of the O.T. God had desired that *all* the people of Israel would be mouthpieces and prophets for Him (Numb. xi. 29). His wish was that they would be a kingdom of Priests (Exod. xix. 26) and as such take the message of His plan and purpose for mankind to all nations of the world. This desire, this wish shall be realized in the Millennium when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. xi. 9). The knowledge He gives to Israel and Judah (Jer. xxxi. 31-34), they pass on to all nations so fulfilling their role as a kingdom of priests.

One point in Joel ii. 28, 29 which we might easily pass over is that the spirit was to be poured out on *all* flesh. This would be very important to those in the O.T. times. It is difficult for us who have been sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption

(Eph. i. 13 and iv. 30), and who have been strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man (Eph. iii. 11), and who are filled by the Spirit (Eph. v. 18), to appreciate that the Comforter has not always been available to all people for all the time. The work of the Holy Spirit is another massive subject and those who wish to look further into it may care to read *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* by Stuart Allen, published by the Berean Publishing Trust. However suffice it to say that in those O.T. times the Holy Spirit was generally given to only a few people and then for only a short time. It was to enable them to carry out God’s will—whatever that may have been.

During the building of the Temple some craftsmen were endowed with special skills and abilities thus producing extremely beautiful work but . . . . whatever that work was, when it had been completed, the Holy Spirit left them. Again God could remove His Holy Spirit if the person sinned badly and He did this to Saul, and David was afraid God might do the same to him. Hence David’s great plea in Psa. li. 11 “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me!” Thus the promise that God’s Holy Spirit was to be poured out “upon all flesh” was of great significance to those alive in Joel’s time.

There is little more to say on these two verses other than to point out that *to prophecy* does not necessarily mean to foretell the future. To prophesy means to speak things about God—His character, His being, His past activities, His present purpose and, if necessary, His future plans.

*Joel ii. 30, 31.* Joel ii. 28-31 contain two groups of seven items and it may be profitable to display them:

“It shall come to pass AFTERWARD that

/	all flesh
/	your sons shall prophesy
/	your daughters shall prophesy
{	your old men shall dream dreams
\	your young men shall see visions
\	your servants
\	your handmaidens
/	in the heavens
/	in the earth
/	blood
{	fire
\	pillars of smoke
\	sun into darkness
\	moon into blood

and I will show wonders

BEFORE the great and terrible day of the Lord.”

To miss the “before” in verse 31 can cause much confusion. Some seem to think that the wonders in heaven etc. come *after* the pouring out of the Spirit but that is to misread Joel. The pouring out of the Spirit comes “afterwards” and although it may not be clear to us exactly how long “after” the Lord’s return that pouring out will be, none the less we do know it is “after” that great event. Similarly we may not know for how long “before” the Lord’s return this Day of the Lord will last but we do know that that age is brought to

a close by His return. Thus Joel ii. 30-32 takes us back in time to before Joel ii. 28, 29; to before the events described in Joel ii. 21-27. It takes us back to those days described in Joel ii. 2-11 and possibly ii. 20.

Reading again Joel ii. 30, 31, and other passages like Matt. xxiv. 29, one wonders how can these things be? How is it possible? How will it happen? What will be the mechanics? We don't know! We are not told! Even if we were told we probably wouldn't (couldn't) understand! Also, as we read such passages again, we may well ask "what *exactly* is described in Joel ii. 30, 31?". Again we cannot be definite but those people who will be alive at this future time will have no trouble at all in seeing *exactly* what these words depict. Matt. xxiv. 21 describes those days as a "great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be". Joel's prophecy, to such as know it, will be a great comfort to those who are alive during that time.

*Joel ii. 32.*

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel ii. 32, A.V.).

Remembering that we are now back into "the great and terrible Day of the Lord" we ask what is this deliverance which will be provided in Jerusalem and the surrounding country? Deliverance is *peletah* which is translate elsewhere "escape". Remnant is not the usual word (*sheeriyth*) but is *sariyd*, a derivative of *sarad* which means a "survivor". Thus *sariyd* means "those left" or "that which remains". Matt. xxiv. 15-21 exhorts those who are alive in Judea to flee into the mountains and Rev. xii. states that there they shall be fed (verses 6 and 14) and protected (verse 16) by God. This is the deliverance of Joel ii. 32.

**No.6. iii. 1 - 21.  
pp. 61 - 72**

In Joel ii. 15-17 there is recorded the call to blow the trumpet and there is the exhortation for the priests to pray to the Lord so that the heathen would not rule over Israel and the nations would not sneer "where is their God?". The rest, Joel ii. 18-iii. 21, deals with the consequences of this action and its structure is:

ii. 18, 19.	Good bestowed; land and people
ii. 20.	Evil removed. Enemy cut off
ii. 21-32.	Good bestowed; land and people
iii. 1-16a.	Evil removed. Enemy cut off
iii. 16b-18.	Good bestowed; land and people
iii. 19.	Evil removed. Enemy cut off
iii. 20, 21.	Good bestowed; land and people

In our last study we dealt with the third member of the above structure; the longest one dealing with the “Good bestowed”. Now we turn to the fourth member, the longest dealing with the “evil removed”. Its structure is as follows:

iii. 1, 2a.	Gathering
iii. 2b.	Place and Act. “I will judge.”
iii. 3-8.	Judgment threatened
iii. 9-12a.	Gathering
iii. 12b.	Place and Act. “I will judge.”
iii. 13.	Judgment executed
iii. 14a.	Gathering
iii. 14b.	Place and Act. Valley of judgment.
iii. 15, 16a.	Judgment threatened.

*Joel iii. 1.* The opening words of chapter iii. “For behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem”, should make us stop and ask which point in time is Joel referring to? Is it those days of Joel ii. 30-32 or some other time? When is the time that “I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem?” Before we can answer that question we need to look at the expression “bring again the captivity”. Surprisingly we find it means to “restore the fortunes” or “relieve from trouble”. This is clear from Amos ix. 14, 15:

“And I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them: and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof: they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”

Jeremiah xxx. 3 is another passage which shows the meaning of this expression to be the gathering and restoring of the people of Israel to their land. Thus these words are translated as “When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem” by the N.I.V., Moffatt and R.S.V. The N.E.B. has “when I reverse the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem”. We know this reversal takes place at the Lord’s Second Coming.

*Joel iii. 2.* So, at that time, in those days, about the time of the return of Christ “I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat”. This is again mentioned in Zechariah xiv. 2 and the ensuing battle has been fully described in Joel ii. 2-10. The second half of Zech.xiv.2 describes explicitly the events of Joel ii. 9.

Again care must be exercised over the expression “I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle” (Zech. xiv. 2). Here God, once more, is taking responsibility for events which He allows. Rev. xix. 19 makes it clear that behind this great battle is the beast, the king of the north, that ‘little horn’ and behind him is Satan!

The mention of Jehoshaphat has led some to want to date Joel’s prophecy in the reign of that king (B.C.819-794) but this is not logical. If a valley bears a king’s name we can

be certain that the prophecy was not written *before* that king ruled but it could have been written *any time* during or after.

The name Jehoshaphat means “Jehovah has judged” and so the valley of Jehoshaphat is a most appropriate place for this battle. Elsewhere this valley is called the Kidron valley and it is situated between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. Here judgment is dispensed and to here Christ returns!

“And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east” (Zech. xiv. 4, A.V.).

What an event that will be! How the nations will be amazed! How they will be judged! We may not always understand God’s judgments but we would do well to always keep in mind that He is a God of love; He is a *righteous* God and He is the *righteous* judge (II Tim. iv. 8).

“I will plead with them for My people” (Joel iii. 2) may be a little misleading. The R.S.V. has “I will enter into judgment with them on account of My people and My heritage Israel”. Moffatt, as usual, is more vivid. “I shall assign them their doom for the treatment of Israel, My heritage”. Here the promise of Gen. xii. 3 is to be fulfilled. There Abraham was told that:

“I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.”

Matthew xxv. 31-46 also deals with the judgment of these nations, again showing the future fulfillment of Gen. xii. 3 in verses 40 and 45. How had the nations treated “These My brethren”? One aspect of this treatment is the scattering of the people of Israel. Here again we meet with the problem of one verse saying the nations scattered Israel and another verse with God saying He scattered Israel. The problem is not difficult for God allowed the nations to scatter His people because of their sin and unbelief. He permitted a nation to teach Israel a lesson, to show them that He was their true God but . . . . how did that nation treat the people of Israel? That is the issue! That is what is to be judged. Even today, some country’s treatment of the exiled Jews leaves much to be desired and that country’s leaders would do well to read Gen. xii. 3.

*Joel iii. 2-3.* In verses 2-6, possibly to demonstrate how badly Israel had been treated by the nations, Joel gives historical examples of maltreatment. A more comprehensive list of such treatments is found in Amos i. 1 - ii. 3, a prophecy which had been written many years before Joel.

“for they have scattered My people throughout their own countries, have taken each a portion of My land and shared out My people by lot, bartered a boy for a whore and sold a girl for wine and drunk it down” (Joel iii. 2, 3. N.E.B.).

The reference to ‘parted My land’ (A.V. and J.N.D.) or ‘divided up My land’ (N.I.V.; Moffatt; R.S.V.) is very significant and very applicable to today. The present day partitioning of Palestine may well not meet with God’s approval but . . . .!!!

*Joel iii. 4-8.* Moving on we come to verse 4 where a severe challenge is issued.

“Now what have you got against Me, O Tyre and Sidon and all you regions of Philistia? Are you repaying Me for something I have done? If you are paying My back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your heads what you have done. For you took My silver and My gold and carried off My finest treasures to your temples. You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from your homeland.

See, I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them, and I will return on your own heads what you have done. I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far away, the Lord has spoken” (Joel iii. 4-8, N.I.V.).

The region termed Palestine in the A.V. of Joel iii. 4 must not be confused with modern day Palestine. Most translations, like the N.I.V. above, have Philistia and this was a coastal strip of land west of Jerusalem. Tyre and Sidon were two sea ports some 100 miles or so north of that region. The following map may be of some use. It shows some of the principal places and divisions of the land which took place during the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah.

## **- - - I l l u s t r a t i o n - - - (BE-LI.65).**

Why Tyre and Sidon and the regions of Philistia should be singled out for mentioning is not obvious. Earlier Amos (i. 10-12) had accused Tyre of not remembering the brotherly covenant, which may be a reference to II Sam. v. 11 and II Kings v. 1 and ix. 11-14. Ezekiel xxviii. 24 had described Sidon as a pricking brier and a grievous thorn but doesn't give clear indication of what he had in mind. It could be that Tyre and Sidon together with parts of Philistia, were the haven of the wealthy slave traders. Amos i. 6-9 mentions Gaza, a port of Philistia, and links it with the slave trade. This would be in agreement with Joel iii. 6.

Some think that the reference to slavery shows that Joel was written after the return to the land from the Babylonian exile because Nehemiah mentions it in v. 5 and xiii. 16. This practice, however, had taken place on many occasions and, as we have read, Amos mentions it in i. 6-9 and that prophecy was written before the exile. The reference to temple robbery would also be more appropriate if placed before the exile. On returning to their homeland the people wanted to build a temple but Ezra and Nehemiah clearly indicate that it was a humble place with none of the splendour of Solomon's temple.

Joel iii. 4 finishes by stating the obvious. If they, or anyone else come to that, attempts to “get their own back” on God then He will swiftly and speedily return on their heads what they have done. In this age of grace in which we live, God is silent and

stands back and takes man's abuse but then . . . . in that day . . . . in that great and terrible Day of the Lord things will be different. This dispensation will have closed.

After the selling and scattering of the children of Judah and Jerusalem (verse 6) we get the gathering of them (verse 7). In an age of law, where the rule is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, He would exercise that justice. Thus those who have mistreated the people in this way will be treated likewise and will be sent to a people far off. It is not certain who the Sabeans were but it is certain that the children of Judah will then be free from those who have persecuted and mistreated them.

Before moving on some may care to know that these verses, Joel iii. 4-8 are the only ones which do not appear in poetic form in any of the translations which have been consulted.

*Joel iii. 9-13.* In Joel iii. 9-12a we have the other side of verse 2. There God said "I will also gather all nations" but from this section it is clear that they gather without Him forcing them. Here in Joel iii. 9-12a, Joel ii. 2-10 is described again and God is calling on the might of the Gentile armies and challenging them to come up and do battle, and attack His people in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

<b>Moffatt</b>	<b>N.I.V.</b>
[9] "Proclaim this to the nations: Let it be war! Rouse up your warriors, Muster your fighting men, march! [10] Hammer your ploughshares into swords, your pruning-hooks into lances. Let your weaklings think them warriors Let your coward think them heroes! [11] Let the nations rouse themselves and march to Judgment valley."	[9] "Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors, Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. [10] Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakly say, I am strong!  [11] Come quickly all you nations from every side, and assemble there."

What a challenge! Come! Come with everything and everybody! Come and attack! Come and attack Jerusalem! But then . . . . then . . . . when the people of Israel are on the very point of extinction they will learn that "If God be for us who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31).

"Bring down your warriors, O Lord!  
 Let the nations be roused;  
 Let them advance into the valley of Jehoshaphat,  
 for there will I sit  
 to judge all the nations on every side" (Joel iii. 11, 12, N.I.V.).

"I will sit in judgment there, on all the nations round" is how Moffatt puts those last words. What will be God's judgment on those nations? How will it be executed? That which was threatened in Joel iii. 3-8 is now carried out and the figurative language of verse 13 does not hide the severity of the judgment.

<p>[13] In with the sickle-- the harvest is ripe! Come, tread the winepress, tread it, it is full: the troughs are overflowing with their wickedness” (Moffatt).</p>	<p>[13] Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow-- so great is their wickedness” (N.I.V.)</p>
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In Gen. xv. 12-21 Abraham and his seed were promised a land which they could not immediately occupy because the iniquity of those who then possessed it, the Amorites, was “not yet full” (Gen. xv. 16). The Amorites had not become bad enough for God to step in and judge them, but when that Amorite cup was full . . . . then judgment! The same is true of this future time Joel is describing. When the cup of iniquity of the nations is full and overflowing then God will step in and act. How large that cup is one cannot say but it becomes full during that great and terrible Day of the Lord and Joel iii. 13 implies that it is full and overflowing.

The parable of the tares in the field (Matt. xiii. 24-30) and its interpretation (36-43) may be of some help here. The “reapers are the angels” (39) and the time is “the end of the age” (verse 40, “age” is better than “world”). Thus the ‘mighty ones’ of Joel iii. 11 are the angels who are told to put in the sickle (Joel iii. 13).

*Joel iii. 14-16.* In Joel iii. 14-16 there is repetition of much which has gone before. There are multitudes in the valley of decision (judgment) encamped around Jerusalem. Tension is high. The climax of their battle is nigh! The sun, moon and stars are darkened and . . . . .

“The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and the earth shall shake” (Joel iii. 16, A.V.).

“And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west and there shall be a very great valley; and half the mountain shall remove toward the north and half toward the south” (Zech. xiv. 4, A.V.).

No wonder Joel says “the earth shall shake”. No wonder Joel says:

“The Lord will be the hope (refuge) of His people, and the strength (stronghold) of the children of Israel” (Joel iii. 16, A.V.).

Just try and picture the situation! What will those armies think? There they are . . . . . encamped about Jerusalem . . . . . waiting for the final order to attack and annihilate the inhabitants . . . . . that order comes . . . . . they attack . . . . . they advance . . . . . they gain entry into the city . . . . . into the Temple . . . . . victory is-- then:

“The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall quake” (Joel iii. 16, A.V.).

Can we paint an adequate picture of this incredible scene in our poor writings? Alas, no!

Before we consider Joel iii. 17-21 we must devote the next two facing pages to a detailed structure to Joel's Prophecy.

## - - - I l l u s t r a t i o n - - - (BE-LI.70,71).

*Joel. iii. 17-21.* Having given this longest section on the removal of evil, Joel now returns to the good which is to be bestowed. Verses 17 and 18 describe a peaceful, agricultural paradise and here again is the start of the Millennium. The Lord is dwelling in Zion, Jerusalem, which shall be holy and "never shall aliens invade her again" (Moffatt). This is better than "no strangers pass through her again".

Waters and fountains in Joel iii. 18 are also mentioned in Zech xiv. 8 but the passage which deals with much in detail is Ezek xlvii. 1-12. Verse 19 again mentions the removal of evil with reference to Egypt and Edom, two past enemies of the people of Israel, and to the wrongs which they committed, but Joel's conclusion is . . . . .

"Judah will be inhabited for ever  
and Jerusalem through all generations  
Their blood guilt, which I have not pardoned,  
I will pardon" (Joel iii. 21, N.I.V.).

"They shall all know, from the least of them unto  
the greatest of them, saith the Lord.  
For I will forgive their iniquity,  
and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. xxxi. 34, A.V.).

Thus the millennial kingdom is set up. Thus:

"The Lord dwelleth in Zion" (Joel iii. 21).

JEHOVAIT SHAMMAH

## **No.7. Joel and the Day of Pentecost.** **pp. 101 - 112**

We now turn to one of the most well known passages of the N.T., Acts ii. 1-21. It was on the day of the Jewish feast of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit descended upon those present and they spoke “with other tongues . . . . the wonderful works of God” (verses 4 and 11). There can be little doubt that this is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied passages of Scripture and ignorance of the original setting from which Peter quoted has been a contributory factor. Thus it was necessary for us to have first studied the whole of the book of Joel before turning our attention to Peter’s speech on that great day. However, before a detailed consideration it may be an idea to look at one or two points about prophecy in general.

In Isa. lxi. 1-3 we read:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”

If we put ourselves back into the O.T. times and blot out our knowledge of the N.T. then trying to see *how* this prophecy would be fulfilled would cause us problems. We might rejoice that “the *day* of vengeance” is shorter than the “acceptable *year*” but . . . . well how can both come true at the same time? How can all that which is contained in these verses come about at one time?

Fortunately we have a completed Bible and our problem is solved in Luke iv. 16-21. There the Lord Jesus Christ opened the book of the prophet Isaiah and started to read at the beginning of chapter lxi. He read as far as . . . . :

“. . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book . . . . and He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke iv. 19-21, A.V.).

The first verse and a half of Isa. lxi. were fulfilled at our Lord’s first coming. The second half of verse 2, “the day of vengeance” will be fulfilled at His Second Coming and much of what we have studied in Joel relates to that time. Isa. lxi. 1-3 is an example of a “two-half” prophecy. In such prophecies one half is fulfilled at one time and the other half is fulfilled at a different time. Is Joel ii. 28-32 a “two-half” prophecy? Some would maintain that Joel ii. 28, 29 was fulfilled during the Acts period and that verses 30-32 were not. They await fulfillment in the days of the Second Coming of Christ. Is this view correct?

\* \* \* \* \*

A different type of prophecy is found in Isa. vii. 10-16 where King Ahaz is told:

“. . . . the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.”

The word translated virgin in Isa. vii. 14 is *almah* and can be translated maiden or young woman. *Behtulah* is the Hebrew for virgin. In Isa. vii. 14, however, we have *ha-almah*, the maiden, that is some specific maiden known to Ahaz, and *The Companion Bible* suggests:

“Behold the maiden is pregnant and beareth a son . . . .”

Ahaz is told that before this son shall know right and wrong the kingdom of Judah shall be relieved of the two kings who oppress it (Isa. vii. 1, 16).

This event, however does not exhaust this prophecy which is taken up by the Holy Spirit in Matt. i. 23 and used of the miraculous birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. There the Greek word *parthenos* does mean virgin and the Holy Spirit can take Isa. vii. and use it in this way because every *bethulah* is an *almah*. Thus we have here an example of a ‘double’ fulfillment of a prophecy. In such the first may be a partial fulfillment and the second total or the first may be total and the second a repeat. Is Joel ii. 28, 29 an example of a prophecy which is to have a “double” fulfillment? Some would maintain that the Acts period was only a partial fulfillment and that there is to be a future total fulfillment. Is that view correct?

\* \* \* \* \*

A very common view is that held by many Pentecostals and Charismatics who, like Mrs. McPherson, claim that these movements are the fulfillments of the latter rain of Joel’s prophecy. The assertion here is that Joel’s prophecy of ii. 28, 29 has a double fulfillment because of the mention of former rain and latter rain in Joel ii. 23. The former rain was the fulfillment during the Acts period and the latter rain is the phenomena now seen in many parts of the world. Is this a valid interpretation of Joel.ii.23, 28 and 29?

From our study of Joel we have seen that the verse which deals with the former and latter rain comes in the section dealing with temporal blessings bestowed upon the land, the animals and the people, Joel ii. 21-27. The setting is very agricultural and, as we have seen, the former rain and the latter rain are just that! It is exactly what it says it is! It is the literal rain. The former rain falls in October and November and the latter rain is to fall in March and April. Is it right to take part of a verse out of its setting and context and “spiritualize” it as Mrs. McPherson and company have done? Is this *rightly* dividing the Word of Truth? Is this correctly handling the Word of God? We think not but . . . .

Let us assume that we are wrong on this point and that such an ‘interpretation’ of the former rain and latter rain is valid. In that case we ask where is this latter rain to fall? The answer must be in the same place as the former rain—Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. The whole idea of former and latter rain is applicable to that land only and we cannot escape that fact. If there were to be such a latter rain fulfillment of Joel.ii.28,29 it would take place in Palestine and we have to face this fact. Some will wiggle. Some will wrest the Scriptures (II Pet. iii. 16) and make this latter rain apply to anywhere in the world but this just cannot be. However . . . . .

Let us assume that we can allow this ‘interpretation’ of latter and allow it to fall anywhere and everywhere in the world. In that case we would ask when is this latter rain to fall? This question shows that views such as Mrs. McPherson’s are at great odds with the Bible. From our study of Joel ii. 21-27 we have seen that all the events described there, including the restoration of the *literal* latter rain, take place after the northerner of Joel ii. 20 has been destroyed and that takes place on the return of Christ.

Thus the latter rain is literal rain which is to fall on the land of Palestine after the return of Christ. It is *not* a second outpouring of the Spirit anywhere in the world sometime before His Second Coming.

Returning to our deliberations as to whether or not Joel’s prophecy is a “two-half” prophecy or one subject to a “double” fulfillment; to help us in our search we should consult other parts of the Scripture. Joel ii. 30-31 deals with “wonders in heaven and in the earth, blood, fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood”. Thus if we consider other parts of the Scripture which contain references to these events and search the context we will be able to see if there is any mention of the outpouring of the Spirit or of miracles similar to those of the Acts period. Initially we shall look to see if such an outpouring or miracles take place before the Lord’s return. Mrs. McPherson’s views may be justified from other Scriptures.

Matthew xxiv. 29, 30 has wonders and signs in heaven and verse 7 has signs on the earth (famine, pestilence, earthquakes). However we search the whole chapter in vain looking for any outpouring of the Spirit and there is no mention of any miracles from God. We do note the many references to ‘deceit’ or ‘deceive’ (verses 4, 5, 11 and 24). There are also references to *false* prophets and *false* Christs (verses 11 and 24) and these shall deceive by using “great signs and wonders”. Thus the only miracles mentioned here prior to our Lord’s return are miracles of deceit!

Mark xiii. is very similar. Again there are signs in heaven and earth, false Christs and false prophets showing “signs and wonders to *seduce*” (Mark xiii. 22).

Luke xxi. is different. There are signs in heaven (verses 25 and 27) and on the earth (verse 11) but there is no mention of miracles from God.

What about Revelation? This is the book that has many references to the phenomena we are considering. Rev. vi. 12, 13 has signs in heaven and earth but we again search

the context in vain for any outpouring of the Spirit or for any Acts period miracle or for any evidential miracle from God. The same is true of Rev. viii. 5, 7-11, also xi. 13, 19, also xvi. 17-21. In fact in all passages which describe signs in heaven and earth there is no mention of the outpouring of the Spirit nor of miracles from God in the days prior to the return of Christ. It is only Joel ii. 28-32 which links them but the outpouring of the Spirit is “afterwards”, that is after the return of Christ, and the signs in heaven are “before the great and terrible Day of the Lord” that is before the return of Christ.

If we search Revelation what do we find?

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth in the sight of men, and he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had the power to do . . . .” (Rev. xiii. 11-14, A.V.).

Here we see “deadly wound was healed”—the ability to raise the dead! “Fire from heaven”—the miracle God used with Elijah to prove His existence. Here we see Satan’s beast, the false prophet, copying God. Here Satan is pretending to be God and is thus causing deceit. Unless those miracles done in Satan’s power are replicas of God’s miracles recorded in Scripture they will not have the desired effect. They will not *deceive* anyone. They must be copies for II Thess. ii. 9, 10 describes them as “signs and *lying* wonders, and in all deceivableness”. These are strong words and people who dabble in miracles in days prior to Christ’s return, and that includes these days in which we live, be warned . . . . Matt. vii. 21-23 is salutary!

Some may say that the passages from Revelation, Thessalonians and Matthew refer to a time after the church which is the Body of Christ has been taken to Glory. This is true but Paul’s epistles to Timothy relate directly to the Body of Christ and this present dispensation. In I Tim. iv. 1-3 we read of ‘seducing spirits’ and ‘doctrines of devils’ and II Tim. iii. 8 states that just “as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these resist the truth”.

Jannes and Jambres were the magicians of Pharaoh in Exod. vii. 11. How did they withstand Moses? They copied the miracles that Moses performed. Thus we cannot escape the fact that those who dabble with miracles in this age of full grace open themselves to the deceit of Satan. Some may ask—are there no evidential miracles of God promised for those days prior to Christ’s return? There are two!

Revelation xi. 3-12 records that God is to miraculously support the two witnesses He shall have in Jerusalem for the 3½ years prior to His return. Rev. xii. 6, 14, and 16 records that God is to feed and protect the people of Israel in the wilderness during the same period. There are not other miracles recorded which relate to these times and note that these two miracles are centred at Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. Thus we come to the conclusion that there is no second fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy—neither

in this dispensation nor in the days just prior to the Lord's return. Such a position cannot be justified from Scripture.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some may now be thinking that Joel's prophecy was thus totally fulfilled in the Acts period but that cannot be. Joel ii. 28 has "it shall come to pass *afterward* that I will pour out My Spirit upon *all* flesh". Certainly this was not the case in the Acts. Only some enjoyed the benefits of the Spirit and the "afterwards" shows us that it is to be fulfilled after many events—the most significant of which is the return of Christ. If this is the case we may well ask why did Peter quote from Joel on the day of Pentecost? How is Pentecost related to Joel's prophecy? What really happened on that day? First let us look at the events leading up to Acts ii.

The Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, had been born. His death was for the world but His life was kept, in the main, to the people of Israel. He was their Prophet, Priest and King but . . . . they crucified Him. Scripture put the responsibility upon the shoulders of the Jewish people (Matt. xxvii. 24, 25; Acts v. 21; x. 39). Was that the end of that nation? Was that the end of their hopes for their kingdom? No! The ever gracious One even as He was suffering prayed "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). That was not a prayer for the Romans for they were not held responsible. That was a prayer for His earthly people and that prayer was obviously answered. They were not cut off at the cross. After His resurrection He taught them all things from the Scripture (Luke xxiv. 44-48) and their first question was . . . .

"Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6).

The Acts period, the book of the Acts and the epistle written during it are all about the possible restoration of the kingdom to Israel and to deny this and to imply that the disciples "got it wrong" or "misunderstood" is a gross insult to their Teacher. Would Israel be restore? They wanted to know but He declined to answer. From Acts iii. 19-21 we see that the return of Christ and thus the restoration, was dependent upon the repentance of the people of Israel. This call to repent was a feature of Joel (ii. 12, 13) and his prophecy was about the setting up of this kingdom. No doubt in His post resurrection teaching the Lord had given Peter and company perfect understanding of this prophecy. Would this nation now respond? Would they repent? Would Christ return? God in all His graciousness, having forgiven them the iniquity of crucifying Christ, leaned over backwards in an attempt to put things clearly before this people. Heb. vi. 5 describes them as those:

"who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age"  
(N.I.V.).

To those Acts period Jews, God had given a taste of "the powers of the coming age". What is the "coming age" to which Hebrews refers? It can only be the Millennium and the powers must refer to the outpouring of the Spirit and the ensuing miracles. Thus God was allowing the Jews of the Acts period a foretaste of the great blessings of the Millennium. He was imploring them, so to speak, to repent and accept Christ as their

Messiah. Isaiah had shown that this Millennial kingdom age would be a time of great blessing “He who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child” (Isa. lxxv. 20 N.I.V.). Thus raising of the dead during the Acts period would have had special significance for the Jew. Those raised, if the nation repented, would see the return of Christ and live a much lengthened life in the Millennium but note the last part of Isa. lxxv. 20:

“But the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.”

Sadly Ananias and Sapphira had a foretaste of that in Acts v. 1-11 so without going into greater detail we can appreciate that for the Jew the Acts period was a foretaste of the miracles or powers of the age which was to come, the Millennium. Thus the Acts period is not a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy but a foretaste of it.

In the N.T., when an O.T. prophecy is fulfilled, it is common to read words such as “as it is written . . . .” or “Then it was fulfilled . . . .” but no such words are found in Acts ii. Thus Peter is *not* claiming that the events on the day of Pentecost are a fulfillment of Joel ii. 28, 29. This is not surprising. The main feature of the day of Pentecost was the gift of tongues but this is not mentioned in Joel ii. 28, 29.

The gift of tongues, according to I Cor. xiv. 21-22, was “a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not”. Verse 21 is a reference back to Isa. xxviii. 11, 12; xxxiii. 19 and Deut. xxviii. 49. Thus to the Jews, the use of the tongues was a sign to them of their unbelief. In O.T. times it was unbelief in Jehovah, God, but in the Acts period it was unbelief in Jehovah manifest in the flesh, Emmanuel. Thus as well as leaning over backwards with a foretaste of the foretold Millennial miracles, God adds the miracle of tongues to indicate to the Jew their unbelief. Did this produce the desire effect?

Sadly the Jews did not respond and the Gentiles were allowed, in the Acts period, to share in the miracles and blessings and hope of Israel. According to Rom. xi. they were like a wild olive grafted into a cultivated one (verse 17), in an attempt to provoke Israel to emulation (which is better translation than jealousy, verse 11). Would the olive tree of Israel now bear fruit? They had had a foretaste of the Millennial miracles; they had the special gift of tongues to point out their unbelief; they had the stimulus of the wild olive; would Israel now repent of the unbelief and rejection of Christ?

Sadly—no! In Acts xxviii. 17 Paul debated with the Jewish leaders but they failed to reach agreement. Verses 26 and 27 indicate that the nation of Israel was then laid on one side by God and He, in verse 28, then turned to the Gentile who was now to be blessed independently of the Jew. God then revealed His great plan for the heavenly places so magnificently described in the first three chapters of Ephesians.

It appears that the evidential miracles, so closely linked with the people of Israel and the earthly kingdom, ceased at this point. In the books written after the end of Acts.xxviii. there is no mention of them (see Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Titus, I & II Timothy). Certainly Phil. ii. 26, 27; I Tim. v. 23; II Tim. iv. 20 show that the days of instant, complete, universal healing were over. The evidential

miracles from God ceased at the end of the Acts period and will not return until after the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those which do appear at the close of this dispensation and in those years just prior to His Second Coming will be replicas of God's miracles but the power behind them is Satan's.

\* \* \* \* \*

Drawing all the ends together we can make the following deductions:

(1) Joel ii. 28-32 is *not* a "two-half" prophecy. Verses 28 and 29 were not totally and completely fulfilled in the Acts period.

During that time the Spirit was *not* poured out upon all Israel but only upon some.

Also the context of the whole of Joel ii. 21-29 is after the northerner had been destroyed (verse 20) which takes place at the return of Christ. Thus total fulfillment could *not* have taken place in the Acts period. However if the people of Israel had repented, then the Lord would have returned (Acts iii. 19-21) the kingdom would have been set up and the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh would have taken place. Pentecost could be described as a bud which could have blossomed into a full bloom—but sadly it didn't.

(2) To say whether or not Joel ii. 28, 29 is a prophecy that is subject to a "double" fulfillment may involve one in the splitting of hairs.

Nowhere does Peter claim the Acts period or the day of Pentecost to be such. Nowhere is it said "then it was fulfilled . . . ." or "as it is written . . . .". Instead Peter says "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel". However Heb. vi. 5 indicates that the Jews of the Acts period were given a foretaste of the Millennial miracles spoken of by Joel, and the gift of tongues, not mentioned by Joel, was added for good measure. Thus Pentecost and the Acts period is complicated but we would say that a foretaste, however small, is a partial fulfillment and that Joel ii. 28, 29 waits for its total fulfillment not in the days in which we live but in the days following the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We could say much more but conclude by reproducing Appendix 183 of *The Companion Bible*.

1. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." There is nothing in the words to tell us what is "this" and what is "that". The word "this" is emphatic and the word "But", with which Peter's argument begins, sets what follows in contrast. This shows that the quotation was used to rebut the charge of drunkenness (verse 13).

So far from these signs and wonders being a proof that "these men" were drunken, "this", said the apostle is "that" (same kind of thing) which Joel prophesied would take place "in the last days". Peter does not say these were the last days, but this (that follows)

is what Joel says of those days. He does not say "then was fulfilled", nor "as it is written", but merely calls attention to what the prophet said of similar scenes yet future.

Therefore to understand what Peter really meant by "this is that", we must turn to the prophecy of Joel. And in order to understand that prophecy, we must see exactly what it is about.

Is it about the Christian Dispensation? or  
The Dispensation of judgment which is to follow it? or  
Is it about the Jew and the Gentile? or  
Is it about the church of God?

2. Structure on page 1224 (in *The Companion Bible*) gives the scope of *Joel* as a whole, while that on page 1227 (in *The Companion Bible*) gives that of the last member *B* (page 1224 in *The Companion Bible*) in which occur the "signs" to which Peter points in connection with "this is that". From this it will be seen that the prophecy of Joel links up with the last clause of the "song of Moses" in Deut. xxxii. 43 (see Rev. xv. 3), which ends:

"And (He) will be merciful unto His Land and to His People."

So Joel ii. 18 begins:

"Then will Jehovah be jealous for His Land, and pity His People."

"THIS", therefore is "THAT". It is the subject-matter and remote context of Acts.ii.16. It concerns Jehovah's Land and Jehovah's People, and has consequently nothing to do with the church of this Dispensation. Peter calls "the house of Israel" (verse 36) to the very repentance spoken of in the call to repentance of Joel (i. 14 - ii. 17; see A, Structure, page 1224 in *The Companion Bible*).

3. But the key to the correct understanding of Peter's quotation lies in the word "afterward" of Joel ii. 28. The question is, after what? This we can learn only from Joel himself. Peter does not explain it, nor can we understand it from Peter's words alone.

The Structure (page 1227 in *The Companion Bible*) shows us that the whole subject of ii. 18 - iii. 21 is,—evil removed from the Land and the People, and blessing bestowed on both; and these are set forth alternately. In ii. 28, 29 we have spiritual blessings connected with the temporal of the previous verses, introduced thus:

"And it shall come to pass AFTERWARD, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh,"  
etc.

After what? The answer is AFTER the temporal blessings of verses 23-27. It is important to note that the temporal precede the spiritual blessings. The holy spirit was not poured out on all flesh at Pentecost: only on some of those present. None of the

great signs in the heavens and on the earth had been shown. No deliverance took place in Jerusalem: both Land and People were still under the Roman yoke.

4. Thus, from a careful study of the two passages, it will be seen that there is a wide divergence between the statements of apostle and prophet on the one hand, and the general belief of Christendom, which the majority hold so tenaciously, not to say acrimoniously, that "the church" was formed at Pentecost (see Appendix 181 and Appendix 186), on the other.

- (a) There can be no mistake about the meaning of Joel's word "afterward". It is not the simple Hebrew word '*ahar*' = after (compare Gen. v. 4, etc.), but the compound '*aharey-ken*' = after that (as Gen. vi. 4, etc.).
- (b) It is therefore certain that the word "this" in Acts ii. 16 refers to what follows, and not to what precedes; to the future events predicted by Joel, and not to those then taking place in Jerusalem.
- (c) As Joel speaks of no gift of tongues, "this" cannot refer to these Pentecostal tongues, the outstanding cause of all the wonder and excitement.
- (d) None of the things detailed in verses 17, 19 came to pass. "This" therefore could not be the fulfillment of Joel's prediction, as the "pouring out" was only on the apostles and those associated with them.

5. To sum up: As we have seen, there is in Acts ii. 16 no fulfillment of Joel's prophecy either expressed or implied, and Peter's argument narrows down to this, *videlicet* (viz.), that a charge of drunkenness can no more be sustained against "these" than it can be against those in the yet future scenes spoken of by Joel, when the wondrous spiritual blessings will be poured out on all flesh AFTER THAT, that is to say, after all the temporal blessings spoken of have been bestowed upon Israel's Land and Israel's People.

## **No.8. The Day of the Lord is at hand. pp. 126 - 131**

One of the most difficult problems in Joel's prophecy is found in chapter i. 15:

"Alas for the day! for the Day of the Lord *is at hand* and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

Well over 2,000 years have passed and the Day of the Lord still has not come! This nearness is again mentioned in Joel ii. 1:

"for the Day of the Lord cometh, for *it is nigh at hand.*"

This problem will not go away. Joel iii. 14:

"for the Day of the Lord *is near* in the valley of decision."

How could Joel write that the Day of the Lord ‘is at hand’, ‘is nigh at hand’, ‘is near’? This is indeed a problem and one which some expositors fail to face. We may not be able to fully understand what is meant here but prayerfully and in all humility we should consider it.

First this is *not* a problem of translation.

	<b>Joel i. 15</b>	<b>Joel ii. 1</b>	<b>Joel iii. 14</b>
<b>A.V.</b>	is at hand	is nigh at hand	is near
<b>R.V.</b>	is at hand	is nigh at hand	is near
<b>R.S.V.</b>	is near	is near	is near
<b>J.N.D.</b>	is at hand	is at hand	is at hand
<b>Moffatt</b>	is near	near it is	is near
<b>N.E.B.</b>	is near	is upon us	is near
<b>N.I.V.</b>	is near	is close at hand	is near

“Is close at hand”! “Is upon us”! We search the book of Joel in vain for an answer but I Cor. ii. 13 exhorts us to compare “spiritual with spiritual” and if we can find the same or similar expression in Scripture and see how that is used we can get a clue to help solve the problem in Joel.

Matthew iii. opens with John the Baptist preaching . . . . .:

“Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven *is at hand*” (Matt. iii. 2).

He is not alone in this call. In Matt. iv. 17 the Lord Jesus Christ says:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven *is at hand*.”

Mark i. 14, 15 has similar words and if we understand that the kingdom referred to and the repentance required are the same as those referred to and required by the O.T. prophets then we can appreciate that we are again dealing with the repentance of Israel and the restoration of their kingdom by their Messiah from heaven. But although this kingdom was *at hand*, it wasn’t set up! Instead of solving the problem of Joel we seem to have added to it. Let’s add more!

In Matt. xvi. 28 the Lord says:

“Verily I say unto thee, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.”

This is repeated in Mark ix. 1 and Luke ix. 27. Some claim that this was fulfilled at the transfiguration which took place soon after (Matt. xvii. 1-9), but that does not seem to be correct especially as Mark ix. 1 has:

“shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come *with power*.”

Matthew xxiv. 34 and Luke xxi. 32 have:

“Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.”

But that generation did pass away! There are explanations which state that these verses mean that all the events described in the context will take place within the lifetime of some future generation but that is not totally satisfying.

Matthew x. 23 provides a worse problem:

“Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.”

What? The Second Coming of Christ with power and great glory before they had gone over the cities of Israel? Well . . . . it never happened! All these and more, are problem passages and the solution to the difficulty is found in the notes of *The Companion Bible*. We quote some of them:

Matt. xvi. 28	till = the particle <i>an</i> and the subjunctive mood gives this a hypothetical force.
Mark ix. 1	till = Greek <i>eos an</i> . The particle <i>an</i> makes this clause conditional: the condition being the repentance of the nation of Israel at the call of Peter. Acts iii. 19-26. cp. xxviii. 25, 26.
Matt. xxiv. 34	till = here with the Greek <i>an</i> and the subjunctive mood, marking the uncertainty which was conditional on the repentance of the nation.
Luke xxi. 32	till all be fulfilled = till (Greek <i>eos an</i> ) all may possibly come to pass (not the same word as fulfilled in verse 24). Had the nation repented at Peter's call in Acts ii. 38; iii. 19-26 “ <i>all</i> that the prophets had spoken” would have come to pass.
Matt. x. 23	till = see the four x. 23; xvi. 28; xxiii. 39; xxiv. 34.

This makes interesting and enlightening reading and there is further support for the above. On pages 143 and 144 of volume XX of *The Berean Expositor* Mr. C. H. Welch writes on these verses:

“There is in each of these verses an untranslatable (untranslated) particle *an*, the effect of which is to make the sentence contingent upon something expressed or implied. We can gather from other scriptures, e.g., Acts iii. 19-21, that the Second Coming of the Lord would not take place while Israel remained unrepentant.

.....

Matthew xvi. 27, 28 refers to the same coming and kingdom. That coming would take place either within the lifetime of some who heard the words, or, failing that, would possibly be deferred. This is implied by the particle “*an*”, “*if*”. Israel did not repent; though granted nearly forty years in which to fulfil the implication of the “*if*”. They failed to do so, and when the longsuffering of God reached this limit, they were set aside, and the possibility of the Lord's return during the lifetime of any of His early disciples ceased to be practical truth.”

Thus we have solved one great problem and so doing have solved another. There are some who think that the disciples were wrong to expect the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in their lifetime. These think that the apostle misunderstood but the Lord Himself taught them! Those who hold such a view must be wrong and they are because they fail to believe that when Peter said:

“Repent . . . . and He shall send Jesus Christ”,

he meant:

“Repent . . . . and He shall send Jesus Christ.”

This is recorded in Acts iii. 19-21 and Peter, whilst delivering that speech, was full of the Holy Spirit. He, Peter, could not have been wrong. This whole section of Acts.iii.19-26 is the foundation of the Acts period and to fail to grasp it will cause many problems in other passages of Scripture. For example:

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Rom. xiii. 12).

“The time is short” (I Cor. vii. 29).

“for yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. x. 37).

“the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James v. 8).

“the end of all things is at hand” (I Pet. iv. 7).

“It is the last time” (I John ii. 18).

And there are others. These all point to the fact that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ was possible then and there. All that was required was for Israel to repent but that was not forthcoming. The nations was laid aside by God at Acts xxviii. 25-28 and the epistles written after that time (Eph., Phil., Col., Philemon, Titus, I & II Tim.) makes no mention of His *parousia*, His coming. The hope of the people of Israel was, and still is, His *parousia*—His coming to the Mount of Olives—but the church, which is the Body of Christ, looks for His manifestation, His appearing in glory (Col. iii. 4; Titus ii. 13).

Thus the Acts period epistles state that “The day is at hand”, “It is the last time”, “the end of all is at hand”.

This may be why Peter changed:

“And it shall come to pass *afterward* that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh . . .”  
(Joel ii. 28),

to:

“And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, saith God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh . . . .” (Acts ii. 17).

This indicates another difference between Joel’s prophecy and Peter’s use of it on the day of Pentecost and shows again that he did not view the events of that time as the fulfillment of Joel ii. 28,29. For Peter, and for those alive during the Acts period, these could so easily have been the last days—if only that nation had accepted Christ, they

would have been. The Acts period epistles say “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” and what draws near can withdraw.

This is also the case with the pronouncement of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ in Matt. iii. 1 and iv. 17 where the words “is at hand” are translated by the Englishman’s Greek New Testament “has drawn near”. Again what draws near can withdraw and this happened. They rejected Christ, they did not repent and the kingdom did not come in (Matt. xxi. 42-44).

Returning to Joel, we see there a call to repent and turn to the Lord (Joel ii. 12, 13). Also in Joel we are told that the Day of the Lord was at hand, it had drawn near. It seems that always these two have been related. Did the people respond to Joel’s message? Did they repent and turn to the Lord? If Joel was written during the last days of the kings of Judah then we know that they did not. They continued in their wicked ways and remained in their apostasy. The nation was exiled to Babylon and the Day of the Lord, which had drawn near, . . . . withdrew. What would have happened if that people had repented . . . . well, using the expression correctly and reverently, only God knows!