

Revivals And Church History :: Christian Perfection

Christian Perfection - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/2 3:23

Greg writes I personally think this is a great topic and very worthy of discussion, and I believe it would be very edifying to go through some facets of this great truth of Sanctification.

Ron, I would love for you to clearly lay out a brief outline of this doctrine from your standpoint, I have an admiration for 'holiness' preachers as you have declared and at my age and walk in God I am still allowing God to mold me and led me into all truth. I am very excited about this and think its great to know more. I would love for us to continue this in a more open-minded viewpoint without making personal accusations to each others credibility for believing something at this point.

For you my brother? Anything. I have highlighted your post above for my personal discipline. It will have some very definite advantages. It will enable me to talk about my standpoint rather than having to align myself with any of my heroes in this matter. This really will be 'my standpoint'. Readers should understand that the doctrines found here will not be Wesleyan, Reformed, Keswick, Instant, Progressive doctrine; they will be mine. I bear full responsibility for them and the likes of Fox, Wesley, Clark, William and Catherine Booth, Brengle, Finney, Chambers, Cook, Campbell Morgan, AB Simpson, Leonard Ravenhill, Duncan Campbell should not be blamed for any statements found here. I am deeply indebted to these men and quick to rush to their defence, but I do not fit into any of these pigeon-holes. Some may see my comments and immediately decide which pigeon-hole I belong in; such judgments will inevitably be wrong. I don't even agree with myself all the time. ;-)

That brings me to another comment or a couple of quotations at least.

I hold myself sacredly bound, not to defend these positions at all events, but on the contrary, to subject every one of them to the most thorough discussion, and to hold and treat them as I would the opinions of any one else; that is, if upon further discussion and investigation I see no cause to change, I hold them fast; but if I can see a flaw in any one of them, I shall amend or wholly reject it, as further light shall demand.

True Christian consistency implies progress in knowledge and holiness, and such changes in theory and in practice as are demanded by increasing light.

Charles Grandison Finney
in the preface to his Systematic Theology (1851)

and an earlier quote from William Tyndale, If I shall perceive either by myself or by the information of another, that ought to be escaped me, or might be more plainly translated, I will shortly after, cause it to be mended.

The 'brief outline' spec is going to be more difficult. My perception of the great truth of Sanctification begins in Genesis and is still going strong when the Revelation closes. It undergirds and integrates the whole of my salvation theology; it is not a bolt-on interest. If you are happy with this, I will make a start. As a brief introduction I can do no better than hyperlink you to the Campbell Morgan devotional for 2nd April.

Re: Christian Perfection - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/4/2 10:54

I am drooling already!

Quote:

-----I don't even agree with myself all the time

Ron, that is my whole philosophy in a nut shell, only I would change it slightly, replacing the 'all' with 'most of'.

Recall most of this from an earlier post, don't remember if I had responded or was thinking of responding...so if this is red

undant, oh well, it won't be the first time, nor likely the last...

"Stone Ears" :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/2 13:59

Hi Mike

Please pause on the drooling; I am away from my desk on a short holiday for a week.

I must admit to a bit of drooling myself. This is a juicy topic and I hope we can do it some kind of justice.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/4/2 14:11

I'll get a bib :-)

Thanks Ron...

Enjoy your holiday!

Re: Framework - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/14 14:30

Some time ago I began a book on this topic. This was the framework. You will see it was going to be comprehensive in its scope.

Preface

I The Diagnosis

1. Disobedience and Disaster
2. Death
3. Sin and Sins
4. The Old Man
5. A Lost Destiny
6. The Old Covenant

II The Remedy

7. Setting the Stage
8. The Hour
9. The Baptism
10. The Crown
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III The Application

12. Obedience and Restoration
13. Life
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15. The New Man
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IV How to...

18. Where am I now?
19. Hearing
20. Believing
21. Receiving
22. But if anyone does sin...

I recall that my brief was to be brief so I will just touch on some of the topics. I am starting like this to emphasise that for me this topic is not additional to the gospel, but IS the gospel. An old hymn speaks thus...

Let the water and the blood
From thy riven side which flowed
Be of sin the double cure,

Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

It is the double-cure of sins and SIN that makes ours 'so great a salvation'. I leave the framework, which balances the cause with the cure, for folks to browse then make a start.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/4/14 16:19

Praise God brother Ron! I pray that all of our lives will be enriched through this study and we will all draw closer to God. And that we will follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man will see the Lord.

Lord make it a reality in your Church that the Bride may make Herself ready!

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/4/15 2:00

Quote:
-----I recall that my brief was to be brief so I will just touch on some of the topics. I am starting like this to emphasise that for me this topic is not additional to the gospel, but IS the gospel. An old hymn speaks thus...

Brother Ron, this seems like a great study and I am very much anticipating it. I have in your furlong just re-read 'Christian Perfectionism' by John Wesley, if you don't mind I will bring out some points from that book as they correspond with the conversation, I have a lot of *questionables* I would love your feedback on. Also it would be neat as you are going through this how the Holy Spirit or Baptism of the Holy Spirit works in all of this.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/15 6:23

Hi Greg

'forum' means a market place. For me the essential concept is of ideas out in the 'open market'. This is not the '6 feet above contradiction' of the pulpit but the open exchange of ideas in a busy bustling market place. It doesn't take much reading between the lines to see the vigour of debate in synagogues, market places and even the gathering of the saints in the NT. Please... question, challenge, remonstrate... whatever. You will not offend me by challenging my ideas. This is a forum, the market place; this is street teaching. If my views can't stand energetic examination let them die.

As I progress I will make a few connections with traditional positions for clarity's sake but in the main will pursue the target pausing just to respond to exchanges. This will not exactly correspond to any other 'position'; Wesley, Spurgeon, Finney, Oswald Chambers, Campbell Morgan will all 'fit where it touches' but my position is not Wesleyan, nor Pentecostal, nor Pentecostal Holiness; it is mine. I arrived here by challenging the writings of these men. So I will be very comfortable with my own being challenged.

What you are about to get is an extremely condensed form of my own systematic theology. Some bits of this have already made their appearance on these pages. :-P It is still 'a work in progress' and not written in stone. You will recall I once said that I suspected that 'genuine revival was just a return to genuine regeneration'. That was not a throw-away line but is basic to my thinking.

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/4/29 13:44

My apologies for not getting back to this thread. I have had a very busy time preaching and teaching and am currently packing for Poland, flying tomorrow for a conference in Warsaw. I have 6 or 7 sessions over the weekend, and have been a little preoccupied.:-D

Back soon, thanks for waiting...

Re: Next Door to Heaven: Preface - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/5/21 5:15

Read not to contradict and confute,
nor to believe and take for granted,
nor to find talk and discourse,
but to weigh and consider.

Some books are to be tasted,
others to be swallowed,
and some few to be chewed and digested.

Francis Bacon 1561-1626

Preface

It is traditional to write the preface last of all, and equally traditional that hardly anyone should ever read it. I am intentionally breaking the first tradition and I hoping that the second tradition will suffer the same fate.

For some time I have been puzzled by a strange omission in modern Evangelicalism. Literature dealing with the issues of heart holiness has been conspicuous mainly by its absence. A generation or so past had a full choice of perspectives from the likes of Thomas Cook, Samuel Chadwick, Paget Wilkes, Barclay Buxton, Samuel Brengle and many others. The perspective has its continuing witness in the writings of Oswald Chambers, but many know him only in daily devotional readings.

The preaching of this truth has not quite died out, but not everyone has access to the preachers. Preaching has a unique place in God's economy, but there is room too for the kind of teaching which can take its time in developing a theme. The hustle of everyday life has resulted in a generation of Christians who have a leaning towards the snappy phrase or "sound bite". The New Testament was not written in this frame of mind, and can only be fully appreciated by those who are prepared to give some time to understanding it.

The intention of this book is to share some truths pertaining to God's plan for the believer, not only in the heaven to come but here on the earth.

In Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress the pilgrim Christian stays for some days at the Castle Beautiful. It is early in his pilgrimage and he rests for the night in a room called Peace, where he slept till break of day, and then awoke and sang -

"Where am I now? Is this the love and care
Of Jesus, for the men that pilgrims are?
Thus to provide that I should be forgiven,
And dwell already the next door to heaven!"

This book is an expression of a heartlonging that men and women who belong to Jesus Christ should know the provision of their Lord not only for a future heaven but for their earthly pilgrimage too. He has made available to us all things that are necessary for life and godliness.

Included in His salvation is the provision that we might know not only forgiveness, but that even on earth we may live...

...next door to heaven.

Ron Bailey, Reading, England 2004

Section I: The Diagnosis - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/5/21 7:03

Chapter 1

Disobedience and Disaster

It is only logical that in trying to discover the origins of things we should turn to the book of the beginnings. The Bible does not attempt to be a chronicle of world history. It is a highly selective, God's eye view, of key events in the destiny of the human race; it is mankind's story. It is the only genuine explanation for the world as we have come to know it. Other histories do touch mankind's history from time to time but the creation of the angels is not mentioned, and the animal creation is only referred to in passing. It is man's story, but where other histories touch ours the point of contact gives fascinating insights.

At a specific point in human history God breathed a spirit of life into the creature he had formed and that creature became a living soul. Man was made with a unique description and destiny; he was made in the image and likeness of God. He was given authority to care for the rest of the creation as its chief servant. His role was to be a servant-king for creation itself; true dominion is the authority to serve. The man, Adam, was placed into the garden of Eden to serve it and guard it. The woman shared this destiny with the man, being in Adam when Adam received his commission.

There's a gentle hint of the nature of man's relationship with God in the words of Christ to the Pharisees regarding divorce. Jesus says that God had decreed that one man and one woman should be united, but a reading of the account in Genesis might suggest that Adam made the statement. Adam was to learn by revelation rather than experiment. His relationship with God was such that God's words could flow spontaneously from him.

This intimacy was devastated by mankind's sin. The sin was disobedience. The biblical revelation is that the woman was deceived by the Tempter, but that the man sinned with his eyes wide open. The story and its consequences are all too familiar. Sin brought immediate separation from fellowship with God and consequently from the presence of God too. It also quickly revealed the characteristic human trait of blaming others for our own faults.

The sin was not merely the taking of forbidden fruit; that was the outward manifestation of an inward folly. Man had imbibed the Satanic lie that he need not remain under God's authority; he could go-it-alone and become a god himself. The noun god is used in the Old Testament to describe not only the one true God, but to designate someone in ultimate authority in a given situation. Consequently it is used of judges and angels in certain contexts.

The nature of the temptation and man's response to it shows clearly that this was a break for freedom, and a usurping of God's rightful place. The letter to the Romans contains this same truth; although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful.

Although the man had been warned of the consequences of such action he made his choice and sealed his fate. The temptation, like most temptations, was at its root a slander against God's character. God was reported as being selfish and possessive. God was portrayed as standing between men and man's true destiny. God's influence must be eradicated. Men had nothing to lose but his chains.

As in all temptations there was a point of contact between the Tempter and tempted. It is probable that Adam did have a sense of destiny; future glories awaited him. There was within him amazing potential and the Tempter tapped into it. Satan is not a creator. He does not have the power to create but he does have the power to corrupt what has already been created. The most beautiful instincts in the human race have been distorted almost beyond recognition by this cosmic vandal.

God had greatness in store for man, but in His time and by His means. This Satanic short-cut was a slur on the character of God, and a buy-now-pay-later bait which Adam swallowed whole. Frustration is a sign of unbelief. It is also an indication that I want to be in control. I will be a god. I will impose my will. I will have what I want now. For the believer it is a sure call to prayer. Activities pursued in frustration never produce lasting satisfaction; they merely bury the seeds of impatience for a future harvest.

If Adam did fear that his opportunity was passing there is a remarkable parable of this in the Bible story of King Saul. At his beginning Saul was an exemplary man; physically and morally he was head and shoulders above his peers. Greatness awaited him. His destiny was to be a powerful servant-king for the people of Israel. At a point early in his reign frustration and fear ruled his conduct. Instead of waiting for God's time he precipitated an action which he reasoned was in e

everyone's best interests; a religious sacrifice to prevent the army's defection.

Samuel the prophet echoes the words of an earlier fateful day; "what have you done?" He had forfeited his destiny; that is what he had done. We shall return to this theme later. For King Saul the disaster would take some time to work through. His initial feelings may have been shame or loss, but the full consequences were not immediately apparent. Saul had pre-empted God's provision in an independent action which was the beginning of the end of his unique role as a servant-king of Israel.

In the moment of Saul's sentence of dismissal comes a promise of another man who will fulfil God's destiny. Saul's intended destiny was not a fantasy, but the genuine intention of God. God, however, is not to be taken by surprise and the future provision was already in hand. This is all a remarkable echo of the Genesis account. Light shines in the darkness. It was in mankind's darkest hour that God declared his settled intention to the vandal; I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

Man's disobedience had an immediate consequence for the creation that had been placed under his authority and care. The creation as we now know it has been described as a beautiful bride who on the day of her intended wedding receives the news that the husband-to-be has committed suicide. It is a stark and sombre image.

This is not the place to examine the controversy between Creationism and Darwinian Evolution hypotheses, but the world as we see it is now is both wonderful and amazingly cruel. For every evidence of a wise and loving creator there seems to be a counter-evidence for nature red in tooth and claw. Most sensitive observers will see in nature cause for celebration of the marvel of life and that which evokes a feeling of deep distress.

The biblical revelation is that the creation itself is in distress; things are not as they were, or as they were intended to be nor, indeed, as they will be at some future time. Events have occurred which have profoundly affected the world around us. The language of Romans is poignant; we read of it being subjected to futility, imprisoned in corruption, it groans as in the pains of childbirth.

Let's stay with the picture of frustration. The English word comes from a word meaning in vain. The effort seems to be pointless. Life is an endless round of might-have-means. This painful conclusion is what the writer of Ecclesiastes discovered for himself. Here was a man equipped with all the resources of his day to find fulfilment in life. At every attempt in every area of life he arrives at the same verdict; all is in vain. It is literally meaning-less.

This is not to say that there is no enjoyment in life, but that it is always hauntingly incomplete. Life is a short, fevered rehearsal for a concert we cannot give. When we appear to have attained some proficiency we are forced to lay down our instruments. There is not time enough to think, to become, to perform what the constitution of our natures indicates we are capable of.

So man sits, like Charles Dickens' Miss Havesham, amidst the dying wreckage of all those might-have-beens. So much for this bold bid for freedom. The short-cut to destiny is found to be a certain route to disaster.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/5/21 7:23

Quote:
-----For some time I have been puzzled by a strange omission in modern Evangelicalism. Literature dealing with the issues of heart holiness has been conspicuous mainly by its absence.

"Heart holiness" ah, yes. I couldn't agree more Ron. It seems that we have been preached practical application to the point that Christianity is just another system.

Always thought it was a heart issue to begin with.

Quote:
-----This book is an expression of a heartlonging that men and women who belong to Jesus Christ should know the provision of their Lord not only for a future heaven but for their earthly pilgrimage too. He has made available to us all things that are necessary for life and godliness.

Looking forward to more on this.

Hope you are well, we miss you around here.

*Edit: You beat me to the punch there, was still typing as you were posting the first chapter. Thanks Ron.

Section I: The Diagnosis - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/5/24 10:57

Chapter 2

Death

There are aspects of life in which we can discover nothing at all by our own ingenuity.

In material matters we have the physical facts around us and the scientific method with which to evaluate them. Some facts can be proved by experiment, others deduced from probability.

The world of spiritual realities is quite different. In this world we can only receive what has been revealed. There are many claims regarding this kind of revelation; some rely on inward convictions, some on sudden impressions. For many centuries Christians have relied on the testimony of the scriptures to provide information which they could acquire in no other way.

God had banned the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil with the warning that death would be the consequence if the prohibition were breached. What could death have meant to Adam in his idyllic surroundings? The principal of death was not completely unknown to him. The first chapter of Genesis speaks of God's creation of seed bearing plants which would reproduce according to their kind. It seems that seed falling into the ground and then dying in order to multiply was pre-Adamic and therefore before mankind's sin.

We have no means of knowing how long Adam may have been able to watch this phenomenon before his disobedience. Perhaps there was no need to observe in order to understand; perhaps he knew by revelation. Certainly he would sense the ominous implications of the warning and understand that some final, irreversible condition was being referred to. In the place of an endless future there came the possibility of an ending. Something which was would be no more.

The warning is also very specific as regards time for in the day that you eat the fruit of it you shall surely die.

Adam's likeness to God was not physical but moral and spiritual, and the life which would end in death was not primarily physical but spiritual. In the event this was clarified in that Adam did not die physically for a considerable time afterwards. The sentence however was enacted on the very day of the disobedience; in that day he died.

He died in his likeness to God. He died in his relationship with God. He died in his access to God. In that day he died and his destiny died with him; more on this theme later. Death implies an absence and these absences began in that day. Before there had been a living likeness to God; now there was an absence. Before there had been a living relationship with God; now there was an absence. Before there had been a living access to God; now there was an absence. All that had been living in his link with God, died.

It is this death which Paul's letter to the Romans reveals was the result of sin entering the human race. It is also this death which has spread to all men. When Paul speaks of this death in Romans 5: 12-20 he invariably uses a definite article. This has the effect of showing the particular death that he has in mind. It is not just death, but The Death. It is The Death which Adam experienced, and it has spread to all men.

This truth is illustrated in Genesis itself. Chapter 5 is a long genealogy which begins with Adam and ends with Noah and his sons. The first two verses repeat the formula of Genesis 1:27 God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and called them Mankind in the day they were created. The next verse speaks of the generations which followed Adam. And Adam lived 130 years and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The tragedy of Genesis 3 lies between the verses.

On the site of ancient Ephesus the visitor can gain a good impression of the splendour of the ancient city. It is built almost entirely of white marble; streets, harbour, library and public baths shine in the bright sun. At the street corners there are white marble statues, and the public buildings have friezes of white marble figures. Unfortunately an impression is all that the visitor can gain. Generations of Turkish boys have spent their childhood throwing stones at the white marble figures; partly in accord with their religious objection to idols, and partly, I suspect, because they were boys. The figures no longer

onger have faces. They are still the images they once were, but at another level they are not.

Man is still in the image of God, and as such is to be respected and honoured. But at another level the image is now spoiled and defaced; the work of the Vandal. Adam received an image and likeness to God, but before he could pass on the likeness the image was distorted. The likeness he passed onto Seth was the likeness of a being who was no longer what God had made him to be.

The Death not only spread throughout the race; it also reigned. The most astounding fact of life concerning mankind as we now find it is that man is dominated by this Death. Man had been intended to feed at the Tree of Life, and Life would have been his most significant characteristic. The Life is now conspicuously absent, and in its place Death is king. This reign touches everything he does.

He is not loved any less by the God who created him in His own image and likeness. In the same way those grieving over a lost loved one do not love any less. But things can never be as they were. The atmosphere of this is caught in the earliest chapters of the scripture where we discover the Creator searching for that which is lost; Adam, where are you?

There is a dramatic phrase sometimes used to express the utter helplessness of a project or individual; they are described as being dead in the water. It is another powerful picture. To see the carcass of a fish or an animal dragged too and fro by the tide is a vivid picture of Death. That which is dead can no longer affect events. It is at the mercy of other forces. There is little point in urging more effort to an ebbing and flowing corpse.

This starting point of revealed truth is repeated in Paul's letter to the Ephesians when he refers to those who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked... This is a startling picture; dead but won't lie down! It points to the fact that Death is not only an absence of Life, but is the presence of an ominous force. It holds its victims in its lifeless grip and refuses to let go.

But there is a gleam of hope here to which we must return later. It is in the single word once, and in the past tenses of the verbs. Paul is writing to people over whom The Death no longer reigns. He shared himself this same confidence of having been freed from Death's lifeless grip.

Refs:

- 1.Genesis 1:11,12
- 2.Genesis 2:17
- 3.Romans 5:12, 14, 17, 21
- 4.Romans 5:14, 17
- 5.Genesis 3:9
- 6.Ephesians 2:1, 2
- 7.2 Corinthians 1:9, 10

Section I: The Diagnosis - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/6/18 12:40

Chapter 3

sins and Sin

Evangelical Christians have long distinguished a difference between sins and sin. Sins are the outward expression; sin is the inward dynamic. A tree is recognisable through its fruit, but it is not the fruit which produces the tree but the reverse. All the fruit may be removed from a tree, but the removal of the fruit will not alter the nature of the tree. Given the proper conditions the fruit will return evidencing the life which is within.

The Finnish language has dozens of different words for snow. Each word conveying some important feature of the particular kind of snow; its wetness, its usability for building etc. To the Finns snow is never just snow. They have become highly sensitized to Å'snow. In a similar manner the Hebrew people of God became highly sensitized to Å'sinÅ'.

The scriptures have several different words for man's failure to comply with God's expectations. One word means to miss the target, as a wayward arrow.(1) Another means to be lawless (2) and yet another means to cross a barrier(3) . Sometimes the scripture will string together a whole list of them as in the phrase keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin(4) .

Sometimes the scripture takes one single area of life and declares that the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue alone is implicated in blasphemy, lies, slander, gossip, backbiting, murmuring etc; here is a world within a world. Small wonder that James describes it as being humanly untamable(5) .

The outsiders' notion that God is not pleased with mankind has an obvious Bible base. One central purpose of the relationship into which God brought the people of Israel was that they would become convinced of their sinfulness(6). Rather than enhancing man's self-image much of God's purpose under the law was to demolish man's too good an impression of himself. The Law of Moses was never given as a means of do-it-yourself salvation; it was given to reveal man's true condition and to restrain it. This is tellingly recorded in our Lord's conversation with the religious leaders of His day; the law concerning divorce had been given not to acquire merit or to eliminate sin, but because of the hardheartedness of man(7) .

The positive expression of God's expectation from His people is expressed in the couplet You shall love God; you shall love your neighbour, but for the people of Israel it was expressed in the main in a series of negatives beginning You shall not. Right living cannot be created by legislation, but wrong living can be exposed and restrained by it.

The true nature of the problem was illustrated again by our Lord in His contention with the Pharisees from Jerusalem who were insistent upon the outward niceties. Our Lord's point is that sins of evil thoughts, murder, immorality, crime, and the like were not the causes of mankind's problem, but rather the symptoms of it(8) . It was not the outward which polluted the inward; it was the inward which produced the outward. The most the law could do was to identify and restrain the outward failure; the cure would have to be sought elsewhere.

Romans identifies the Adam-Death that mankind has experienced by the use of the definite article and describes it as a king upon a throne. In this image Death is personified; It is not only an absence of life, but the illegal reign of an alien power. Romans refers to Sin a similar way. 'The Sin' entered; 'the Sin' was the channel for 'The Death'; 'the Sin' reigned(9) .

There is a vital spiritual revelation to be seen here. 'The Sin' entered. Something passed from the outside to the inside; that is a workable definition of the word entered. A change of status is revealed. 'The Sin' is older than the human race, but there was a point in time when The Sin entered the human race. Through the man Adam 'The Sin' found entrance into the human race and brought 'The Death' as its companion.

The Greek word enter is the most usual word used for enter in the New Testament. There are, however, one or two uses of the word which may illustrate further the enormity of what happened to the human race of that day. John records that at Jesus gave to Judas Iscariot a choice part of the meal and continues after the piece of bread; Satan entered him(10) . A second is even more sobering; Behold; I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me(11) .

This latter reference speaks not only of entrance but of a consequent relationship; a relationship which was to be the consequence of entrance through an opened door. I am making a conscious effort to understate things here rather than be drawn into extreme speculations, but we seem to be reading of profound things. It is plain that Satan's entrance into Judas had some profound effect upon him; it is also plain that Christ's entrance into the open door of a life also has a profound and lasting consequence.

In some similar manner 'The Sin' entered through man's disobedience and 'The Death' accompanied 'The Sin'. As Satan controlled the man Judas and directed him in his attempt to eradicate God, so 'The Sin' entered Adam and established a settled state of enmity towards God.

On two separate occasions I have visited Auschwitz, the Nazi extermination camp in southern Poland. It is almost mind-numbing to contemplate the atrocities that took place there. My reaction at the second visit was no different to my reaction at the first visit; it is almost impossible to believe that men could behave like this towards other men. And yet the recollection of my own childhood cruelties bore a witness that what one man is capable of, all men are capable of. What is it in the human race that produces behaviour like this? Animals don't behave like this, why the human race?

There is the only one adequate explanation for the present spiritual state of the human race. An alien has entered, and has taken the throne. Our Lord described the characteristic behaviour of this alien by saying he was a murderer from the beginning and comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy(12) . This is the death-through-sin that Adam experienced

and which was revealed so clearly in Cain's slaughter of Abel.

This Death-through-Sin has contaminated the entire race for The Death has spread to all mankind, because all sinned(13). This is (roughly) what the theologians refer to as the doctrine of Original Sin and consequent Total Depravity of Man. It does not mean that there is no good in man, but it emphasizes the truth that the contamination has left no part untouched. This is true for the individual and for the entire race.

To return to our original picture at the beginning of the chapter, individual sins may be identified and restrained. The individual pieces of fruit may be removed from the tree, but the essential nature of the tree remains. The specific sin may be identified and dealt with; the liar may recognise his sin and cease from it; the adulterer may recognise his sin and cease from it. Society and the individual will be all the more comfortable for these outward changes, but inside there lurks the spirit of the destroyer and the liar.

When my daughters were younger they would dress our Staffordshire Bull Terrier in baby clothes and make it a member of the family. They shaped its daily life with rules as to when to sit and when to stand. Its behaviour was exemplary... as long as there were no cats in the vicinity. However human its outward behaviour might appear the presence of its ancient enemy always provoked the dog that was within. Law can reform manners but it can never change nature.

Notes:

- (1) Hebrew \hat{A} – Chatja; Greek-hamartia; to miss the mark
- (2) Greek \hat{A} – anomia; lawless
- (3) Hebrew \hat{A} – pasha; Greek \hat{A} – parabatEs; to overstep a fixed limit
- (4) Exodus 34:7 The Hebrew Old Testament has at least 15 different words for \hat{A} 'sin \hat{A} '.
- (5) James 3:6-8
- (6) Romans 7:12,13
- (7) Matthew 19:8
- (8) Matthew 15:1-20
- (9) Romans 5:12-21
- (10) John 13:27
- (11) Revelation 3:20
- (12) John 8:44, 10:10.
- (13) Romans 5:12

Section I: The Diagnosis - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/6/21 16:09

Chapter 4

Our Old Man

The exact phrase our old man is used only in Paul's letter to the Romans, although the concept of the old man is to be found in Ephesians and Colossians. (1) Many modern translations opt for the phrase old self(2), but this is more in the way of an interpretation than a translation; the original phrase is simply old man.

To lose the phrase old man is not only sad, but it spoils the inbuilt contrast with another biblical phrase the new man. This is not mere pedantry. The modern concept of the self is from modern western philosophy/psychology. It is always dangerous to substitute a modern technical term for an ancient biblical technical term. It results in a theology which is based on the latest version of the dictionary rather than on the fixed biblical revelation.

This can be illustrated by a personal experiment. Before you read any further ask the question "what do I understand by the concept of the self?" If you have done that, now ask the question "is a new self likely to be an improvement on an old self?" The twentieth century concept of the self is not a biblical one. This is not to say we must never use the word, but only that when we do so we are sure that we are not confusing others... or ourselves.

Some other modern versions opt for phrases such as old nature or old being. This may be somewhat closer to the original sense but still does not do it full justice.

We may understand the theme better if we start from the beginning. The Bible is not a western book, and many western insights sit uncomfortably with its own insights. I will repeat what has already been stated in saying that man is

dependent upon divine revelation. One of Job's friends asked the question Can you discover the deep things of God?(3) How can a creature discover the Creator? How can the finite comprehend the infinite? Man cannot examine God in laboratory conditions; he will discover only what God has permitted to be revealed. There are aspects of our human condition which are revealed and need to be received if we are to understand the true nature of things.

One of these revealed truths is the corporate-ness of the human race. An English poet has said that No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main, Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls,' it tolls for thee.(4) This glint of truth is one not often emphasized in the western world where the emphasis is more usually upon individual rights and responsibilities. In the east the concept is taken to the opposite extreme with blood feuds which last for generations and ancestor worship. In between these two extremes lies the biblical revelation of the corporate-ness of the human race.

There is an illustration of truth which the writer to the Hebrews uses which is strange logic to the western mind. The writer is declaring the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant to Moses and the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant's priesthood stemmed from Aaron, the brother of Moses, a descendent of Levi. In that covenant the people of Israel paid a tenth of their income to the priestly clan of Levi.

The writer argues that this priesthood was inferior to the King-Priesthood of Melchizedek because Levi paid his tenth to Melchizedek. When did this admission of a "greater and lesser" occur? Before Levi was born; when he was still in the loins of his grandfather Abraham. Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.(5) This is either a weird logic or a revelation of key facts of spiritual life.

The fact is that I was in Adam, and so were you. In Abraham, Levi paid tithes; in Adam I sinned, and so did you. This truth is taught in Paul's letter to the Romans; through one man sin entered the world; and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.(6) The tense of the verb sinned is very significant; it implies a completed action at a point in time.(7) If Paul had wanted to say because all do sin, or even all will sin he would have used a different form of the verb. We can capture the atmosphere of this tense if we translated Paul's phrase as death spread to all men because all did sin.

I cannot opt out from Adam's behaviour; I am involved as an integral part of the corporate entity which is the human race. Once the human race was just Adam, now it is more complex but viewed from one perspective it is still a single entity. This may not be the perspective we usually view things from, especially if we have had a western type of education, but it is a perfectly valid perspective. More importantly it is a vital God's-eye-view perspective and we shall miss much if we refuse the information that this revelation provides for us.

If I place a scrap of paper within the pages of this book the scrap of paper will share the experiences of the book. In I put the book on my shelf I have also put the scrap of paper on my shelf. If I give the book away I have also given the scrap of paper away. From the moment the scrap of paper was inserted into the book it has shared the book's history. As the tree is in the acorn so I was in Adam from the beginning. But within the tree which was in the acorn are more acorns, and so on.

Adam sinned, and I was in him when he sinned. I share his history, his guilt and the consequence of his sin. I share his separation from God and the separation from the unique spiritual life that is only possible if I am in right union with God. To quote Paul's inspired writing again in Adam all die.(8) Whatever happened to Adam in spiritual terms also happened to me. Whatever he did is now my history too.

What Adam had become and the consequent states of the whole entity of the human race are referred to in the New Testament as our old man. It is not my old man as distinct to your old man, it is our old man. This is our old man; the common heritage of the whole race, irrespective of colour or religion. This is one of the reasons that the phrase old self is such an inadequate alternative for old man. Self focuses on the individual rather than the corporate experience of the race.

How then shall we describe our old man? It is mankind wrongly related to God; mankind spoiled and defaced. It is also mankind in a misalliance with another spirit; mankind under the wrong king. It is a mystical body under the wrong headship and it functions as one man.

It is important to understand just how wrong mankind has become in order to understand the impossibility of any do-it-yourself salvation. If this is what is really wrong with mankind it is clear that none of the usual suggested cures can ever provide the remedy. Education, philosophy, politics, legislation, personal discipline, religion; none of these, nor any combination of them, can ever provide a remedy for this ancient condition.

I use the word ancient purposely. The original word used for old in our phrase is *palaaios*(9), meaning not merely having grown old but ancient. This is mankind's ancient problem. Almost as old as man himself, and which has never known the slightest improvement in its inward condition.

In deed, we are told that it is itself in a constant state of deterioration(10). It is in a constant state of being corrupted as a result of deceiving passions. There is no hope therefore of it outgrowing its strength or its growing weary.

None of this is to say that man is any the less wonderful. It is not so say that man is not capable of greatness or kindness, nor is it to indicate that God loves him the less. Mankind is wonderful but spoiled incurably. It is still the object of God's special favour and love, but if he is to be rescued from what he has become it will need an inward dynamic that is at least as powerful as that which caused his condition.

Notes:

1. Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:9
2. RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV
3. Job 11:7
4. John Donne 1573-1631 – Devotions 17
5. Hebrews 7:1-10
6. Romans 5:12
7. Aorist
8. 1 Corinthians 15:22
9. as used in the word *palaeontology*. The knowledge or study of ancient things.
10. NASB is being corrupted

Section I: The Diagnosis - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/7/9 14:39

Chapter 5

A Lost Destiny

C S Lewis wrote a science fiction trilogy; the second volume was called *'Voyage to Venus'*. It told the story of a man from earth who arrived on Venus just as that world was being created. Lewis's Venus had its own Adam and Eve, and it's own devil. The man from earth is instrumental in preventing a repeat of earth's tragedy and as the book comes to its conclusion the whole of the Venus creation is gathered around its own Adam and Eve in happy celebration. The couple wants the visitor from earth to share their celebrations, but he cannot bear the sight and lies face down on the ground. *"Don't raise me up"*, he says *"I have never seen a real man or a real woman. I have lived all my life among shadows and broken images"*.

We have learned to live in our fallen world; we have never known anything better. They say that you never miss what you never had, but I don't think it is true. We do miss what we never knew although we are hard pressed to explain our longings. The cultures of the world look backwards or forwards to a golden age when things will be as they ought. Where does this longing for Utopia, Shangri-La arise? How is that we can imagine this thing that has never been?

Paul's letter to the Romans adds a further thought to the accusation of universal sinfulness; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God(1), In that short sentence there lies the hidden half of our tragedy; we have not only *'sinned'* but we *'fall short of the glory of God'*. We never became what we were intended to be. In the words of C S Lewis, we have spent all our lives among shadows and broken images. Ephesus was a magnificent city; its white stones still glitter in the bright sun. It is a ruin; its glory is gone but just enough remains to give us an idea of what it must have been like in its prime. Our race is the same; it still glitters and is capable of marvelous exploits, but it is a ruin with just enough remaining to haunt us as to what might have been...

What is man? That is a question that has often been asked and answered in a variety of ways. Mark Twain wrote an essay to answer the question and the human race constantly attempts to define itself, but is there a definitive answer? An

intuitive shepherd boy asked the question some 3000 years ago and provided some astonishing answers.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: (Psa 8:4-6 KJV)

The current scientific consensus is that man is a little higher than the apes. David, the shepherd boy, had a different perspective; man is a little lower than the angels. In fact, the word translated 'angels' here is a Hebrew word; *elohim*(2) and can be translated 'gods'. David's vision of mankind is amazing; there is nothing negative in his description. There is no sign of sin or its ravages. This is man as he was created; in the image and likeness of God. Our race was created to be the living link between heaven and earth. In our spirits we were a functioning part of the spirit world of God and angels. In our bodies we were a functioning part of the physical creation. Our unique glory was that we were to be equally at home in each.

David describes mankind as; 'crowned with glory and honour'. Our race was created to be noble and glorious; instinct with life and power. If we were to give a definition I wonder if it would resemble David's? Not unless we had the same vision. There is no sin in this definition of 'man' because sin is not part of man's original constitution. It is easy to forget this; we have spent all our lives among shadows and broken images. He was created perfect in an original state of childlike innocence. As a consequence of right choices he would have become holy. God is holy, angels are holy, and man was created to be holy. Man's holiness would not have been angelic holiness anymore than the angels have divine holiness, but he would have been holy nevertheless.

Our race was given 'dominion' over the rest of the sentient creation, but it was not a tyrannical dominion. He was to serve the creation and guard it (3). Man was creation's masterpiece and its chief servant. His service of God was to be worked out in his serving of the creation; he would have become a co-worker with God. His original 'project' was a garden with 3 rivers in it but all the earth was his potential task. He worked, not to pay the bills, but because it was his calling under God. When anything is functioning in the environment for which it was created there is perfect harmony; so it was to have been.

That plaintive cry comes to my mind again; "what hast thou done?" He plunged our race into disgrace and bestiality; that is what he had done. Perhaps we should not be surprised that the scientific consensus is that he is a little higher than the beasts; there is little evidence in his history that he was ever behaved like someone who was a little lower than the angels.

There is a amazing link to this theme in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. In reference to Christ and Adam he says; The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven(4). The first man is Adam, the second man is Christ. There have only ever been two men; the others did not deserve the label, and the first did not deserve it for long. If the definition of man is that he is in the image and likeness of God, and that he is crowned with glory and honour, then there have only ever been two men.

Christ's qualification is plain to see. In his incarnation he was the one Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (5) He was determined to carry this role through all his trials. Satan tempted Him by demanding that he prove He was the Son of God. Christ's answer begins; "it is written man shall not ..."(6) His life on earth was as the representative of the race; He was the second man.

What a culmination of tragedies had eclipsed God's creation designed to be in His own image and likeness. From his glorious beginnings to disgrace and degradation. From a being designed to be the dwelling place of God, he has become infested with an alien spirit. From a being with the capacity to be indwelt with God's own life, he has become the carrier of Sin and Death. Man had become a magnificent ruin, haunted by a rebellious spirit. God's glorious plan appeared to be wrecked by a cosmic vandal; the race of Man was spoiled beyond repair.

I am trying to be disciplined in the telling of this story but I cannot resist the temptation at this point to run ahead just a little. There have only ever been two men, but there will be more... The writer to the Hebrews had this in mind when he said; But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who

was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (). The disgraced race had a champion and he has prevailed; we shall know again the glory from which Adam fell, and more...

Blessings abound where'er He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest;
And all the sons of want are blessed.

Where He displays His healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more;
In Him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.(7)

Notes:

1. (Rom 3:23 NASB).
2. Elohim sometimes refers to angels and judges and often God Himself. It is a word that is used to signify someone a ultimate authority in a given situation. This fits well with the context of Psalm 8.
3. And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, to serve it, and to keep it. (Gen 2:15 Youngs Literal Translation)
4. 1Co 15:47 KJV
5. Heb 1:3 KJV
6. Matt 4:3,4
7. Heb 2:6-10 KJV
8. Isaac Watts: Jesus shall reign where'er the sun...

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2004/7/9 14:55

Philologos,

I must say that I am touched beyond words by this latest entry. Few things I have ever read apart from God's word have moved me like this. I can't put my finger on exactly what God has done with me in these last 10 minutes- but I know it is something. Something leaped in my heart when I realized from whence we have fallen- and put another piece in this great tapestry that God is weaving in my heart.

You write:

Quote:

-----There have only ever been two men; the others did not deserve the label, and the first did not deserve it for long.

This quote drove me to tears. Though I am here and not at liberty to shed them abundantly, I will shed them nonetheless .

Re: Lost Destiny - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2004/7/9 15:31

I suddenly saw something about that:

5Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6Who, being in very natureA God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7but made himself nothing,
taking the very natureB of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

Phil 2:15

It's almost as if we can't lay ourselves down unless we know who we are where we have come from.

It is only as we realise who we are in Christ that the security comes to be able lay down our lives. Jesus who was the very nature of God did not hold onto it so tightly but let it go. It is an amazing paradox up is down, and down is up.

Section I: The Diagnosis - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/7/20 15:45

Chapter 6

The Old Covenant

The rules in the kindergarten are different to the rules of the factory. The rules that govern the child will have a different purpose to those which govern the adult.

New readers of the Bible are often surprised by the difference in atmosphere of the Old Testament to that of the New Testament. Some, in the past, have even questioned whether it was referring to the same God! The English words Testament and Covenant are usually translations of the same Hebrew or Greek word, but sometimes it is difficult to get all the nuances from one language into another. The early Bible translators tried to solve this by deciding which was closer to the intention of the author and then choosing an English word which best carried the sense.

This has some side effects which can sometimes confuse the picture. As an illustration consider the second chapter of Acts which is almost half way into the New Testament/Covenant... However, the actual New Covenant did not come into full operation until Acts 2! This means that in one way of regarding things Acts chapter 1 is the last chapter of the Old Testament/Covenant. Are you still following this?

Just to make the matter a little more confusing the Old Covenant does not begin until halfway through the book of Exodus; so Genesis and the first half of Exodus are before the Old Testament/Covenant. Of course none of these things really matters very much as we are only talking about the way in which men have divided God's book. The chapter and verse divisions are just as arbitrary.

Let's see if we can't simplify things a little. In Genesis we have accounts of God's dealings with individuals and families, but the beginning of Exodus sets the scene for something quite different. God was about to enter into a special relationship with a whole nation. It is this special relationship with a whole nation that the writer of Hebrews calls the First or the Old Covenant. (1) The New Covenant, by contrast, was initiated by the shedding of Christ's blood, and the benefits of it were communicated to his followers in Acts 2.

There is a consequence to this which is not always realised namely that the larger portion of our Bibles, over 84% in fact, recounts events which occurred under the Old Covenant. (2) The time of the Gospels was unique in that there was a single person living in the experience of a New Covenant, while almost all his followers were still under the implications of the Old Covenant. That Old Covenant operated for approximately 1500 years and was only ever intended to be temporary; it is remarkable how long temporary things will last.

Why temporary? Because the Old Covenant was only ever intended to be a parenthesis in God's dealings with mankind. This is the amazing conclusion arrived at, under the inspiration of the Spirit, by Paul in his letter to the churches in Galatia. The Old Covenant, says Paul, was an addition to God's original promises to Abraham. Furthermore it was a temporary addition in force only until The Seed arrived to whom the original promise had been made. (3)

This is breathtaking in its implications. The Old Covenant's elaborate priesthood and sacrificial system, the temple with its magnificence, the unique position enjoyed by the nation that had entered that Old Covenant; all temporary additions until the Promised One should come? It is not difficult to see why Paul's preaching aroused such passions among the Jews of his day. The same passions had been aroused by Stephen, the man whose judicial murder Paul had himself witnessed. (4) No doubt Stephen's accusers were misquoting him, or were they? People often "hear" what has not been said, but usually there is some thread upon which the mis-hearers fasten their thoughts.

Under the inspiration of the same Spirit, Paul has more to say on this theme. He declares that we (the people of that Old Covenant) were under a paedagogus. A paedagogus was a guardian and guide of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals

of 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. (5) Paul's point is that although the chosen nation had a wonderful destiny before them they had been like heirs who had not reached the age at which they might inherit their inheritance. The Old Covenant period had been the child-state of the nation.

The Sinai (Old) Covenant experience had been but the prelude to full sonship. (6) (There are other letters of Paul where it is important to notice when he switches from we to you.) The issues at stake here were vital to the survival of genuine New Covenant Christianity. Without these vital contributions Christianity would have almost inevitably drifted into becoming a sect within Judaism; an addition to an addition rather than finding its full destiny as an entirely New Covenant.

But the Old Covenant was a glorious covenant. This is also revealed in the scriptures. (7) We must not disparage the earlier provision of God; its failure was due to the failure of the human partners in the covenant not to the weakness of the covenant itself. It was a fading covenant, like the glory that ultimately faded from the face of its mediator Moses. The New Covenant too has a changing glory within it, but this time from great to greater. The events and writings of the New Testament are against the background of the final fadings of the Old Covenant. (8) But at its beginnings the Old Covenant had been truly glorious.

What was the purpose of this unique relationship which made the nation of Israel so special in salvation history? Its purpose was manifold. On the positive side it was to initiate a relationship with God which would mark them out as different to all other nations, though all nations were God's too. (9)

The secular covenant of marriage is a fitting illustration of God's actions. In a marriage covenant there comes a point at which each of the partners belong to each other in a unique and exclusive sense. The two partners make their promises, enter into a covenant and from that moment belong to each other in a way that neither can belong to anyone else. The prophet Ezekiel took up this daring image when he brought God's words to the people of his day; I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. (10)

From this moment in the nation's history all spiritual unfaithfulness was described as adultery. Another prophet took up the same theme as he proclaimed the coming of a different kind of covenant; "The time is coming, " declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. (11)

The marriage contract included their occupation of the land. Or to view the opposite side of the coin, it was a tenancy agreement with regard to the land and it demanded their faithfulness; if they kept the covenant they would keep the land. The book of Deuteronomy, which are the last words of Moses prior to his death and the entrance of the people into their promised land has this as a constant theme. The beginnings of the contract are recorded in a classical "if- then" statement which lies at the foundation of their destiny and consequent history; Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, (12)

This takes us onto the next step in our understanding of Israel's destiny. They were to be separated from all other nations in order to be available to God as a priest-nation. Priests were mediators; they stood between God and man. This nation was not being separated for its own private salvation but for a unique role in salvation history. As priests they must be taught so that they in turn could teach others. (13) That privilege would bring with it fearful responsibilities. From he that had much, much would be required. They would be expected to live a quality of life which was in keeping with their lofty destiny. Moses last words are recorded in Deuteronomy 33.

26 none like unto the God of Jeshurun (14), rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.
27 The eternal God refuge, and underneath the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy jrom before thee; and shall say, Destroy .
28 Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob upon a land of corn and wine,. also his heavens shall drop down dew.
29 Happy thou, O Israel: who like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD

The work of preparing this covenant people went on through pain and prosperity, through special favours and hard disciplines right up to the time of John Baptist. His work was to get all things ready for their supreme mission; And he will go on before the Lord; in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (15)

The period of the Law was to have another purpose which is explained in a well known and often misapplied Bible verse; Where no vision, the people perish: (16) This is the familiar KJV rendering, but the context makes it clear that the NIV has got closer to the heart of this passage when it states; Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law. God's covenant people were not in ignorance of right behaviour. God's will had been revealed to them in order to restrain them. Where there is no revelation of God's will there will be no restraint to wickedness.

The Law was expressed initially mostly in terms of a series of prohibitions; thou shalt not rather than thou shalt. Read thoughtfully the Ten Commandments will be found to be Ten Prohibitions.

We shall need to return to this theme later, but we will do well to understand that Law can restrain but can never change character. Restraint of evil however is a blessing, although God's ultimate purpose is much greater than this. Much of the Law which now seems so imperfect to our modern sensibilities needs to be understood in the light of this; these imperfect legislations take into account the hardness of men's hearts. (17)

This period of the Law was to have yet another purpose. It was to bring to the covenant people an adequate sense of their own failure. Again we must turn to the writings of Paul to appreciate this aspect of revelation. He is answering the hypothetical questions as to why the Law has not made him a better man. His answer brings this other purpose clearly into focus; Did that which is good; then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognised as sin, it produced death in me through what was good; so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. (18)

The law would strip away all possibility of camouflage. There would be no doubt as to mankind's true condition. This Covenant nation, at least, would not be able to pretend that they were good enough. But the intention of this was largely frustrated by the determination of that nation to use the Law as a means of acquiring merit; almost the direct opposite of its purpose. (19)

Notes:

- (1) Hebrews 8:7-13. Some call this the Mosaic (Moses) or Sinaitic Covenant.
- (2) Genesis, Exodus 1-19, the Book of Job, Acts 2 through to the Revelation are the exceptions.
- (3) Gal 3:19
- (4) Acts 6:14
- (5) Thayer Greek-English Lexicon
- (6) Gal 4:1,2
- (7) 2 Cor 3:7
- (8) 2 Cor 3:13,18. Hebrews 8:13
- (9) Exodus 19:5,6
- (10) Ezekiel 16:8 NIV
- (11) Jeremiah 31:31,32
- (12) Exodus 19:5,6
- (13) Malachi 2:7
- (14) A Hebrew term meaning 'my upright one'
- (15) Luke 1:17 NIV
- (16) Proverbs 29:18
- (17) Matthew 19:8
- (18) Romans 7:13
- (19) Romans 10:2,3

Re: - posted by Delboy (), on: 2004/10/5 17:06

Hey Ron where's chapter 7 ? Slow coach :-)

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/10/5 17:28

Hi Derek

You're not the first to complain! Sorry, I've been busy preaching most weekends and elders' conferences and.... this thread is my first love so I will be back. promise..

Re: - posted by riki (), on: 2004/12/4 6:35

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Hi Derek

You're not the first to complain! Sorry, I've been busy preaching most weekends and elders' conferences and.... this thread is my first love so I will be back. promise..

So...? How's it going? I'm waiting, almost patiently... ;-) Honestly, I'd love to read the rest. Any recommended reading in the meanwhile?

JUst a smidgen of encouragement, on: 2004/12/4 12:59

Ron,

I was just reading thru Chapter 6, that is really nice scholarship, and great writing. Christian perfection has always been a topic thats been dear to my soul and I never really picked up on this thread. Is there an outlet to buy your books?

Neil

Re: JUst a smidgen of encouragement - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/12/4 13:23

Quote:

-----Is there an outlet to buy your books?

At the moment we have a bottleneck called 'me'. I am longing to get back to this but I had a busy summer and then distr actions. My books only exist in my mind at present although Greg and I have been talking about them.

Laughter!, on: 2004/12/4 15:46

When I read about your "bottleneck", I laughed as I am all too familiar with this affliction. I have a play to write, and God has told me to get busy...and then comes "me".

Brother, my prayer is that the Father of all speak to us, and endow us with the necessary creative impetus to complete t hese works.
amen.

His/yours, (lol)

Neil

Re: Laughter! - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/12/5 4:01

My wife read this Spurgeon devotional to me the other morning.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

--Ecclesiastes 9:10

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," refers to works that are possible. There are many things which our heart findeth to do which we never shall do. It is well it is in our heart; but if we would be eminently useful, we must not be content with forming schemes in our heart, and talking of them; we must practically carry out "whatsoever our hand findeth to do." One good deed is more worth than a thousand brilliant theories. Let us not wait for large opportunities, or for a different kind of work, but do just the things we "find to do" day by day. We have no other time in which to live. The past is gone; the future has not arrived; we never shall have any time but time present. Then do not wait until your experience has ripened into maturity before you attempt to serve God.

Endeavour now to bring forth fruit. Serve God now, but be careful as to the way in which you perform what you find to do--"do it with thy might." Do it promptly; do not fritter away your life in thinking of what you intend to do to-morrow as if that could recompense for the idleness of to-day. No man ever served God by doing things to-morrow. If we honour Christ and are blessed, it is by the things which we do to-day. Whatever you do for Christ throw your whole soul into it. Do not give Christ a little slurred labour, done as a matter of course now and then; but when you do serve Him, do it with heart, and soul, and strength.

But where is the might of a Christian? It is not in himself, for he is perfect weakness. His might lieth in the Lord of Hosts. Then let us seek His help; let us proceed with prayer and faith, and when we have done what our "hand findeth to do," let us wait upon the Lord for His blessing. What we do thus will be well done, and will not fail in its effect.

Thank You, on: 2004/12/6 19:34

for that word, my brother. "perfect weakness" HalleLuYah! Our weakness is there for God to show His Glory and Strength.

Section II: The Remedy - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/12 9:37

Chapter 7

Setting the Stage

Luke is the main historian of the New Testament. He carefully date-stamps the beginnings of John's work in water baptism by putting it *in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontus Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Itrurea and the region of Trachonitus and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene.*¹ Caesar Augustus died in AD 14 but Tiberius Caesar was associated with him for the last two years of his reign; this gives us a date of AD 26 for Luke's account of John Baptist's ministry.

Paul gives a different kind of time scale. In the passage where he had described Israel's years of waiting for the Seed to come He refers to the coming future moment as the *time appointed by the father*. And then with a note of triumph he declares *when the fulness of the time had come God sent forth his Son.*² His word for 'fulness' was a word used of a ship being fully manned and ready for sailing, as the English would say 'a full ship's complement'. We might even paraphrase it very loosely by saying *when everything was completely ready God launched his Son*.

The coming of Christ was not the result of a sudden impulse on the part of the Godhead, but a perfectly synchronized and perfectly executed keeping of an *appointment*. On the natural level we can see how the political events of the past centuries had prepared the Mediterranean world for the coming of the Truth. The momentous changes that over hundreds of years would disrupt the lives of hundreds of thousands were all the preparations for history's central event. The stage was being set...

On the level of language the conquests of Alexander the Great, three hundred years earlier, had spread Greek culture from Greece to India. In the Finns³ are the snow-specialists and the Hebrews are the sin-specialists then the Greeks were the thinking-specialists. They had numerous words for thought processes which gave the possibility of great exactness to communication; they were the idealists of the ancient world. Their philosophers and their philosophies still hold a place of honour in western universities. Their language developed in such a way that its prepositions, for example, could

have an almost mathematical precision. Greek commerce (they were great sailors) had consolidated their cultural base around the borders of the Mediterranean. The stage was being set...

Greek ideas filtered into Judaism sometimes to advantage and sometimes not. The people of the Old Covenant who spread throughout the Mediterranean became more at home in Greek than in Hebrew and a Greek translation of their sacred scriptures was produced.⁴ This in turn, gave non-Hebrews the opportunity to learn about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to consider the moral codes of Judaism. This version of the Bible was later to become one of the most powerful weapons in the early spread of Christianity. The stage was being set...

This Greek culture mind-set was taken up by the Roman empire which followed Alexander's and proved a lingua-franca of thoughts and ideas for western Europe.⁵ The Romans who later annexed the broken remnants of Alexander's successors also added their own contribution. The Romans were the law-specialists. Its codification, its application and its enforcement were all part of the lasting consequence of the Roman Empire. Their army operated not only as a frightening machine of conquest but as an international police force.

The Romans cleared the Mediterranean of pirates. They established a system of roads to speed their armies from one location to another. In Britain there were better roads in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD under the Romans than in the 18th century! A network of roads spread from Rome to the Persian Gulf to North Africa, to the whole of Western Europe including most of Britain. Their shipping routes and road network expedited the itinerant preachers of the gospel and gave them a measure of safety. The Roman *Pax Romana* was harsh, but it was peace. The stage was being set...

On the inner frontiers too the time was ripe. Greek philosophies might gratify the mind but they could never warm the heart. Much Greek philosophy was highly speculative but a consensus had been reached that the physical world and the body in particular was essentially evil. Being 'evil' it must be restrained. In some ways philosophies were a reaction against the puerile and amoral antics of the Greek gods. The high moral ground of Judaism was an attraction to many at this time. Some converted and became thorough going Jewish proselytes, and some merely became fellow-travellers known as 'God fearers'.

The emotional vacuum began to be filled with designer-religions from the east where rationality had no part at all. They are known as the Mystery Religions and have been described as *coming from the East these Oriental systems had over centuries first seeped into, then flooded the Empire. Spiritistic in origin; bizarre in method; immoral in manner of life; fanatical in demands; grotesque in ritual; degrading in effect, they shocked their way into the Roman world.*⁶ In terms of true spirituality these religions were bankrupt from their beginnings, but initiation rites supplied a sense of belonging. The stage was being set...

The heathen world was ripe for the gospel. It is remarkable how different but similar our current world is to those days. Again we have the sterile philosophical speculations of secular humanism and the bizarre practices of New Age religion. Again we have possibilities of communication on a level never before available. These, too, are days of unprecedented opportunities for the spread of the Truth.

Among the people of the Old Covenant two things were poised for a unique purpose. Synagogue worship probably began in the time of the Babylonian exile. It has been said that *Nebuchadnezzar's battering rams breached Israel's theology.* When Jerusalem fell in 587 BC Israel's destiny seemed to be ruined beyond any hope of repair. David's dynasty and all the promises that surrounded it seemed lost in the exile and humiliation of Judah's last monarch, Zedekiah.⁷ Their sacrosanct 'son of David', their sacrosanct city and their sacrosanct temple and priesthood disappeared in a wall of flame. Every national symbol of their faith perished in that conflagration.

Beyond consolation, they mourned their loss by the rivers of Babylon.⁸ But the rivers of Babylon were the scene for new beginnings too. Separated from the territorial distractions of their promised land they began a Judaism which was no longer dependent upon priest and temple; the Judaism of the synagogues. Its key workers were no longer the priests but the scribes and lawyers. It became bible-based rather than temple-based.

The Babylonian captivity was also a watershed for the development of the Diaspora; the scattered ones.⁹ The people of the Old Covenant spread throughout the known world and wherever they settled they formed synagogues.¹⁰ One legend has it that there were 394 synagogues in Jerusalem alone when Titus destroyed it in AD 70. And the vast majority of Jews lived outside their promised land. *Between 73 & 581 BC there were six distinct deportations of the Israelites, and more fled voluntarily into Egypt and other parts of the Near East. From this time onwards, a majority of Jews would always live outside the Promised Land.*¹¹

It may be difficult for the modern reader to appreciate the size of the Diaspora. *One calculation is that during the Herodian period there were about eight million Jews in the world, of whom, 2,350,000 to 2,500,000 lived in Palestine, the Jews thus constituted about 10% of the Roman Empire.*¹² And wherever they settled they formed their synagogues. Synagogues which were witnesses to God's earlier revelation to Moses.

When James the apostle had addressed the conference in Jerusalem he had been most mindful of this Jewish presence and witness throughout the world. It was with these in mind and the numerous proselytes and God-fearers that the early Christians subscribed, for love's sake, to some simple prohibitions of diet. James had made the point very clearly in his address. *For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in the synagogues every Sabbath.*¹³

These synagogue communities constituted not only a potentially fruitful mission field for the gospel, but a rich network of contacts and associations throughout the Mediterranean area. Not only 'mission fields' but 'mission bases' from which the gospel might have spread like a prairie fire. As a mission strategy it was perfect. Wherever seekers were seeking the synagogue was the perfect starting point. Spiritual pilgrims, at whatever point in their pilgrimage, had access to those who were preaching Moses and pointing to the true God. It is no accident that the synagogue or its equivalent was always Paul's first point of contact.¹⁴ The stage was being set...

There is a time gap of almost 430 years between the prophecy of Malachi and the events of Luke's histories. During this time there was, no doubt, much setting of the stage. It was during this time that the synagogues grew to such importance. It was during this time that the empires of Alexander and his successors rose and fell. It was during this time that the bloody wars of the Maccabees were fought. It was during this time that the empire of Rome rose to prominence. The stage had received most of its final preparations during this time and yet there had been a strange omission. The spirit of prophecy seemed to have died out. These were the silent years. The length of the gap is not insignificant. For a third of its history the people of the Covenant had been without a Spirit-inspired messenger.

There are four messengers in the book of Malachi; the last book of the Old Testament. The name 'Malachi' means messenger, so he is the first. Israel, the priest-nation was to have been 'the messenger' (Mal 2:7) Then in the last two chapters we are introduced to two more messengers. There is one called 'my messenger' (Mal 3:1) whose work is to prepare the way for the fourth and final messenger. The final messenger is described as 'the Lord... the messenger of the covenant'. (Mal 3:1)

For four hundred years they waited. The super-powers of those centuries ebbed and flowed in their control of the 'promised land'. The people of God waited. Their hopes flamed and died away again as their nationalistic heroes began a new golden age that quickly degenerated into a sordid power struggle. They waited... False Messiah's came with their promises awakening hopes of deliverance which all *came to nothing*.¹⁵ And still they waited.

Some of those who waited are known to us by name. Simeon was one who was *waiting for the consolation of Israel*. Anna too knew of those who were *waiting for redemption*, and was quick to tell them the news of what she had witnessed.¹⁶ Perhaps many had given up hoping, but there were those like Abraham before them who *contrary to hope, in hope believed*. For perhaps close on 15 centuries the people had boasted a special relationship with God, and for the last four centuries He had had nothing to say to them. All natural optimism must surely have been long dead. But this too, is just the setting of the stage...

Suddenly, without any apparent warning, there comes a flurry of Holy Spirit activity. In clear preparation for some powerful new initiative from God there is often an unmistakable preparation; *the Spirit of God fluttering on the face of the waters*.¹⁷ An angel interrupts a solemn temple service with a promise of the soon arrival of a Spirit-filled messenger to be born to the aged wife of a aged priest.¹⁸ Six months later the same angel visits a young teenager with the message that the Spirit is about to effect unheard-of miracles within her virgin body.¹⁹

In the moment that the two potential mothers meet, the older woman is filled with the Holy Spirit; a phenomenon not recorded for the previous 400 years! Three months later her aged husband, the priest, experiences the same phenomenon.²⁰ And an angel visits the virgin's betrothed husband, and soon shepherds see the skies filled with angel warriors.²¹

The sense of anticipation grows. The final preparations are being completed. The stage is set. The 'fulness of the time' has come.

...the dayspring from on high has visited us...²²

there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.²³
When the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman...²⁴

Notes:

1. Luke 3:1
2. Galatians 4:2,4
3. See Chapter 1
4. The Septuagint, often referred to simply by the Roman numerals LXX.
5. *Captive Greece took Rome captive*: Horace
6. H Brash Bonsall
7. 2 Kings 24:17-25:7
8. Psalm 137
9. The Disapora are the people referred to in John 7:35. Jews living outside the land of Israel.
10. Acts 13:5,14; 14:1; 17:10
11. A History of the Jews: Paul Johnson.
12. Encyclopaedia Judaica xiii 871
13. Acts 15:21
14. Acts 16:13
15. Acts 5:36,37
16. Luke 2:25,38
17. Gen 1:2 Young's Literal Translation
18. Luke 1:11-17
19. Luke 1:26-37
20. Luke 1:67
21. Matt 1:18-24
22. Luke 1:78
23. Luke 2:11
24. Gal 4:4

Re: Section II: The Remedy - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/13 5:19

Chapter 8

The Hour

The life story of Jesus of Nazareth is a thrilling demonstration of One who came, not to please Himself, but His Father. John's account, in particular, is full of expressions which show Him to be 'on course' and in 'perfect synchronisation' with His Father's will. He lived in the conscious approval of His Father and all His teachings and signs demonstrated it. We cannot linger on this wonderful story however; we have an appointment with a unique moment in history. John's account of Jesus' life has another feature; Jesus was conscious that His life was leading inevitably to His death. This death would not just be a natural consequence of ageing, or of circumstances which overwhelmed Him. His death would be the culmination of His life. Uniquely, this man was born to die.

Military campaigns often demand pin-point timing. "Synchronise your watches" is a key scene from many a war film. In general terms the stage was now set, but there would need to be perfect synchronisation of events. Christ's appointment with His destiny was no approximation but timed to the very second.

John records a series of progress points, and reveals the element of truth. At the very beginning of His public ministry a domestic emergency arose. His attention was drawn to the fact by His mother who clearly intends His intervention. It was at a wedding celebration and there would have been considerable disgrace for the family if the situation had become more widely known. Mary addresses her observation and request to Him personally. *They have no wine*.¹ At this point there had been no public display of special powers, and it is interesting to wonder what Mary had in mind when she raised the issue.

Christ's response is surprising in its apparent abruptness, although it is not as stark as it appears in our English translations. *Woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come*. We sometimes say of an individual that 'he marches to the sound of a different drum'; Christ was such an individual. He said so Himself using some what different words; *I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does*.² Before His public acknowledge as the Father's Son, Jesus was content to submit Himself to the authority of His mother and adopted father but from the time of His baptism in the

Jordan, He never again submitted to Mary. He could do only what His Father authorized.

His hour had not yet arrived. What hour? Here was an opportunity for Him to display His Messianic authority. Moses had provided food in the wilderness why not Jesus at a wedding? However, when He provided for this needy family He did so in a way so discrete that only the servants and His immediate followers knew what had happened.³ There were many aspects to Christ's vocation, but the full scope of His Messianic role would be seen later. Above all others there was one supreme task to accomplish. One time which above all others would be *His hour*.

John's account of things keeps this truth at the forefront of things. Neither Satan nor men could hurry that hour, although they certainly tried on more than one occasion.⁴ His teaching continued, as did the miracles accomplished under His Father's instruction, but it seems as though He always had His eye on another *hour*.

One of His acts of power is a special point of time reference in this gospel. The feeding of the 5000 is the only one of His miracles recorded in all four accounts.⁵ Many Bible students feel that part of the reason for this is what is known as the Caesarea Philippi Confession of Faith. This was the time when Peter (and perhaps the others too) received a heavenly revelation of who Jesus of Nazareth really was. It was a true watershed. From this point the disciples knew clearly who He was, but they were not nearly so clear about what He had come to do.

The feeding of the 5000 was, without doubt, a spectacularly public display of power. John records the immediate response of some who experienced the miracle personally. Their response was to try to start a revolution. Our mental pictures of *The Holy Land* are usually of quiet country scenes with gently grazing sheep and the steady rhythms of an agricultural society. These were not the mental pictures of the Roman Legionaries who found themselves stationed in this seething hotbed of passionate nationalism.

The earthly lifespan of Jesus Christ was lived out in a country under enemy occupation with numerous terrorist groups committed to national liberation. *The most violent group were referred to by the Romans occupation forces as the Sicarii; they carried hidden daggers and used to assassinate Jewish collaborators, especially in the crowds at festival times. This was merely, however, the ultra-violent terrorist fringe of a movement who called themselves Zealots.*⁶ One of Christ's own disciples had been a Zealot, and it is possible that the term Iscariot is derived from *Sicarii*. Perhaps this is why Matthew (an ex tax-gatherer and hence collaborator) groups them together as *Simon the Zealot and Judas the Assassin*.⁷

Imagine the scene; a popular orator who could now become the front-man for a national uprising. Thousands of potential revolutionaries on a hillside 'eating out of his hand'. Too good an opportunity to miss. Some activists refusing to take 'no' for an answer determined to *take Him by force to make Him king*.⁸ But this was not His way, and this was not His hour. This was not His vocation. He acted promptly, removing his disciples from the danger zone and climbing the hill alone to receive fresh orders.⁹

It was in the shadow of these events that Jesus asked "who do the crowds say that I am?" Peter's answer is unequivocal, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*.¹⁰ No sooner is this revelation established in Peter's understanding than Christ's thoughts turn to the significance of the role. His thoughts turn immediately to *His hour*; He must go to Jerusalem, He must suffer, He must be killed, He must rise again.¹¹ Peter protested and received the strongest possible rebuke. There could be no compromise on this issue. He was heading towards *His hour* and Peter's misplaced compassion could not be allowed to hinder Him.

As events unfold the consciousness is of His appointment with *the hour*. The arrival and request of the non-Jews or Hellenists provokes an awareness that the time has arrived. His soul is troubled but He knows that the whole purpose of His incarnation was to keep this appointment. It was in the consciousness of this imminent hour's ultimate stripping of all His rights, that He stripped to the waist and acted out the role of the servant. It was with a supreme consciousness of *the hour* having arrived that He prayed the great prayer of personal consecration; which could only ever be accomplished by the works of *the hour*.¹² The repetition of the phrase is like the tolling of a great bell; *the hour is coming*. Mark records some of the words spoken in Gethsemane on the night of the betrayal. To the sleepy disciples He says *Are you still sleeping and resting. It is enough! The hour has come!*¹³

But other events were reaching their climax too, in an amazing synchronisation. Luke's gospel adds another dimension to these momentous events. Those who arrived to arrest Him heard these extraordinary words; *when I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness*. The New International Version senses the mood in its freer translation; *Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand*

*d on Me. But this is your hour – when darkness reigns.*¹⁴

Satan's and mankind's wickedness has always had a restraint upon it. Although almost unbelievable evil had been seen in our world, the full force of a murderous malice aimed at God Himself had hardly been seen. For generations mankind had been able to hide behind the protest of an independent spirit; *we will not have this man to reign over us*¹⁵ The prophet Isaiah caught this refusal to submit to God's reign when He records mysterious details of the original rebellion; *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.*¹⁶ In this form of expression the rebellion is a bid for equality; *I will be like the Most High*, but as all restraint is removed in this cosmic conflict the expression takes on an unmistakable form; *Crucify Him!*¹⁷ There is no hiding behind some kind of mutual co-existence now. The treacherous secret is out in the open. There never could have been two supreme beings in the universe; the nature of the usurper is clearly revealed; he intends *to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*¹⁸

Calvary then was a battlefield where two mighty combatants were to meet. This was both *My hour* and *your hour*. A terrifying synchronisation of love and hate in all their full measure. The hour in which Evil and Good met is at the centre of the universe. A meeting in which one pretended to equality with God and who in this moment reaches out to take his prize, and One *who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross.*¹⁹

The cross was a demonstration. On the one hand it was an hour in which *God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*²⁰ On the other hand it was an hour which demonstrated the workings of the darkest powers in the universe, in the attempted murder of God. It is a synchronisation beyond human comprehension of God's carefully planned intention and foreknowledge, and the creature's red-handed guilt. An old Charles Wesley hymn expressed a grateful wonder; *Died He for me, who caused His pain?*

*For me, who Him to death pursued?*²¹ These are mysteries too profound for ordinary human words. God, however, has had a means of expressing something of the depths of these sufferings. The Bible itself tells us that Christ's own Spirit has testified to His own sufferings. This testimony was 'heard' in the heart of prophets and is the source of much of their revelation.²² King David was such a prophet, and Psalm 22 is that kind of prophecy. It is an amazing song written a thousand years before *the hour*, but recounts in powerful imagery the events of *the hour*. This psalm was not directly David's testimony. David's hands and feet were never pierced, not did men cast lots for his clothing. This is *the testimony of Jesus* which is *the spirit of prophecy.*²³ Its first words reveal its real author; *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*²⁴

If it is at all possible, read it now, down to verse 21. Its subtitle is 'the hind of the dawn' and the imagery is of a young deer hunted to exhaustion. Its atmosphere is heavy and brooding. It is Calvary's cry of dereliction. It is prayer of One who in His identification with the human race in all its ruin is now *a worm, and no man*. He is quite alone; there is *none to help*. Alone, that is, except for His prowling enemies. He is impaled upon the *horns of the wild oxen*; this animal is almost certainly the now extinct great auroch. These were animals of prodigious and awesome strength and probably the most powerful animal known to those regions. In Bible idiom 'horn' is very often the symbol of power. The symbolism of Psalm 22 has its victim finally impaled on the horns of this terrible power.

There is a mystery within a mystery here. Ancient Israel's laws were very explicit. If an ox gored to death a common slave compensation had to be paid to the slave's owner. The price was fixed for all generations; thirty pieces of silver.²⁵

This fixed price may well have been in Matthew's thoughts as he recorded Judas' betrayal. Quoting from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Zechariah; *They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel.*²⁶ 'Thirty pieces of silver'; the compensation price for a slave who had been gored to death by an ox.

Let's return to our reading of Psalm 22. There is a point in the psalm where the whole atmosphere changes. It is halfway through a verse in most modern translations, but Bible chapters and verse breaks are very arbitrary things. The New King James version format of the verses will help to make the point; *Deliver me from the sword, My precious (life) from the power of the dog.*

*Save me from the lion's mouth
And from the horn's of the wild oxen.*

You have answered me.

*I will declare your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the congregation I will praise you.²⁷*

The translators have done us a real service here. Psalm 22 has two quite separate sections with two entirely different atmospheres, and the change comes with the conviction that the prayers of the first section have been heard and answered; *You have answered me*²⁸ Later in the psalm the writer records *when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of you in the great congregation.*²⁹ In the second half of the psalm He is no longer alone. He knows that His prayer is heard and He looks forward with absolute certainty to the joys set before Him in the fellowship of His church (the great congregation). It is the familiar pattern of so much Old Testament prophecy; the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.³⁰

Understood in this way the psalm becomes a commentary on a passage in the letter to the Hebrews. *who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death, with strong crying and tears; (and having been heard because of his piety)*³¹

In the gospel account all these invisible mysteries are hidden from the natural eyes, but the moment of conviction that the work was accomplished rings through 'loud and clear'; *it is finished.*³² He had spoken of His death as a baptism which must be 'accomplished'; using the same word.³³ Now emerging from His baptism, while still on the horns of the wild oxen, we hear the victor's triumphal shout; 'it is finished, it is accomplished, it is done! In one place, at one time, in the history of all creation evil in all its power and love in all its power kept their divine appointment, and the battle won. The appointment with *the hour* has been kept, and the Mission Accomplished.

Notes:

1. John 2:1-11
2. John 5:19 New International Version
3. John 2:9,11
4. John 7:38; 8:20.
5. Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:33-44; Luke 9:11-17; John 6:2-14
6. A History of the Jews; Paul Johnson
7. Matt 10:4. This is a possible paraphrase. In Acts 21:38 the word translated 'assassins' is 'sicarion.
8. John 6:15
9. Matt 14:23
10. Matt 16:16 King James. The 'thou' is emphasised in the original text.
11. Matt 16:21-28
12. John 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1
13. Mark 14:41
14. Luke 22:53
15. Luke 19:14
16. Isaiah 14
17. Mark 15:13
18. John 10:10
19. Philippians 2:6 1901 American Standard Version
20. Romans 5:8
21. 'And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?' Charles Wesley
22. 1 Pet 1:10,11
23. Revelation 19:10
24. Psalm 22:1
25. Exodus 21:32
26. Matthew 27:9; Jeremiah 32:6-9; Zechariah 11:13
27. Psalm 22:2-22 KJV. Notice how the last section of verse 21 has been separated from the main body of the verse.
28. Psalm 22:21b
29. Psalm 22:24,25
30. 1 Peter 1:11
31. Hebrews 5:7 J N Darby translation.
32. John 19:30
33. Luke 12:50

Re: Section II: The Remedy - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/15 3:56

Chapter 9

The Sin-Bearer

What really happened on the cross? The Bible is a book of many parts, and all the parts do not have the same purpose. Although together they comprise the Holy Scriptures and are completely trustworthy. To put it very simply, the Old Testament prepares us for the New, but we shall not understand the Old Testament without the New. In many ways the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old. The Lord saw Himself as the great theme of the Old Testament; *"You search the Scriptures,"* He said on one occasion, *"for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."*¹ The Scripture bore witness to Him; His person, His character, His work. Peter summed up the Holy writings in a different way in his letter; *"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into."*²

In many ways the Scriptures were 'time-locked' and their full meaning was not understood. When we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament we begin to read the unfolding of God's purposes in the four accounts of the Life and Ministry of Christ. The first three accounts, Matthew, Mark and Luke, have many similarities and were probably written within 20 years of the events they record. They have something of the mood of a journalist's 'eye-witness' account. John's account is different; it was probably written almost 60 years afterwards and has a commentary added to the events it records. As events unfolded the disciples were often quite unaware of their significance and frequently quite misunderstood what was really happening. John, writing many years later, has thought through many of these implications and he sees significance in every detail.

At the time, the disciples were often much less wise than even a casual reader would be now. Just as we have an added insight into the Old Testament by looking backwards from the Gospels, so quite often we have an added insight into the Gospels by looking backwards from John's account and from the New Testament letters. During the actual time there was much that they could not digest. Although there was much important teaching that they did receive, some teaching was beyond them; *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."*³

Although He spoke often of the fact of His coming death, He did not explain its significance to them at that time other than in fairly simple terms. It seems that they struggled even with the 'fact' of His death, and frequently missed the point. John's account includes this explanation; *you cannot bear them now*. The implication, of course, is that a time was coming when they would be able to 'bear them'. It is important to remember this when we read the gospel and when we see the behaviour of the disciples; they just could not 'carry' this real significance of this information and the Lord did not overburden them. The day came when the promise was fulfilled and by a unique gift of the Spirit He opened their minds... *Then He said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*⁴ At this point the purpose of His death began to come more clearly into focus.

John writing and commenting of the gospel events often gives us glimpses that were not enjoyed by the disciples of the day. So many things must have been quite beyond them. John the gospel recorder was almost certainly a disciple of John the Baptist, and it does not take much skill to see glimpses of him the gospel that bears his name. John Baptist's work had been to prepare the way for the coming Lord. His preparatory work included a 'call to repentance' and a 'baptism of repentance'; it not very appropriate that the first word we hear from his lips is 'repent'.⁵ John Baptist also had words of counsel and direction, but his supreme task was to pave the way for a clear view of the coming Messiah⁶. All the gospel recorders tell us that John Baptist referred to Christ as a 'Spirit and Fire Baptizer' but only John tells us of another description that John Baptist used.

When Jesus came to the Jordan and was baptized John Baptist had protested; *I need your baptism and you come to me*?⁷ John gave way and Jesus was baptized. John had another description for Jesus; not only was He to be a 'Spirit and Fire Baptist', but He was to have another unique role. *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*⁸ The Old Testament people of God had a very complicated priestly system with elaborate sacrifices which had to be performed in precise ways. The heart of this system was an annual event called The Day of Atonement⁹. On this day in symbolic action the sins of the nation of Israel were dealt with in a remarkable way. Two important truths were captured in the event by the use of two goats. The first goat suffered a death penalty for the nation's sin; this underlined the truth that 'the soul that sins must die'¹⁰. The second goat did not die but 'escaped' into the wilderness. Before it did so an important ceremony had taken place; *Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.*¹¹

In the pictorial truth of this ceremony the role of the goat was played by two separate animals but in the spiritual reality behind it, the two represented a double aspect, and the two goats are a complex picture of a single truth. As a result of the death penalty being enacted God's righteous punishment was received by a substitute; the goat. But as a result of the sentence having been enacted God was now able to 'remit' or 'send away' the sins of His people on the back of the second goat. The goats were both sin-offering and sin-bearer. Not only was the penalty suffered by a substitute but a substitute carried away the defilement from God's people.

The people of John Baptist's day were familiar with the ritual of the Day of Atonement and its two goats. The consequence for Israel was *...on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.*¹² They were familiar with the concept of a goat acting as a sin-bearer for Israel, but what can they have made of John Baptist's amazing statement? A lamb would now be a sin-bearer, and not for Israel's sins only but for the sin of the world. *Behold* said John. *this is not Israel's goat, but God's lamb, and He is the World's Sin Bearer.* We are familiar with the ideas now but for those of John Baptist's day it must have been 'mind blowing'. Christ's death then was not as a martyr or as an example but as a Sin-Bearer.

As a result of Israel's Day of Atonement God was able to remain among His people. Paul, the apostle, later wrote; *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*¹³. He is taking up all the symbolism of the Day of Atonement. Christ became the world's substitute, the Sin-bearer. Peter too, having had his understanding opened, saw the amazing implications of what occurred on the cross; *who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.*¹⁴

This truth is revealed again and again in the New Testament in similar pictures which illustrate different aspects of the same truth. One such picture is the symbolism of propitiation. There is a beautiful little picture of propitiation which lies almost forgotten in the story of Esau and Jacob. Jacob's cunning had opened up a gulf between him and his brother. Esau was so angry that he pronounced a death sentence upon his brother; *So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."*¹⁵ Jacob fled and the separation lasted probably for twenty years, but finally the time came for Jacob to return to his own land. His quick thinking had not deserted him and Jacob decided he must take steps to pacify Esau.

Jacob split up his family to ensure the survival of at least part of his family, and then set to work to get back into Esau's favour. To begin he sends a conciliatory message but is horrified to hear that Esau is on his way with what sounds like a small army.¹⁶ His solution was an costly present sent in installments with the intention of softening up his brother. The account is fascinating, as is Jacob's self-honesty. His thinking is recorded plainly for all to see; *"and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.'*" *For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me."*¹⁷ Although the circumstances are not very noble this is a perfect example of 'propitiation'. 'Propitiation' is the price paid in order to remove enmity.

It is an instinct deep in the human psyche. If I offend someone I may be able to 'put things right' by providing the right

t price. This was the instinct which caused the child to try to buy his way back into his mother's favour with a bunch of flowers, or even the husband who forgot the anniversary! Sometimes we even use the language; 'please accept this peace-offering'. That, in essence, is what a propitiation is; a peace offering. *I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.* It is the instinct behind all heathen sacrifice given to propitiate an angry local god.

How are we to understand Christ's death in these terms? Our sin is an offence to God and has opened up an enormous gulf between us. When we begin to understand this rightly our response is one of fear and a frantic search for the right 'peace-offering'. We can hear it in the voices of the people in Jerusalem on the day that Peter told them that they had executed God's King but that God had raised Him to heaven's throne. *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*¹⁸ That is the plaintive cry for a solution; 'what shall we do?'. What can we do to remedy the offence? How can we get back into God's favour.

Without the Bible's revelation men would attempt to find the price. Some still do. Some give costly gifts to church. Some give costly promises of lives to be lived 'better' than before. Without the Bible's revelation we can never calculate the cost of such reconciliation. The offence is far too great; the gap is far too wide for it to be spanned from our side. This is the background behind part of Romans when Paul, speaking of the redemption that is in Christ, writes; *being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*¹⁹ Paul says God has 'set out' the 'peace-offering'; the propitiation. We sometime say that Christ paid the price for our sins; the truth is even more wonderful... God paid the price, and the price He paid was the death, the blood, of His Son. Christ is the 'propitiation'; the price paid in order to remove the enmity. *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..*

Even in those dimmer days of the Old Testament the truth had been declared, but it was to be hundreds of years before its full interpretation; Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand²⁰.

Notes:

1. John 5:39 NKJ
2. 1 Peter 1:10-12
3. John 16:12-14
4. Luke 24:45-47
5. Matt 3:2
6. John 1:31
7. Matt 3:14
8. John 1:29
9. Leviticus 16
10. Ezekiel 18:20
11. Leviticus 16:21,22
12. Leviticus 16:30.
13. 2 Cor 5:18-21
14. 1 Peter 2:24
15. Genesis 27:41
16. Genesis 33:6,7
17. Genesis 33:20

- 18. Acts 2:36,37
- 19. Romans 3:24-26
- 20. Isaiah 53:4-10ff

Re: Section Two: The Remedy - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/21 5:32

Chapter 10

The Baptism

The death of Christ is spoken of in the Scriptures in many different pictures; each one bringing a new facet of the event into clearer view. Passages sometimes arrest our attention simply because they use symbols which come 'out of the blue'; without warning or expectation. One of these must surely be the idea of Christ's death as a baptism.

Chronologically, the first time He did this is recorded in Luke's gospel; *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"*¹ It comes in the context of a passage where He has spoken of the need to be vigilant and prepared for His return, and His thoughts have turned to future judgments. It seems that His thoughts connected this picture of a fiery judgment with a future experience of His own. I often thought it a great pity that the translators did not use slightly different language here. The last phrase might well have been translated 'it is finished' and would have given us an immediate link with the moment of this 'baptism'; *So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.*² This eliminates all possible of confusion; this baptism is the moment of His death. It is 'the hour' and the moment of 'propitiation'.

He describes the experience as 'a baptism to be baptized with'; which seems tautological to Western ears. The Hebrew language has a particular way of emphasizing something; it repeats the idea. This is the background of phrases like 'The Holy of Holies', 'The King of Kings', 'The Song of Songs', and many more. When James, in his letter, wanted to speak of intense prayer our English translations speak of 'fervent prayer', but James' own language speaks of 'praying with prayer'; *Elijah was a man like affected as we, and with prayer he did pray--not to rain, and it did not rain upon the land three years and six months;*³ The phrase then, as used by Christ, is not a pointless repetition but a way of indicating the intensity of the event. This, we might say, is the 'baptism of all baptisms'.

As we read the words of Christ it is clear that this 'baptism of all baptisms' is a event which must be achieved before other events can transpire. The New King James version says He was 'distressed', but the word really means 'held fast'. He was unable to unlock the future until this work was finished. All that He has come to do lies on the other side of this 'baptism'; there is no access to it without this 'baptism'. It is the focus of all history.

The same picture is captured in the book of Revelation. Mankind's history lies closed and sealed and John is overwhelmed with the distress of such an impasse. *So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.*⁴ Not until the Lamb had taken His place in the Throne could the future be released, and the Lamb is a lamb that has passed through death; *as though it had been slain*. The 'baptism' has unlocked the future.

The second incident in which Christ referred to His death as a 'baptism' is recorded in both Matthew and Mark.⁵ This time the context is dispute among the disciples as to who would get the highest status places in the coming Kingdom. Christ's response is powerful rebuke but in surprising language. *But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*⁶ Again we see this intense expression; *a baptism to be baptized with*. This time however it is associated with another symbol; the Cup. It was His destiny to 'take the cup'; to consciously embrace all that His Father's will included. The Cup is uppermost in His mind in the sufferings of Gethsemane; *And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup a way from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."*⁷ The imagery is very powerful. In our mind's eye we see the Father offering the cup, and Christ's phrase 'this cup'; it is no longer distant but at hand.

We see too His instinctive expression of Sonship in the word 'Abba', used only here in the gospels. His mission was not forced upon Him, but offered by the Father's outstretched hand. The word 'Abba' is an expression of nearest int

imacy. Mark's gospel records that en route to the journey to the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane Christ had quoted a piece of scripture from the prophet Zechariah; *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.'*"⁸ It is an amazing piece of scripture and one which explains the horror of Gethsemane. Its impact will be seen if we identify just who is speaking in the quotation; who is the 'I' of 'I will strike the Shepherd'?

The prophet Zechariah lived over 500 years before Christ. How could he have said something which struck such horror in the heart of Christ? It is a passage of scripture which sends a shiver down the spine. Without trying to explain the context let us just quote the words as we find them in Zechariah's prophecy; *And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.*⁹ The words appear suddenly in Zechariah's prophecy without explanation; *what are these wounds in thine hands?* These words point to the nature of what awaits Him in the next few hours, but it is not the nature of the wounds that breaks His heart, but their source. The one who speaks is God Himself; Jehovah of Hosts. Their horror is to be seen in the words *awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow... smite the shepherd*

For centuries God had instructed the people of the Old Covenant that He was 'One God'. *That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.*¹⁰ But in other parts of the scripture we have strange hints that the full story is more complex than this simple statement. It is not that the statement is not true, but that there is more truth to be added to it. In the book of the Proverbs, for example, the writer personifies Wisdom, and suddenly finds that Wisdom¹¹ speaks back to him. The word 'Wisdom' is very close to what John meant by 'the Word' in the first chapter of his gospel. Wisdom testifies to an existence that pre-dates the whole of creation, and to a wonderful intimacy with God; *I was by Him.*¹ It continues in a wonderful picture of an eternal fellowship of delight and laughter in 'heaven' before anything was made. This 'perfect fellowship of eternal co-equals' theologians have called Trinity. No shadow ever dimmed this fellowship; all was in perfect harmony... until the day God said 'awake, o sword, against the man that is my fellow'.

There is a little Bible cameo of Father and Son in perfect accord in the story of Abraham and Isaac. On two occasions in that account there is a simple phrase 'and they went both of them together'¹³; Father and Son journeying 'together' to the place of sacrifice. Abraham and Isaac went beyond the sight of those who travelled with them, and at Calvary Father and Son went beyond all human observation. Where no one could witness Abraham took the knife in his hand and began the downward strike, when an angel intervened and stopped him mid-strike. At Calvary there was no angel. It was not the wounded hands that broke Christ's heart, but the knowledge that His Father held the sword. Another prophet had seen it even before Zechariah; *He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.*¹⁴

Gethsemane was Calvary seen in prospect. A great Victorian preacher once said "The debt is discharged to the utmost farthing; the account is cleared; the balance is struck; the scales of justice turn in our favor; God's sword is sheathed forever, and the blood of Christ has sealed it in its scabbard."¹⁵ It was as though the Father had unsheathed the sword of His righteous indignation against all sin, and sheathed it once and forever in the body of His Son. But the pain of separation in that 'eternal moment' is conveyed in just a few words when Christ cried 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me'. The eternal consciousness of 'Abba, Father' was gone, and in its place there remained the determination to drain the cup to its bitterest drops. When the Greeks described the utter overwhelming of stricken ship they would use the word 'baptism'. This was His cup and His baptism.

There is an interesting question that Paul asked the disciples in Ephesus; *And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."*¹⁶ I wonder how we would answer the question if we asked it of Christ's Baptism; 'into what was He baptised?' John Baptist baptised his converts in water, and later Christ would baptise His sons in Spirit and Fire, but what was the element into which He Himself was 'baptized'? The term 'baptize' was used in many ways, including Greek cookery recipes. It had the idea of a thorough soaking through which the flavours of the marinade passed into the vegetables or meat. In that sense something which is baptised shares the nature of the element that it is baptised into. We can see this in the letter to the Romans where Paul speaks of a union which is produced by baptism; *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,*¹⁷ It was used to describe how a piece of white cloth 'baptised' into a purple dye would become united with the dye to produce purple cloth.

So we repeat our question; into what was Christ baptised? There is another clue half-hidden in a language. In Hebrew one word for sin is 'chataah', however, the word for 'sin-offering' is also 'chataah'. There is such an identity of the 'sin' with its 'sin-offering' that one word covers both. The consequence of this is that Bible translators have to look at the context to decide whether to translate the word as 'sin' or 'sin offering'. In one sense, just making the decision, interrupts the identity. For the Hebrew mind-set it would have been impossible to consider the one without the other. The simple answer to our question is that He was thoroughly united with humanity, not just its outward appearance, but with all that it had become. He was born as man in order to be completely identified with man; one with him. But the identification was made complete in the overwhelming tide of Calvary when He became baptised into all that mankind had become. Is this an extreme statement? *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*¹⁸ Some Bible students have said 'but this really means a sin-offering rather than sin'; in the heart of God and in the mind-set of the Hebrew there was complete identity between both. The judgment of the 'sin offering' was the judgment of the 'sin'. This is representation, identification and substitution; He was made sin. When the priest placed his hands upon the goat he said 'this for us, this is us, this is instead of us'.

There is a story which often comes to my mind when I think these thoughts. It is the story of the final conflict between an Otter, Tarka; and an Otterhound, Deadlock; in Devonshire. The Otterhound had been the curse of Tarka's family for generations; father, mother, mate and children had all fallen victim to Deadlock cruel jaws. Finally Deadlock chases Tarka into the coastal waters...

Deadlock saw the small brown head, and bayed in triumph as he jumped down the bank. He bit into the head, lifted the otter high, flung him about and fell into the water with him. They saw the broken head look up beside Deadlock, heard the cry of "Ic-yang" as Tarka bit into his throat, and the hound was sinking; with the otter into the deep water.

Oak-leaves black and rotting in the mud of the unseen bed, arose and swirled and sank again. And the tide slowed still, and began to move back, and they waited and watched, until the body of Deadlock arose, drowned and heavy, and floated away amidst the froth on the waters.

*They pulled the body out of the river and carried it to the bank, laying it on the grass, and looking down at the dead hound is sad wonder. And while they stood there silently, a great bubble rose out of the depths, and broke, and as they watched, another bubble shook to the surface, and broke; and there was a third bubble in the sea going waters, and nothing more.*¹⁹

Tarka had taken his ancient enemy down into death with himself. So our wonderful Saviour took down into death, with Himself, all that mankind had become. Our old man was co-crucified with Him²⁰. By death He rendered powerless him that had the power of death²¹. His great, bloody, baptism had brought all the consequences of Sin and Death in the human race to an end, in Himself. It was... all...finished.

Notes:

1. Luke 12:49,50 NKJV
2. John 19:30 NKJV
3. Jam 5:17 Young's Literal Translation
4. Revelation 5:4-7 NKJV
5. Matt 20:2-28; Mark 10:35-40
6. Matt 20:22; Mark 10:38
7. Mark 14:36 NKJV
8. Zechariah 13:7
9. Zechariah 13:6,7 KJV
10. Isaiah 45:6 NKJV
11. Proverbs 8
12. Proverbs 8:30
13. Genesis 22:6, 8.
14. Isaiah 53:3,4
15. Charles Spurgeon: "Death and Life in Christ" preached on Sunday Morning, April 5th, 1863
16. Act 19:3 NASB
17. Romans 6:4,5.
18. 2 Corinthians 5:21
19. Tarka the Otter: Henry Williamson
20. Romans 6:6

21. Hebrews 2:14

Re: Section II: The Remedy - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/29 4:08

Chapter 11

The Throne

The original governor of Pennsylvania wrote a book called *'No Cross, No Crown'*. It is a fascinating glimpse into the deep spiritual experience of the early Quakers. William Penn's intention was primarily to expound this truth in the experience of the believer, but in the earthly history of Son of God the title is even more true; His voluntary humanity was not a temporary experiment, but a permanent fact. The incarnation made God, man. Paul, the apostle, later opened out this truth *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* 1

Crucifixion was not only the death penalty but the ultimate humiliation and judgment of the worth of an individual; it was the final rejection of a member of society who died in disgrace. *When the Romans adopted crucifixion they reserved it for criminals convicted of murder, rebellion or armed robbery, provided that they were also slaves, foreigners, or other non-persons* 2. The coming of Jesus as the Son of God in flesh was a condescension beyond our imagination, but to die even the death on a cross was a scandal. The distance from the Throne of heaven to the Cross at Calvary is the longest journey in all history. But there could be no shortcuts; this is why He came.

The normal and logical destination for the bodies of the crucified was the city dump just outside Jerusalem. There in the continual burning of the valley of Hinnom the rejects were finally erased from history. One of his more influential disciples made a special formal request to be allowed to take away the corpse for *'burial'*. His bruised and battered body was laid in the quietness of a rock tomb, and his followers wandered off nursing their broken hearts and shattered dreams. The pain is witnessed later in the gospel according to Luke; *...Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel..."* 3 Is anything more poignant than the phrase *'but we were hoping...'*? The enthusiasm of the earlier years was gone now; their world is in ruins.

To understand the special ignominy of these events we should dip into the gospel according to Matthew. Matthew introduces the subject of his account using two key phrases; *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* 4 These are two glorious titles; Son of David, Son of Abraham. They tell us the whole purpose of Matthew's gospel. This is the gospel of the King, the gospel of the Promised Seed. Matthew's gospel is conspicuous for its use of phrases like; *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying...* 5 It is the gospel, which more than any other, reveals Christ as the fulfilment of ancient prophecy and promise; prophecies which have their clearest expression in promises given to Abraham, and prophecies which promised a *'new'* David. I can't think of better words to excite the imagination and hope of the ancient Israelite. We hear them again in the words of Philip spoken to Nathaniel at the very beginning of John's gospel; *Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* 6 After 2000 years we can still hear the excitement; *we have found him!* And we see Nathaniel's understanding of such words; *'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel.'* 7

But if it not been Joseph of Arimathea's successful request the body of their promised Messiah and King would have been smouldering to oblivion in the valley of Hinnom. If the journey from Heaven's Throne to Calvary's Hill was beyond our understanding, what shall we say of the return journey? Sometimes we need to set history's events into a wider context to see their real significance. How about this for a summary of Christ's Mission? *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.* 8 In that single sentence the scripture captures the whole picture. It covers the *'round trip'*; incarnation and enthronement. In between the two mountain peaks of this revelation there lies a hidden valley; Calvary and a rock tomb.

For the vast majority of the human race Calvary was the last sight they had of Jesus. His followers interned His body; the guard sealed the stone against interference. It was all over. It would never have touched even the footnotes of history but for one thing. *"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- this Man, deliver*

ed over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 9 The testimony of the witnesses of course is vital and God took care to ensure that their number was large¹⁰, although Peter explained to Cornelius that it was a select group¹¹. There was an event, however, which was much more public which occurred some 50 days after the crucifixion and interment.

For forty days Christ appeared and disappeared. The appearances are recorded in the gospel and this time was a vital part of the preparation for the future. During this time the disciples' hopeless disappointment was transformed into glorious hope. During this time Christ 'breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit'¹². Again, this was to all the people but seems to have been a unique authorising of those who would continue His work. Back in Old Testament times God had taken the 'spirit' that marked Moses' unique authority and 'put' it upon 70 elders of Israel¹³. The focus in Numbers is not so much of the personality of the Spirit but of His unique equipping ministry. Jesus breathed 'Holy Spirit' on them. Luke records this same resurrection appearance but does not mention this specific detail. Luke concentrates on other aspects of that same visit to the upper room; *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.* 14 I would have loved to have been at that Bible study! He interpreted the Old Testament¹⁵ in the dawning light of the New, and one of His key themes was the Kingdom of God¹⁶.

He also instructed them to 'remain in Jerusalem until a further event took place'¹⁷. They were not to begin their 'work' until this event. The King James version has the phrase 'tarry ye in Jerusalem'; the word is 'sit down'. They were not to enter into their labours prior to this event; they must 'sit and wait'. Let's not be coy any longer, He called the coming event 'the sending of My Father's promise'. They had needed and received a work of the Holy Spirit which 'opened their understanding' but they were still commanded to wait until He had fulfilled His promise to them. Everything would be coming together in their understanding now. When they had protested at the thought of His absence He had encouraged them with this promise; *"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.* 18 More profitable to have the Spirit than to have the Son? So He said! The word behind 'Helper' is a multi-faceted word which means supporter, advocate, encourager, strengthener; one called alongside to help another, and a legal representative. The 'coming One' would be all that they could possibly need.

He also tied in His leaving with the Spirit's coming; this was cause and effect. Without the 'leaving' there could be no 'coming'. No doubt they were much helped during those 40 days; *The first account I composed, Theophylus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.* 19 It was through the enabling and empowering of the Holy Spirit that those 40 days were filled with increasing revelation and expectation, but they were still to await His personal arrival.

Calvary + 40 and Christ's work on earth was done. He assembled the believers together on the Mount of Olives²⁰ and as He was blessing them He parted from them and was carried up beyond their mortal vision. What a thrilling picture it is? Christ with hands uplifted in blessing leaving the scene of His passion and triumph. He is the conquering hero, going home to receive the honour due to Him. No Roman 'triumph' was ever like this one; *when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive.* 21 The believers lingered to catch their last glimpse and two angels appeared to assure them that He would return. 22

The believers returned to Jerusalem... to wait. Their days were spent either in the upper room in prayer or in the Temple courts. What a transformation of despair to hope; *And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.* 23 They spent their days in growing excitement and anticipation. Did they know how long they must wait? Almost certainly; there is the feeling of a countdown in the opening verse of Acts 2; *when the Day of Pentecost was fully come...* 24 Why wait until the Day of Pentecost? We must leave that until the next chapter.

He had gone; but where had He gone? They had known that His atoning work was complete by the fact that He was raised from the dead, but now He had gone from their sight; how could they know what was happening? That little verse in Revelation with its great sweep of history will put it all into context for us; *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.* 25 He had come from the Throne over 30 years earlier; now He was returning. The culmination of the account of Christ's manhood is not reached

until He who left the Throne as God, had returned to it as both God and Man. Of course, eternity is a mystery and we can never really get our heads around it, but in straight-line time something happened in heaven that had never happened in the whole of eternity past; something happened at the level of the Throne. There is something that we can now say about the Throne that we could not say before His ascension; it has a new name, the Throne of God and of the Lamb. The old psalmist had written; *Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.* 26 The ancient Israelites had been schooled with the truth that God was Eternal and Immutable; never beginning, never ending and never changing. But something happened in the Throne which has changed things. It is captured in a little phrase scattered through the writings of Paul; *‘but now’*.

Let’s see how John expresses this truth. The Throne is the central reference point of the book of the Revelation. The list of prepositions used in connection with the Throne is almost endless; things are *‘in’* or *‘around’* or *‘above’* or *‘before’* or *‘on’* or *‘out of’* the Throne. For John, in his vision, it was the ultimate fact of life. It is not hard to see the significance for the man who recorded the vision. His world was in ruins. The religious system in which he had grown up had been swept away by the Roman legions and the symbols of that religion were all gone; the city, the temple, the priesthood... all gone. He had witnessed the new beginnings of the Church but by the time of his writing of the Revelation he is an old man, and the churches are under various attacks from within and without. It seemed as though they were in danger of being swept away too. Now, to make matters worse, he had been exiled to a penal colony on Patmos. Everything was running out of control... or was it? In the midst of John’s personal experience of traumatic change and decay he is given a vision of the Throne. The overriding message of the book of the Revelation is that history is not in the hands of the conquerors, but in the hands of God. His vision begins with the Throne; his message proper begins *John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne;* 27

After this starting point to the vision the Throne is not mentioned until John relays the message to the church in Laodicea; *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* 28 The first verse of this couplet is well known but the second is very significant. It tells us that Christ was able to take up His place again in the Throne because He had overcome or prevailed. He had accomplished His mission and had ascended the Throne. You can read the *‘Coronation’* hymn in Psalm 24. He is the victorious, warrior, Son who has accomplished His Father’s will and returned to the place of His inherent glory.

This truth of Christ’s accession to the throne is now relived in John’s vision. He is lifted up in the Spirit and sees a Throne. 29 He sees the Throne before he sees the One who sits upon it; the title of this part of the vision should be The Throne; there are 17 references to the Throne in these next two chapters. He sees that the Throne is occupied. That must have been a great comfort to John’s own circumstances; however things seemed from the earthly elevation, the heavenly vision showed that God was still on the Throne. It seems that John is watching a heavenly tableau. It culminates in the song of creation; *and the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.* 30

But in the midst of all this celebration John sees an unopened scroll in the right hand of the One who sits on the throne. It is protected with seven unbroken seals. John hears an angel asking *‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’* 31 It seems that a *‘man’* must open this scroll, and there is no-one who qualifies to do so. Heaven, earth and the regions beneath the earth are quickly scanned but the search is fruitless; *no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon,* 32 and John is heartbroken. It seems that *‘history’* is locked and God’s purposes blocked too. 33

One of the heavenly elders comforts John; there is a qualifier! *Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.* 34 The elder uses the word *‘overcome’* or *‘prevail’* that was used in the original promise of Christ to the church at Laodicea; *I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. John will now see this truth in his vision. And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.* 35 It is not incidental that we have a reference here which identifies someone as being from the tribe of Judah and as a *‘root of David’*; this is great David’s

greater son; this is the promised king.

The usual word for 'lamb' is 'arēn' but this word is 'arnion'; the diminutive form. In many languages affection is expressed by using a diminutive form of the name. The same is true here; this is a 'dear Lamb'. But this dear Lamb has been 'butchered'; that is not said for dramatic effect but is the real meaning of the Greek word used here. But then again this 'butchered' Lamb is standing; it has passed through bloody brutal death into triumphant life, and look where it is standing... in the midst of the Throne. Calvary's despised victim has become king over all. The book of the Revelation is full of symbols, and this 'dear Lamb' has seven horns and seven eyes. What can this symbolise? In the Bible's symbolic language the horn is a symbol of strength, and the eyes are the symbol of knowledge. This 'dear Lamb' has seven of each. We are not intended to paint the portrait of this vision; such a Lamb would be grotesque. Seven is symbolic of completion and fullness. The symbols of John's 'heavenly Lamb' signify that this Lamb has all power and all knowledge. That is a powerful combination. If he had all power but was without all knowledge, He would be able to do all things, but some things always remain beyond his knowledge, and consequently would go untouched. If he had all knowledge, He would be able to know all things, but unable to affect all things. In order to rule in completeness the Lamb must have seven horns and seven eyes, or as the theologians might say He must have omnipotence and omniscience.

We must leave the consequences of this to the next chapter. The Throne of God has become the Throne of God and of the Lamb, and that has changed the basis for all of God's dealings in the entire cosmos. Towards the end of the Revelation we have a clear statement; *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.* 36 It is only 'the one who sits up on the Throne' that can say 'Behold, I make all things new'. The limitations of His earthly experience are ended. He has passed through the heavens to the Throne of God. From this place He can begin His new creation, and from this place, the Throne of God and of the Lamb, will pour 'a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal' 37.

Notes:

1. Phi 2:5-8 NASB
2. John Stott "The Cross of Christ"
3. Luk 24:19-21 NASB
4. Mat 1:1 KJV
5. Matt 1:22
6. Joh 1:45 KJV
7. John 1:49
8. Rev 12:5 KJV
9. Act 2:22-24 NASB
10. 1 Cor 15:4-8
11. Act 10:40-42
12. John 20:22
13. Numbers 11
14. Luk 24:45-48 KJV
15. the phrase 'the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms' is a way of referring to the whole of the Old Testament by referring to its three main 'sections'.
16. Acts 1:3
17. Luke 24:49
18. Joh 16:7 NASB
19. Act 1:1-2 NASB
20. Acts 1:12
21. Ephesians 4:8
22. Acts 1:11
23. Luk 24:52-53 KJV
24. Acts 2:1
25. Rev 12:5 KJV
26. Psa 93:2 KJV
27. Rev 1:4 KJV
28. Rev 3:20-21 KJV
29. Rev 4:2

- 30. Rev 4:8-11 ASV
- 31. Rev 5:3
- 32. Rev 5:4
- 33. cf Luke 12:50
- 34. Rev 5:5
- 35. Rev 5:6 ASV
- 36. Rev 21:5-6 KJV
- 37. Rev 22:1

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/1/31 21:06

Quote:

-----The distance from the Throne of heaven to the Cross at Calvary is the longest journey in all history.

What a comforting statement.

Thanks Bro. Ron for another well presented entry into this series. It is a real blessing indeed!

God Bless,

-Robert

Re: Ready for Section III - posted by dann (), on: 2005/3/15 13:52

I am looking forward to the completion of this series.

Keep up the good work!

(edit: spelling errors!)

Re: Invite to Visit - posted by ReceivedText, on: 2005/4/22 14:52

Thought you might enjoy the articles section of our site. There are quite a few resources for you to refer to. Here's the link: (<http://www.bbconfire.com>) Bible Believers Church

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/22 16:37

Did you know that you were not supposed to scatter your website around SI?

Re: I was wondering - posted by lyndon, on: 2005/10/27 19:17

Has anything further developed on this book Ron? I was just going through my materials at home and found the first few chapters which I printed off. Just wondering if this book got stuck half way through or is more forthcoming?

Lyndon

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/10/27 20:51

Lyndon

There is the rest coming... sometime! I have several projects running just now and am struggling to get the priorities right. I would value your prayer.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/10/28 7:54

Strange how this was just brought up again. I had planned this morning to bring it up again myself. :-)

Re: - posted by beenblake (), on: 2005/10/28 11:27

Wow. This is very insightful. I think I am more excited about reading chapter 12 than I was to see the making of Star Wars Episode III.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless you in this.

Blake

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/10/28 12:09

Quote:

-----Star Wars Episode III.

Although I have given this work in progress the title 'Next Door to Heaven', 'the Empire Strikes Back' might have been a close contender!

Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2007/5/21 16:21

Hi Ron!

I was wondering if you ever finished this. I would love to read more.

Quote:

-----Preface

I The Diagnosis

1. Disobedience and Disaster
2. Death
3. Sin and Sins
4. The Old Man
5. A Lost Destiny
6. The Old Covenant

II The Remedy

7. Setting the Stage
8. The Hour
9. The Baptism
10. The Crown
11. The Throne

III The Application

12. Obedience and Restoration
13. Life
14. Forgiveness and Restoration
15. The New Man
16. The Hope of Glory
17. The New Covenant

IV How to...

18. Where am I now?
19. Hearing
20. Believing
21. Receiving
22. But if anyone does sin...

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2007/5/22 17:22

It is still in my projects file!