

Elements of Dispensational Truth
The Seven Churches

Chapter 4

What the Spirit Said to Ephesus

(Rev. 2:1-7)

Ephesus -- “from the apostolic age to the close of the second century” (Andrew Miller).

Introductory Notes

Let us now directly consider the seven assemblies. Paul was gone, who had had all the assemblies on his heart. Sadly, he had experienced the departure and the ruin lamented by him in 2 Tim. 1.

We know something about Ephesus from other Scriptures and it is most fitting, in the ways of God, that this should be so. In Ephesus we see the great point of departure: “thou hast left thy first love.” So we have references to Ephesus elsewhere; and there is the epistle to Ephesus written by Paul. He wrote no canonical epistle directly to any of the other six. However, the epistle to the Colossians was to be read in Laodicea also (Col. 4:16), which is not without its significance, Laodicea being the last of the seven assemblies here addressed.

Paul and Apollos had labored for the Lord in Ephesus (Acts 17:18-28). And when finally on the way to Jerusalem, to deliver the Greek’s collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, we have recorded that most touching scene of the stop at Miletus where he called for the elders of Ephesus and delivered to them His parting words face to face for the last time (Acts 20:17-38). Taken prisoner in Jerusalem, he was sent to Rome, and from the prison in Rome he sent the epistle to the Ephesians, setting forth great, heavenly truth. There was such a state then at Ephesus that it pleased God to make them the recipients of such an epistle. From the letter to Ephesus in Rev. 2 we gather that the things that the Lord commended were things that characterized Ephesus *when Paul wrote*, only when Paul wrote, Ephesus had not yet left its first love. Such was the original state at Ephesus. It is good for us to see the starting point. It was about AD 96,

when John wrote. The leaving first love is called by the Lord a fall (Rev. 2:5). The significance is that the fall of the church on earth, the church viewed in responsible testimony, had occurred; the church was not in the original state: it was fallen. What is meant by “the ruin of the church” had taken place.

Indeed, the ruin had taken place already near the end of Paul’s life. 2 Timothy shows this. 2 Tim. 1 shows a general defection in Asia from Paul, from the truth connected with his ministry. It was not apostasy from Christ. “All they in Asia” does not there mean every last Christian; he names two who did not defect. And, might we not judge that Ephesus had not defected, nor did Philadelphia, though certainly Thyatira had, along with Laodicea, and Pergamos also. The fact that each of the seven is a candlestick proves otherwise only in the minds of Christians who have a ‘church’ system that refuses to be fully separate from evil unto the Lord. The golden candlestick sets forth what was in the mind of God about the assemblies, while the Judge was examining the actual state.

Presentation of Christ

To the angel of the assembly in Ephesus write:

(2:1) These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps.

In each of the seven letters, Christ is presented in a character that is appropriate to the state of that assembly. But in Ephesus we have the first of the seven, and as occupying this first position, the Lord is presented in the most general way in His relationship as Judge to the assembly on earth viewed in responsible testimony. There is a spring from which flows the widening stream of failure and evil as unfolded in Rev. 2 and 3. The spring is, of course, leaving first love. As JND remarked, “The failure of the church is seen in its first principle, not in consequent details.” This is the source of what follows.

HE HOLDS THE SEVEN STARS IN HIS RIGHT HAND (2:1)

The right hand is the hand of power and sustainment, as in the OT which speaks of “the saving power of his right arm.” In that hand are the seven stars. Reliance upon Him is the resource. This notice of holding them in His right hand He only states to Ephesus.

WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN LAMPS (2:1)

He is the inspector of the lamp, and this presentation of Himself is connected with the threat to remove the lamp.

Commendation

(2:2) I know thy works and [thy] labour, and thine endurance, and that thou canst not bear evil [men]; and thou hast tried them who say that themselves [are] apostles and are not, and hast found them liars; (2:3) and endurest, and hast borne for my name's sake, and hast not wearied:

The commendation begins with the words *I know*, as does each commendation given. This is a comfort for the heart, but at the same time it is also a reminder that what does not please Him does not escape His notice.

WORKS, LABOR, AND ENDURANCE (2:2)

“Works” refers to things that are done while “labor” refers more to effort. It is not a question of success. Moreover, they endured, keeping at it.

Paul had spent but three weeks with the Thessalonians and to them he wrote:

. . . remembering unceasingly your work of faith, and labour of love, and enduring constancy of hope, of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father (1 Thess. 1:3).

The reader should examine the words work, labor, and endurance in this letter to Ephesus in the light of 1 Thess. 1:3 and observe the missing words: faith, love, and hope. It appears that at this time in Ephesus they did not rise this high, though of course, the Lord commended them. Outwardly, it may have looked the same. But the Lord looks within. Still, there was present that which He could, and did, commend; and if He commended these things, no doubt He will reward them.

It is good, dear brother, that we should be tested. I can say that for more than forty years I have had no other object than Christ; but I have learnt that one can be careless in respect of one's own soul, even when with all faithfulness one labors for the Lord according to His will -- the same power perhaps is not developed in the labor. In Thessalonians we read: “Work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope”; the springs were open, the three principles of Christianity. In Revelation: “I know thy works and labor and patience,” but “thou . . . hast left thy first love.” Oh, how often this is the case! not that at the bottom of the heart the love is grown cold, but the links between the labor and the love are weakened; a man works because the work lies before him. He loves the work, he would glorify the Savior, but his work does not flow in the same way from the fulness of the love of Christ's own heart. The soul is injured thereby. God in His love chastises us, and renews the flow of love in the heart. He sets us in His presence and speaks with us in our conscience. How full of love and patience is He! how tender with us! If He were not so, what should we do? Besides, the “I” of the heart is so deceitful. It takes account of the advantage of the work of benefitting the brethren. But in so far as it operates in us, it separates the heart from the realized presence of God. We are ever so ignorantly confident when not guided by the word of God. If I think of the Lord, and of His perfection, how He always had the right word ready, the right feeling of heart, how He always was as man before God, the wisdom of the love

that was evinced in Him, I feel how poor I am in my best endeavors to serve Him. Thank God, the work is His own -- by us according to His great love.¹

We must beware that as we serve the Lord that jealousy, envy, success, rivalry, and other ungodly motives, may be entering in, in some measure. It is self; therefore; and self-judgment is always in order. We need to deny ourselves (not meaning deny our self some *thing*), deny self, that Christ who is our life (Col. 3:4) is the life manifested in our walk.

CAN NOT BEAR EVIL MEN (2/ 2)

Evil must be purged out of the assembly. The motive must not be that we have a moral reputation. That would not be acting in first love -- love without admixture of self. In excommunication the first consideration is what is due the Lord; the second, the purity of the assembly; the third, the restoration of the wicked person. Does that moral order commend itself to you?

Bear with me in speaking of a case in which I was personally involved when about 31 years of age. Another brother and I had visited somewhere for ministering the Word of God. Late that night in conversation with one who was, as it was called, “a full time laborer” in the Lord's service, we were shocked to discover that he held F. E. Raven's denial that the Lord had a human soul. This is evil! And so, as in the case of the person guilty of moral evil in 1 Cor. 5, this person was also a *wicked person*, but the doctrinal evil was the worse of the two, for it pretends to come from God. If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do? This was not to be borne with. Subsequently, we had let some brethren know what we had found. Some began to characterize us as spreaders of evil. On the other hand, one brother, an ex-Baptist clergyman, of whom I have such a happy memory, wrote a letter of thanks to us for opening that old sore. He spoke to the wicked person and he said he got the doctrine out of him in five minutes. Another “full time laborer” talked to this person for an hour and said there was nothing wrong. And that “full time laborer” has written on Rev. 2 & 3 and called for return to first love! But as someone once said, “your walk is so loud I can't hear your talk” -- not meant in a complimentary way, of course. Evil is to be excluded.

If Ephesus had left first love and yet could not bear evil men, do you think that if they repented from whence they were fallen that then they would have borne with evil men? What? returned to first love and bear with evil men? Why, bearing with evil men is lower yet than having left first love!

TRIED FALSE APOSTLES (2:2)

Some wholesome words from W. Kelly are in order here:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into

1. *Letters* 1:513.

the apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13). And at Galatia, “I would they were even cut off which trouble you” (Gal. 5:12). St. John alludes to them, “They went out from us, but they were not of us” (1 John 2:19). “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

This early attempt of Satan to undermine the church from within was that which the apostles were constantly guarding against, and formed a considerable portion of the afflictions of the gospel. Trying indeed must it have been to the soul of the apostle, to find all in Asia turned away from him to listen perhaps to those who would set before them doctrines more suited to their tastes. It was thus too at Corinth, where although they had ten thousand instructors, yet not many fathers. Here was the germ of the evil: why not a class of men or a profession of men to be accredited as instructors and teachers, the same as prevailed in their schools of philosophy? This was the readiest way in man’s thought to provide for the instruction of the church; to keep to themselves teachers; and it was thus early in the church that we see its ruin provided for, and the dawning of that season which is not yet fully matured, when they would not endure sound doctrine. The secret is, that we can never be taught except in obedience. “He that hath an ear, let him hear.” Now a recognized class of teachers, as such, relieves from the responsibility laid upon us by the Lord. “Take heed how ye hear.” Men hear what they like to hear -- hear after their own lusts, instead of proving what they hear, and holding fast that which is good. Instruction to the church never assumes the ground of ignorance, but that of competent understanding. “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it” . . . “and ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:20, 21). And the Second and Third Epistles throw the responsibility on Christians, not of receiving teachers as teachers, -- let them bear what name they might -- but of testing their doctrine. In St. Paul’s discourse to the elders of Ephesus, the Spirit leads him to point out the corruption of the church as arising from within.

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29, 30).²

Clericalism may be indicated in those who say that they were apostles.

ENDURING, BEARING, AND NOTWEARYING (2:3)

This is not the same endurance as in v. 2. Here, enduring, bearing, and not wearying refer to their resistance and rejection of the evil men and the false apostles. What Ephesus thus resisted eventually gained entrance into the church on earth, viewed in responsible testimony. Ephesus had to bear with this harassment, they endured in their resistance and rejection of the evil, and they wearied not. It is good to begin well, but what about enduring, and not wearying? The Lord commended them for their tenacity in resisting. If we do

2. *The Schools of the Prophets*. See his 2 Corinthians, *in loco*.

not resist and reject evil, we will be drawn along to be like it. Evil cannot be tampered with without a dire consequence. If we become tired of resisting the evil will triumph over us.

Judgment

(2:4) but I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.

The word “*somewhat* against thee,” as in the KJV, is not present. Its presence would blunt the sharpness of the Lord’s expression of the seriousness of what was at work. What the Lord had against them, the leaving of first love, is the spring from which flows the influx of evil into the church viewed in responsible testimony. “First love” is love for the Lord that is free of admixture of self-consideration. It is like the love of espousal (Jer. 2:2) This is what produces “first works.” First works are works that are free from admixture from *self*. We must keep in mind that the leaving first love ends in Laodicea. In Laodicea everything is *self*. The descent is dreadful. And this is where the leaving of first love at Ephesus leads when it has worked fully. Leaving first love is the spring from which the river of departure from the truth of God broadens until, the rapture having taken place, it is spued into the great tribulation and leaps over all bounds to accept the final Antichrist of prophecy.

The degree to which we give a place for self is the degree to which Christ is displaced in our hearts. While that is true, that is not exactly what is expressed here. Do you think we ought to inspect our hearts to see if only a little displacement has taken place? -- and be satisfied with that? Oh, how much displacement *that* kind of inspection would really indicate had taken place and it would be hidden from ourselves!

In the measure that the heart is filled with other things, the springs of this love are weakened; and if we ask ourselves, Do you still think as much of your Savior as when you received Him for the first time into your heart? We notice that we have left our first love. I can be occupied with good things; I may seek souls; but if I no longer think as much about Jesus -- about what He is for me -- all is marred. If I am before God, I am always little; I feel myself responsible to God, and I am nothing. I judge myself, there is love; but if I get far from Him, I think of myself, and weakness increases. There is no longer the same discernment. There is no longer the same love. One is no longer at a height to view things as Christ views them; one is not at a height to show grace. This is the leaving of one’s first love, and of the patience of our hope.³

And do we not see this dawn in the natural relationships of life? Take husband and wife. A wife may take care of the house and fulfil all her duties so as to leave nothing undone for which her husband could find fault; but if her love for

3. *Collected Writings* 34:149, 150.

him has diminished, will all her service satisfy him if his love to her be the same as at the first? No. Well, then, if it will not do for him, it will not do for Christ: He must have the reflection of His love. He says, I am not blind to your good qualities, but I want yourself. Love, which was once the spring of every action, is gone; and therefore the service is valueless. If love is wanting, the rest is as nothing. It is true that our love cannot answer worthily, but still it may answer truly; for at least Christ looks for undividedness of object, though there be not adequateness of affection. There must be a dividedness of heart if there is instability of affection. This was the secret of all the failure at Ephesus. Undividedness of heart as regarded the object of affection had been lost, singleness of eye was gone, and the perfect reflection of that love which had laid hold of the church for Himself was gone. Still, while Christ says, "I have somewhat against thee," He marks everything that is good. "Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." Well, then, it might be said, What can the Lord want more? He says, I want herself. Remember this as regards the church. Then He says, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." To me this is a very solemn but touching word to us, for we have gone much farther from our first love than they; still the heart of him that is faithful finds a certain refuge in Christ, for his soul finds in the very reproach an infallible proof of His unchanged love.⁴

Admonition

(2:5) Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: but if not, I am coming to thee, and I will remove thy lamp out of its place, except thou shalt repent. (2:6) But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

Here we have the first of the corrective ministry from the Lord to the seven churches: correcting,⁵ condemning, calling to repentance, as well as His

4. *Collected Writings* 5:283.

5. Here is an example of how to use something nice-sounding to thwart true corrective ministry -- doing so right in the face of the corrective ministry given by the Lord in Rev. 2 & 3:

Yet now love for Christ had been displaced by love of correct ecclesiastical position, love of doctrine, love of righteousness, love of judgment. These were all right in their proper place, but much better if inspired by love for Christ. This the Lord saw to be lacking. Outwardly the church seemed healthy, but the Lord saw the heart -- their first love gone.

Is there not in this a lesson for today, for those who minister to the saints? Would not ministry of the person and work of Christ, intended to increase the believer's love and devotion to Him, yield better results than so-called corrective ministry? If we are brought back to our first love it would cause us to walk aright. Love for Him who loved us even unto death is superior in producing godliness than receiving advice from well-meaning brethren. The Christ who in love drew us to seek Him at conversion will

(continued...)

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approving of what He could commend. In 2 Tim. 4:16, 17 we read:

Every scripture [is] divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for correction, for conviction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work.

REMEMBER FROM WHENCE THOU ART FALLEN (2:5)

Previously we saw that they had *left* their first love. It was not lost, as if accidentally dropped somewhere. *Left* brings out the responsibility and *fallen* brings out the consequence. It is a solemn consequence. It signifies that the church on earth, seen in responsibility as a lightbearer, was fallen. I suggest to the reader that the teaching that we ought to see from this *fall* is that it is a fall from the state of the church on earth, in responsibility, as originally placed here in responsible testimony as a lightbearer. The state was not the original one as God had established it. The word *fallen* denotes a new state and it is this new state that is meant by the ruin of the church. We have seen the phrase "Darby's doctrine of the ruin of the church" used in a way that indicates the denial of this teaching of Scripture. Perhaps you will not receive such a teaching unless you read the words in Scripture, "the church is in ruins." Some do not believe in the "trinity," or in "the eternal Sonship," justifying their view by saying that those words do not appear in Scripture. But the truth meant to be conveyed by these expressions *is* found in Scripture.

In a previous article it was pointed out that the lamp will not be removed until Christ appears in judgment. The removal of the lamp has in view the mystery aspect of Rev. 2 & 3, which indicates the church on earth in responsible testimony as a lightbearer is in view. As to Ephesus itself, it continued for some centuries.

FIRST WORKS (2:5)

First works are works produced by first love. First love is love free from admixture of self. Works produced by love free from admixture of self are works free from admixture of self. Those are first works.

5. (...continued)

daily produce in us love to keep us ever near to Himself. The contrast between the first love of the Ephesian church and the love of orthodox procedure that the Lord found in it is well illustrated in the love of the Shulamite for the person of the Shepherd (Cant. 5:10-16) as contrasted with the love of one of the daughters of Jerusalem who rather appreciated Solomon by reason of his ancillary glories (Cant. 3:6-10) (John Boyd, "The Things which Are," *Assembly Testimony*, p. 77, -- the year of issue has escaped me).

It is his self-sparing advice which is out of step with the Lord's way with the seven churches and we had better follow His way. Not content to hold back corrective ministry himself, he would hinder those who do give it -- and try to make it appear that this is godliness in ministry. Rather, it is shirking responsibility and helping on the decline while making a lovely sound!

It is because He *loves* that He comes to *search*. He must on the ground of love to me, search my works now. If Christ's love is perfect towards me, He desires that when I come face to face with God, He should find my works perfect before Him; that is, walking before Him according to certain traits of character. The things done are not so important before God as the formation of character. Many things He has to repress, and one object of Christ in searching and trying is to prove His own work in us to God.⁶

I AM COMING TO THEE, AND WILL REMOVE THY CANDLESTICK (2:5)

It is important to see that Scripture shows us that the point of departure is the point of recovery, or restoration. We find a most instructive example of this in Gen. 12, 13, where Abraham recovered himself -- but not without having a Hagar in the house. However the case with individuals, with such a thing as the nation of Israel, or such a thing as the church on earth viewed in responsible testimony, when ruin had occurred, there is no recovery, no matter how many calls to repentance are given.

I could not accept (through grace) anything short of the picture of the church as God first gave it. Take even man as man: alas! I have lost innocence; but can I accept any standard lower than the total absence of sin? Nor is this all; for God now raises up a more excellent object of desire before my heart, in which He replaces what is lost by the full revelation of Himself, His own glory in His people. Hence the saint has to judge his state, not by that from which Adam fell, nor even by the first state of the church only, but by the Christ he has to meet.

There are thus two ways in which God is judging: the departure from the first condition of blessing; and then how far the fulness of the blessing to which God is calling us is met. Thus it is by our past blessing and our future blessing that God judges us. As we see in all the addresses to the churches their departure from original blessings, and the enquiry how far their present condition corresponds with the blessing to which they are called, and which is spoken of in promise. Paul could say, "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, I press toward the mark": when a man can say this, then his conscience is good and happy with God in view of the glory before him. But this I would desire to press on all your souls -- that your standard is wrong, and your affections are wrong, if you are doing anything but following the Christ of glory presented to the eye of your heart. You know well the church has not kept its first love. O remember that though He is patient, He cannot lower the standard, and therefore "repent." There is abundant grace to lift up and to restore; but my conscience could not be happy if God lowered the picture He has given me of the church.

Man has lost innocency; but blessing has come in by the cross, and though I have not attained the glorious result of that redemption manifested in the glory of Him that accomplished it, "I press toward the mark"; my conscience could

6. *Memorials of the Ministry of G. V. Wigram*, London: Morrish, p. 148, third ed.

not be happy otherwise. Suppose the thought of the Lord's coming to receive us to glory were very present to us, how many things would disappear! How many objects that we now cling to, how many sorrows and cares that burden us, would be nothing, were the hope of His coming steadily before our eyes! "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

But the church has lost her first love, and has also lost her expectation. The hope of the Lord's coming makes Him very present to our souls, so as to judge the condition in which we are. You are called to meet Jesus; are you in such a position as would make you ashamed before Him at His coming?⁷

THEY HATED THE WORKS OF THE NICOLAITANES (2:6)

Here we note that the *works* of the Nicolaitanes are hated. Works, deeds, practices, often are followed by a doctrine concerning such practices in order to justify what is wrong.

There are cases in which Christ approves hatred. "Thou hatest" that "which I also hate." The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes brought in a licence to evil with the character of grace, thus putting into association Christ and evil. And this is a terrible thing -- the bringing in that which associates God with evil; for Satan would imitate or counterfeit grace, and thus associate God with evil, the very thing that God says -- "my soul hateth."⁸

And what, it may be asked, is Nicolaitanism? An elaborate explanation has been proposed, based solely on a supposed etymology of the word Nicolaitan; *Nike* in Greek being victory, and *laos*, the people. Hence it has been assumed that Nicolaitanism meant an overcoming of the people; and this is taken to be the rise and prevalence of clerical authority. But this derivation, even supposing it to be actual, and not more than a fancy attached to a mere name, would just as well bear the meaning of a victory by the people over some one else, as a victory by some one else over the people. The explanation, however, is based upon a fallacious theory; 'a name in Scripture,' it is alleged, 'is always significant.' That it is SOMETIMES so, that it may be so, would be within the mark of sober interpretation; but to adopt it as a universal rule would give a precarious scope to imagination, and certainly tend to unsound exegesis.

That Nicolaitanism can scarcely mean clericalism seems palpable from the fact that clericalism has already been dealt with in plain language in this same epistle (v. 2). And when so treated, the tone used towards each subject is so different as scarcely to permit of their being the same. The rejection of clericalism is very simply and moderately commended, but the utterance about Nicolaitanism is exceedingly strong, and it closes the judgment upon Ephesus: "I will remove thy lamp out of its place except thou repent. BUT THIS THOU HAST THAT THOU HATEST THE WORKS OF THE NICOLAITANS, WHICH I ALSO HATE." We are not told what the works were. Another has said, "This strong expression in the mouth of our Lord, unquestionably points

7. *Collected Writings* 5:270-272

8. *Collected Writings* 5:285.

at deeds of abomination and impurity.” Ephesus, at all events, was faithful as to the solemn evil, whatever it was; they had the mind of Christ about it – there was no apathy; they” hated” the works of the Nicolaitans, and the Lord hated them too. How intense is God’s hatred of unholiness! Respecting Nicolaitans, we shall find more in the Epistle to Pergamum.⁹

Call to Hear

(2:7) He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

In Mark 4:24 we read: “Take heed what ye hear.” In Luke 8:18 we read: “Take heed therefore how ye hear.” We are in some moral state of soul when we hear and this is pointed to by the word “How” in Luke 8:18. It is well to be exercised about this when we hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

Promise to the Overcomer

(2:7) To him that overcomes, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

In view of observing the first of the seven cases of promises to the overcomer, we should be careful to note that it is not a question of overcoming the world -- although, of course, if the world gets inside the church, then that must be overcome. The point is that we must overcome the wrong and evil inside that which is in the place of responsible testimony, the church on earth.

Eating of the tree of life indicates the blessedness of fellowship we shall enjoy. And where shall it be enjoyed? In a place where evil cannot gain entrance as it did in the earthly Eden. It is in the paradise of God, above. The earthly Eden was not something that could satisfy the heart of God. In the paradise of God above, all is ordered for His enjoyment and delight. All that is there will answer to what is in His heart. And there we may eat of the tree forbidden to Adam; not a literal tree in our case, of course, but Christ Himself.

Whilst we feed on the fruit of it, “the leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2). When the church is in glory, it will not lose the character of grace. God gives us now to feed on the bread of life; our first delight must be in God, but then, secondarily, we have the joy of love in being

9. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 11:157. William Lincoln and F. W. Grant wrote in support of the thought that the clergy is meant. What is interesting is that when clergyman accept the view, they make clergy to mean priests. Here is C. I. Scofield’s note on p. 1332 of the reference bible:

If the word is symbolic it refers to the earliest form of the notion of a priestly order, or clergy, which later divided the equal brotherhood (Matt. 23:8), into “priests’ and “laity.”

made ministers of blessing unto others. Well, so also in glory our portion will be grace, but we shall be able likewise to minister in grace to others.¹⁰

The two trees in Eden represent in one case responsibility and in the other case life. Man took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, acquired that knowledge, and found himself lost and powerless to do the moral good. He was totally lost. Adam had never eaten of the tree of life in Eden, the earthly paradise. That would not be permitted. Access to the tree of life was going to be provided by God, but not via man’s presumptuous thought to gain it through discharging responsibility. *Fallen* Adam became the head of a fallen race. God has arranged it that there are two men (1 Cor. 15:47-49). All the offspring of fallen Adam come under that description, “the first man.” For the first man (you and me in our natural, lost condition, looked at as in Adam fallen) there is no access to the tree of life in the paradise of God on the basis, or ground, of responsibility. How then can one eat of the tree of life? J. N. Darby remarked:

The tree of life, which is here referred to, is no longer in man’s paradise, but in God’s. In Eden, the paradise of man, there were two trees. Satan succeeded in entering there, and all was marred; but God’s paradise was arranged by Him and for Him, after all was lost, and that by a work of love and glory, which causes the other to be forgotten. The paradise of God is a work of grace, which is the consequence of what it is God’s good pleasure to do when man has failed. The paradise of man was a test of what man is; that {paradise of} of God is the consequence of the fact that Christ has resisted and overcome all evil. As the other was the place where the responsibility of the first Adam was -- responsibility as to which he failed -- we are placed with the life of Christ in us, and put to the test in the midst of evil with that life, not as men, but as Christians.¹¹

Two things are always found, as in the garden of Eden, responsibility and life -- the two trees. Adam acted in his responsibility, and failed as to it, before having life. This is why God must needs drive him out of Eden, because God did not permit that he should have life together with sin. There are the two great principles, responsibility of good and evil, and life: Christ alone has reconciled them. When the law was introduced, it presented responsibility, and not life. The law places man in responsibility as to his salvation; but instead of life, it pronounces condemnation and death. Christ, on the contrary, takes the responsibility on Himself, and becomes at the same time the source of life. Christ took upon Himself our responsibility before the judgment of God, and has placed us under a much higher responsibility -- responsibility according to that life which He has given us. Consequently, He judges Christians, not to condemn them, in their everyday conduct. But treating them according to the holiness of this life, He judges their walk, that grace may always be given them, according to their need, and to maintain them in communion with the Father and

10. *Collected Writings* 17:351.

11. *Collected Writings* 34:151.

with Himself. He intercedes at the same time for His own before God, not to obtain their justification, which He has perfectly accomplished, but to take them out of their difficulties and maintain them in the path of faith.¹²

Earlier, it was pointed out that the promises refer to things that the first man (1 Cor. 15:47-49) forfeited and an article about this would be quoted concerning this fact, integrated into our consideration of each assembly respectively:

To the church in Ephesus He says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Here we get the earliest of the forfeited gifts between Adam and the Creator in the garden of Eden, "so God drove out the man." But in the new title of "I am he that liveth" the Lord grants the promise in redemption order, as well as in resurrection power; and leads the overcomer to eat of the tree of life (of which Adam never ate) which is in the midst of the paradise of God, where the first man never was. A garden in Eden is lost, it is true; but the paradise of God is gained. The flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the tree of life, is sheathed by the knowledge of a crucified Christ; and He who was dead takes the place of the cherubim and affirms, "I will give to eat of the tree of life and in the paradise of God."

Let it be observed, this new bestowment is not merely regaining a place of blessing between God and man, but, being now embodied in Christ, acquires a fulness of meaning which His own worthiness before the Father brings into it, for the eternal delight of Himself and the redeemed, where the tree of the knowledge of good and evil never grew.¹³

So there is something far higher than man's restoration to an innocent state, which, of course, could not be, and that is that Christ Himself is the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. In that place of glory Christ will surely be everything, and first love shall have its place. The tree of life is Christ Himself. We shall enjoy communion with Him having no admixture of self.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

12. *Collected Writings* 34:148. See also 5:286.

13. *The Bible Treasury* 8:365.

Elements of Dispensational Truth *Romans 9-11*

Chapter 9.3

Romans 11

Rom. 11:22-29

God's Governmental Ways Consistent With His Election

(Continued)

THIS MYSTERY (v. 25)

Christian Conceit. Paul now addresses his readers as brethren. It would be a colossal mistake to think that because he here speaks *to* brethren that he only speaks *about* brethren in Rom. 11. He desires that they be not wise in their own conceits -- such as that the last thing God will do on earth is with the church. That is a conceit, denying Israel's fulness and supremacy as a saved nation on earth, through whom the government of the earth will proceed under Messiah. A Christian is wise in this conceit when he regards the privileges of the Gentile graft as the last work of God. This conceit is one specially opposed by the Spirit of God in Rom 9-11 as is the Jewish conceit that claims privilege based on natural descent alone.

The Two-part Mystery Concerning Israel. The OT was silent about the mystery of Christ and the church (Rom. 16:25); it was hidden from ages (from time periods), and it was hidden from generations (from persons) (Col. 1:26). Where was it hidden? It was not hidden in the OT; it was *hidden in God* (Eph. 3:9). This is the great mystery to which others are ancillary and subordinate:

. . . it is the special mystery, ancillary to the prosecution of the great mystery, of setting aside Israel as blinded for a time, "in part," until the fulness of the Gentiles was come in. This was a peculiar plan of God, which was not exactly the Church nor the kingdom, but a temporary displacement of the earthly part, not its establishment under the new covenant, nor Messiah, but the setting aside of Israel in part, under blindness, until the fulness of the Gentiles should be come in. Then this preparatory thing being accomplished, the blessing of Israel, as such, would take its course according to the enlarged scope of the counsels of God, which embraced the heavens also. It was a subordinate special mystery, for naturally Israel would have been continued placed under the new covenant,

and the Gentiles blessed with God's people; but all this is for the moment set aside, that the Gentiles, as a special thing, according to the counsels of God, to whom all His counsels are known from the foundations of the world, may come in. This then also is a special mystery, though serving in its place to the development of the great mystery of God's will in result.¹

That Israel will be blessed under Messiah cannot be the mystery of Rom. 11. That blessedness was plainly declared in the OT. That Gentiles would be blessed when Israel was restored cannot be this mystery (i.e., a thing previously hidden), for that also was plainly declared in the OT. The mystery in v. 24 is composed of this:

The blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the nations be come in.

This involves two parts:

1. partial, not complete, blindness of Israel; and
2. during a period wherein will occur "the fulness of the nations."

"Blindness in Part is happened to Israel." Some of the natural branches remain in the Olive Tree all through the time of the Gentile graft. Since the removed Jewish branches were removed because of unbelief (vv. 17, 23) the branches that were not removed (Jews) turn out to be believers, therefore.

The Fulness of the Gentiles.

The Jewish system closed, we know, to let in the Gentiles. The Gentile will close, to let in the Jews back as such to the place of promise, which will then indeed extend, in its own way, over the earth. Not that there was any failure, nor could be, as to God's accomplishing His own work of grace; but blindness in part had happened to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles had come in, all the Gentiles who had part in Christ's glory -- the true church, in a word -- what completed the number thus brought in by the gospel.

Then the Gentile history of grace and the church would cease, and Israel be saved as Israel, as a nation (which of course cannot be while the church time is going on, where there is neither Jew nor Greek); and not only the Jews but all Israel; when Christ should come, the Deliverer, out of Zion -- not from heaven to take to heaven, but turning away ungodliness from Jacob in the place of His power on the earth. The Gentile professing system will be cut off, unless popery and infidelity be continuing in God's goodness. And, note here, it is not God's goodness continuing. Only just then it is displayed in the fullest way; the fulness of the Gentiles will be come in, and taken up then to heavenly glory. But as a system on earth, they will not have continued in God's goodness, and, as such, they will be cut off. These are the ways of God on the earth, not the security of the saints for heaven. There is a place of promise and blessing into which men are introduced; and they outwardly partake of what can be

1. J. N. Darby, *Notes and Comments* 2:108.

participated in on earth, but are not necessarily really partakers of Christ; Heb. 6.²

"Fulness" (πλήρωμα) in v. 24 is the same word used of Israel in v. 12. The full complement of the elect Gentiles during the time when God is not dealing with Israel is what is meant in the latter case; while in the former case it says that the entire nation, cleared of all the obdurate of heart, will be saved. Note, then, that the epoch of the present ingathering of the Gentiles terminates with the cessation of the preaching of Paul's gospel. Note that Rom. 11:28 states:

As regards the glad tidings, [they are] enemies on your account; but as regards election, beloved on account of the fathers.

The interval between the rapture and the appearing of Christ is a transition period during which the present gospel will not be preached. God will form an election of Israel, as such, and not as part of the church. They will recommence the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

These two fullnesses are connected with the purpose of God, which is to glorify Himself in Christ, in two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly.

Bearing in mind that the OT predictions of Gentile blessing have the millennium in view, we observe that the present ingathering of Gentiles involves a trusting ahead of that time. Hence in Eph. 1:12 we read:

. . . that we should be to [the] praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ: in whom ye also [have trusted], having heard the word of the truth . . .

Speaking of the fulness of the Gentiles and the olive tree as a whole, J. N. Darby responded to the notion that a body cannot exist if others are to be added to it. It is quoted in the footnote.³

2. *Collected Writings* 3:185.

3. . . . to suppose as a general principle that the body cannot exist if there are yet other persons to be grafted into it, is mere self-deception. The apostle calls the assembly a body; that was the principle of the institution; nevertheless it was augmented every day by means of the joints and bands which minister nourishment, Eph. 4. The apostle had no idea that a body could not increase and finally arrive at the point that the fulness of the Gentiles should be come in. An army can recruit itself and be always the army. I do not say the Gentiles were grafted in by the act of an altogether exterior dispensation. That which God had established pure, Satan, availing himself of the sleep of man, had spoiled. Those who had been grafted in did not abide faithful; Christendom is the result, and we must not confound all this with the reconciliation of the world, which is only in a special manner connected with it. Let me also recall to mind, that in setting up the kingdom of heaven the Sower recognizes no other field than the world; possibly all is not sown; but it is the object of His attention, the field of His toil and the scene of His judgments. The Lord speaks of it as a whole. That may be an abstraction, but it is the abstraction of the Spirit of God, received and understood by those who are spiritual. For the Spirit of God makes His thoughts to enter into those who are humble of heart; He conceals these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes. (*Collected Writings* 1:321, 322).

How Does This Bear on the Time of the Rapture of the Saints? It might be argued that at the same instant that the fulness of the Gentiles occurs, Israel's blindness ceases, and that would be at the appearing of Christ in glory, thus supporting posttribulationism. J. N. Darby remarked:

The only attempt to prove the non-rapture of the Church which might seem to have Scripture to warrant it is that founded on Rom. 11:25, that blindness happens to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. But it proves nothing whatever, save that blindness is on Israel till the Church be complete. Then Israel's judicial blindness will cease. What the process is by which they are brought to be ready to own Christ, so that He comes (for He does not, till they are) is not spoken of. Other passages enlarge upon it -- the sorrows, exercises, awakenings, pleadings which take place before the answer of grace, in the personal return of the Lord, comes. With these passages it proves the contrary of non-previous rapture, for, till the Church is complete, there is blindness, and these exercises of the heart according to Scripture are the proof that blindness is taken away, though the answer be not yet come.

'All Israel,' I think, results naturally enough from the fact that he speaks of blindness 'unto Israel.' In grace he had spoken only of branches broken off from the stock of promise, but, in fact, the nation, as such, was in outer darkness, for a time blindness was on it, the veil on their hearts. When the fulness of the Gentiles should be in, then this, as to the national condition, should be changed. ⁴

If we do not take "until" as a strict terminal point, i.e., it need not mean that the blindness ceases instantaneously with the terminal point designated "the fullness of the Gentiles; then JND's conclusion is correct.

There can be no Gentile addition to the Olive Tree after the rapture. The testimony of the Jewish remnant is different than from what obtains now. At the rapture there remains nothing but the cutting off of the present corrupt Gentile professing system. The godly Jewish remnant that proclaims the gospel of the kingdom is in the Olive Tree. The heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1) that was interposed into Israel's earthly calling comes to an end at the rapture. The earthly calling recommences and God will have a godly Jewish remnant rendering testimony to the coming of the kingdom (the gospel of the kingdom). However, the nation will not be declared to be Ammi (Hos. 2) and receive national status until after the appearing of Christ in glory. During Daniel's 70th week, the godly Jewish remnant will be in the earthly calling and will be as an election of grace in the Olive Tree as natural branches. But that is not the grafting in again spoken of in Rom. 11. It was the *nation* which was broken out and it is the *nation* which will be grafted in again.

There is another passage, to which W. Trotter directed attention as bearing

4. *Notes and Comments* 4:239.

on this matter, and that is Acts 15.⁵ And this shows the validity of JND's observation above that "it proves nothing but that blindness happens to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Yes. Rom. 11:25 does not prove that the blindness in part does not continue for a short time after the fulness of the Gentiles has occurred.

James answered, saying, Brethren, listen to me: Simon has related how God first visited to take out of [the] nations a people for his name. And with this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written: After these things I will return, and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and will rebuild its ruins, and will set it up, so that the residue of men may seek out the Lord, and all the nations on whom my name is invoked, saith [the] Lord, who does these things known from eternity (Acts 15:13-18).

God's work of taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name is proceeding right now. It is after this that Christ will return, appear in glory, and then rebuild the tabernacle of David that is fallen. This is the sequence.

It is clear that there is a godly Jewish remnant during Daniel's 70th week, and you cannot have two remnants, a Jewish one and a Christian one. There has to be a Jewish one, preserved from the worship of the Beast and from receiving the mark of the Beast, in order for them to form the saved nation consequent upon the appearing of Christ in glory. It is a myth promulgated by the heretic B. W. Newton, the posttribulationist, that there would be a preserved Jewish remnant, not in relationship to God, while there was a Christian remnant also in the 70th week. He had to connect Christ in the Psalms with this Jewish remnant seen in the Psalms, which, according to his system, must be at a distance from God, but preserved from the mark of the beast so as to be able to form the millennial nation; and so He taught that Christ, thus connected with that Jewish remnant, was at an "unspeakable circumstantial distance from God" ⁶ -- a horrid blasphemy, to save his posttribulationist scheme. ⁷

It is when the Deliverer turns away ungodliness from Jacob that the natural branches are grafted in again.

ISRAEL'S FULNESS (v. 26).

All Israel Shall Be Saved (v. 26). Israel, too, shall have a fullness (v. 12). That

5. *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects*, London: Morrish, p. 198ff, new ed.

6. This is discussed in some detail in my *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 2, available from the publisher.

7. I suppose many posttribulationists are not aware that their system requires a preserved Jewish remnant to go through the great tribulation, which does not worship the Beast or receive his mark, in order not to be judged, and thus be able to form the saved nation of Israel in the millennium. It would not do to have a saved Christian remnant and a distinct, saved Jewish remnant at the same time, would it?

will be the time of the realization of the OT prophecies.⁸ The election of the future Jewish remnant is what will compose the nation then -- not every single Jew on earth, for the obdurate in heart will have been removed by various judgments. Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7) shall indeed take its appointed toll, but Jacob shall be saved out of it and enter into the blessed "morning" of the Psalms, when the upright in heart shall have dominion over the wicked, whose comeliness shall be for Sheol to consume (Psa. 49:14. The elects sons of Jacob shall be bathed in the fountain for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1).

That Jacob or Israel is elect for earth, scripture does teach; and that as a nation they will be blessed -- the gifts and calling of God being without repentance -- scripture teaches. But this says nothing as to their souls being saved; but the positive testimonies to the contrary are clear. (Isa. 65:9.) Read the whole chapter, which teaches positively that only a remnant shall be saved. Chapter 66 shows the same truth if there be intelligence. Rom. 11, while plainly declaring their certain blessing as a nation, yet lays it in an election according to grace, and at the time of the people's deliverance -- when "all Israel shall be saved." Dan. 12 is quite clear that an elect remnant only who are written in the book shall be delivered, and that many shall arise to shame and everlasting contempt. Zech. 13:8, 9 is also clear as to there being only a remnant spared from the great tribulation; if the Lord had not left them a very small remnant, they would be as Sodom and Gomorrah. And note, these statements apply to the time when it is said all Israel (not all the Israelites) shall be saved. Isa. 4 clearly teaches the same truth, that it is in a very small remnant this blessing will be effected: not all Israel, because they are not gathered to the church, but saved as a people -- all that are spared.

As to the ten tribes we have the same testimony, that only a remnant will be delivered. Zechariah shows us two thirds cut off in the land -- Jews. Ezek. 20 teaches us that the rebels of the ten tribes will be purged out, and not allowed to enter into the land. And in this very place where the rebels are cut off, and not allowed to enter into the land, there it is said of all the spared ones, "There shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me," making the teaching of scripture too plain to leave a trace of doubt. But the truth should have hindered such a delusion, because where Israel's restoration is taught, it is not only said they were blinded, but they did not attain to the law of righteousness. The application of "mercy upon all" is an utter mis-application. What the apostle is teaching is, that as the Gentiles had no promises, and it was sovereign mercy to them, so the Jews, having not only broken the law, but rejected the promises in rejecting Christ, in whom they were, come under mercy like a Gentile, though the promises would be fulfilled. The "all" in v. 32 (Rom. 11) refers to Jews, and Gentiles in vv. 30, 31. In the last you must read, "Have not believed in your mercy that they may be objects of mercy." (See Isa.

8. For a survey of the OT promises concerning the regathering of Israel see *Collected Writings* 11:268-278.

10:20-22.) Nothing can be plainer that the deliverance is for the remnant only.⁹

The Deliverer Shall Come Out of Zion.¹⁰ Jehovah will roar from Zion in the time of Jacob's deliverance (Joel 3:16, 17).

DOES ISRAEL MEAN THE CHURCH?

If Israel means the Church and Jacob means the Church, let us try v. 26 that way.

And so all the Church shall be saved. According as it is written, the deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from the Church."

It is objected that the literal view of this would result in the untenable position that all Jews are and will be saved, or all Jews of one generation will be.¹¹ We are pleased to know that a literal view means that all Jews of one generation will be saved. Antidispensationalists cannot believe this. What his problem really is, is *unbelief*. Will the deliverer come out of the church and turn away ungodliness from the church and so all the church shall be saved? The amillennialist, P. Mauro seems to think so:

This section of the Epistle begins with the declaration of a fact which caused the apostle great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, namely, that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel" (9:6). Observe here the phrase, "all Israel," concerning which we are now inquiring. And observe further that what we here are told is, not what it includes, but what it does not include. The "all Israel" of this passage does not embrace all who are Israelites. Paul is here speaking of his "kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites" (ver. 3, 4). And what caused him such acute anguish of mind was the fact, revealed to him by the Spirit of God, that not all these, but indeed only a few of them, were to be included in the "all Israel" of God's purposes. It is simply impossible that Paul

9. *Letters of J.N. Darby* 2:440-441.

10. If the apostle used the Septuagint Version of two passages in Isaiah (Isa. 59:20, Isa. 27:9; compare also Jer. 31), in the Greek text as it now stands the phrase is neither "to" Zion, as in the Hebrew, nor "out of" Zion as in the epistle, but ἕνεκεν ("for the sake of"), save in two copies referred to by Holmes and Parsons in their great edition of the LXX, one of which is certainly a correction, the other probably so. That Origen, Chrysostom, and Theodoret cite according to the New Testament decides nothing against the common text of the Seventy. And this is confirmed by the plain fact that Origen, who had quoted the prophet when interpreting Psalm 14 according to the apostle's form of citation, gives in his Hexapla the text of the LXX, just as it now stands, while we see Aquila and Symmachus adhering precisely to the Hebrew. It is evident to me that the last verses of Psa. 16 and Psa. 52 fully and literally justify the apostle, who was directed by the Holy Spirit to use the Old Testament in such a way as looks lax to the hasty, careless, or unbelieving, too disposed to regard an inspired man as like themselves, but really with the most comprehensive wisdom and the nicest exactitude, so as to convey the mind of God as contained in His word, not in one text only but out of many interwoven into one. The Deliverer will come to Zion, out of which He will subsequently send the rod of His power for the full deliverance of His people, in the day that He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob and place him for ever under the new covenant (W. Kelly, *Notes on the Epistle to the Romans, in loco.*)

11. S. G. Bilezikian, *Eternity* (Philadelphia: Evangelical Foundation) July, 1964, p. 4.

could have penned those words of poignant grief; it is impossible, I say, that he could have wished himself “accursed from Christ” for the sake of his “kinsmen according to the flesh” if he had held and was about to declare the doctrine now frequently attributed to him, namely, that all the Israelites in the world were to be saved at the second coming of Christ -- an event the Christians of that day regarded as imminent. That doctrine, which was the very corner stone of the Judaism of that day, Paul had cast aside; and it was moreover an important part of his ministry to expose the falsity of it.¹²

The words “And so all Israel shall be saved” (v. 26) have been strangely misunderstood. They have been taken to mean that all natural Jews are to be saved in a coming dispensation. But they cannot possibly be made to yield that meaning. The adverb “so” declares how (not when) “all Israel” shall be saved. It refers to the process of grafting into the good olive tree branches from “a wild olive tree” and branches broken off from the good olive tree itself; and it declares that “so,” that is to say, *in that manner*, and hence necessarily *in this present dispensation of the Holy Spirit*, “all,” the Israel of God shall be saved.¹³

According to spiritual alchemy, he tells us that all the church will be saved! Jacob = Church; Israel = Church; Israel of God = Church; and he claims what no instructed dispensationalist believes for one moment, namely, that all Israelites in the world at the second coming will be saved. Cp. Ezek. 20.

ACCORDING AS IT IS WRITTEN (v. 26)

We are told by Paul in this very book (Rom 16:25) that the mystery (i.e., of Christ and the Church) was not mentioned in the OT. Therefore what Paul refers to, when he says “Even as it is written,” cannot refer to the body of Christ. Isa. 59:20, 21 show this is for Israel, literally understood.

The Deliverer is the same person mentioned in 1 Thess 1:10. In the OT He is the “Goel,” the Kinsman-Redeemer, whom Boaz, as the Kinsman Redeemer, typifies.

GOD’S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL (v. 27)

No doubt the reference is to the new covenant under which Israel will have the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 8:12). J. N. Darby gave a helpful summary of matters connected with this status for Israel:

The Mediator, Christ Jesus, has appeared. The work is done -- the blood shed. But the new covenant is not yet made with the two houses of Israel and Judah. Hence, in Hebrews, it is remarkable how the apostle, writing for those who now anticipatively enjoy its spiritual privileges, constantly waives the discussion of its direct application. In fact, that is reserved for converted Israel by-and-by. There is really no difficulty. Those of the Jews, and we of the Gentiles, who

12. P. Mauro, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 246.

13. P. Mauro, *The Hope of Israel*, p. 150.

now believe in Jesus, come into a distinct position as one body, but possessing all the moral blessings of the new covenant. The fulfilment of it pertains to the Jewish people in the last days, when Messiah reigns over them. Jesus died “for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” {John 11:51, 52}. His death will avail for both purposes: the time and order of applying it is another question. In fact, we know that Israel refused the message, and hence the blessing remains in abeyance till the fullness of the Gentiles is come in. Then, and when the Redeemer shall come to Zion and out of Zion (for both are true), “all Israel shall be saved.” Of course, all the efficacious value for Israel then, as for us now, is in the blood of the Lamb. If Israel will have sacrifices, as well as an earthly temple and priesthood, they will be only commemorative signs of the one great offering of Christ.¹⁴ The epistle to the Hebrews excludes these for the Christian. The question of the Jew by-and-by is answered by their own prophecies.¹⁵

The old covenant was ‘do and live.’ The new covenant is ‘live and do.’

ISRAEL, ENEMIES NOW -- BUT ELECT (V. 28)

Israel Now. As regards the gospel, the nation are enemies. The natural branches that have been cut out of the olive tree shall not be grafted in by the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. *Israel as a nation* is cast away at least as long as the gospel of the grace of God is preached, and even a little longer.

Is it as individuals that they are enemies as touching the gospel? Of course not; the gospel goes to Jew and Gentile alike. It is not a question of individuals but of the position of the nation, as a nation.

“As regards the glad tidings, [they are] enemies on our account.” This also shows us that as long as “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) is preached, the nation remains in that position. This will be true “until the fullness of the nations be come in” (v. 25) at the rapture, and then God will take up the Jews again, forming a godly remnant which will become, under Christ, the saved nation.

Israel According to Election, Beloved on Account of the Fathers (v. 28).

There are two elections in this chapter. Verse 28 is the election *of* the nation but v. 5 is an election of *grace from among* the nation. As regards the election of v. 28, the *nation* cast away is beloved for the fathers’ sake. How can you dream that Israel means the church?

If this is the spiritual Israel {the church construed by spiritual alchemy to be that}, it is nonsense. They are “beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” Who? gentiles?

14. {Observe that the millennial High Priest is Christ, the priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13). His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedec, and that it is founded upon the finished work. Hence Israel’s sacrifices look back to a finished work and are memorial, i.e., commemorative}.

15. *Letters* 3:324, 325.

never; but Israel; for God is the “God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.” “Enemies for your sakes.” Is the spiritual Israel that? Never. Nor can believing Jews be said to be so either.¹⁶

. . . the question treated is that of the Jews, as God’s manifested people, of Jews, according to the flesh, who are enemies as to the gospel, but beloved on the principle of a national election on account of the fathers.¹⁷

Read Rom. 9:3, 4 again.

THE GIFTS AND CALLING OF GOD (v. 29)

It is all well to use v. 29 as a general truth but let us be aware that the Holy Spirit is applying it to Israel as a nation and, as the rest of Rom. 9-11 does, denotes a future for Israel as a nation beloved for the fathers’ sake and beloved on the principle of national election. Indeed:

For I say that Jesus Christ became a minister of [the] circumcision for [the] truth of God, to confirm the promises of the fathers (Rom. 15:8).

The Lord Jesus died for the nation of Israel (John 11:51, 52).

Israel is spoken of in v. 28 in their national character. “They are enemies for our sakes” does not mean the election of grace. The gifts and calling of God therefore refers to Israel as a nation.

The *gifts* are noted in Rom. 9:4, 5. The *calling* is noted in Rom. 9:7.

Cf. Num. 23:19; Psa. 89.

Israel, unfaithful as men, have lost all title to the enjoyment of the promises by the rejection of Him in whom they were to have this enjoyment. They were, after all, children of wrath as others; but that will not hinder God from fulfilling His promises. He cannot be unfaithful to His promise, whatever the unfaithfulness of man may be. His gifts and calling are without repentance, and the blindness of Israel is only temporary. This is what Romans 11 teaches; as the Lord Himself said to them, “Your house is left unto you desolate . . . till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” But here is the perfect wisdom of God. Israel having rejected the Christ when He came to present Himself to the nation, they are without remedy. It will be the sovereign grace of God which will reinstate them as being only poor sinners in the enjoyment of the promises, according to the word. Israel, under chastening, and kept for that day, abide without the true God, and without a false god, according to the prophecy of Hos. 2; and God, during this interval, brings in the fulness of the Gentiles, displaying His multiform wisdom in the calling of the Church, a heavenly people, established upon more than promises, on a perfect redemption, accomplished through the act by which Israel placed themselves under condemnation.¹⁸

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

16. *The Girdle of Truth* 2:379 (1857).

17. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 2:523, Morrish ed.

18. *Collected Writings* 3:348.

Elements of Propitiation, Substitution, and The Righteousness of God

Chapter 9

The Showing Forth of The Righteousness of God *Romans 3:19-26*

(Continued)

The Actings of God Are in Accordance with His Righteousness

(Continued)

Does Not Mean Imputing the Righteousness of God. Note well that last quotation from JND. I repeat a part of it to emphasize an important matter:

No one who knew what scripture means by imputed righteousness could for a moment speak of imputing the righteousness of God.

We note that the subject here in Romans is not the matter of 2 Cor. 5:21: made the righteousness of God in Him. Let us not jumble everything together. In the place in Romans we are considering, note that sins, guilt, the blood, the righteousness of God, and the justification of those who are of the faith of Jesus are before us. Keeping in mind, then, that Romans, through ch. 5:11, deals with sins, let us note this from the pen of A. C. Ord:

This passage gives us the relation between the blood of Christ and the righteousness of God, displayed toward us, in justifying us according to its efficacy, declared in its being put upon the mercy-seat or propitiatory; an act which represents its full value according to the righteousness of God, whose throne is the mercy-seat. But 2 Cor. 5:21 goes further than this, for there we find its {i.e., the righteousness of God’s} relation to the death of Christ as bearing sin {not sins}; and that we are “made the righteousness of God in

Christ.” . . . ¹

It is quite clear that OT saints were not “in Christ,” and so could not have been made the righteousness of God in Christ (Cp. 2 Cor. 5:21). But the subject here in Romans is not that of being made *the righteousness of God in Christ*, but of being *accounted righteous*. And that makes room for OT saints to have been accounted righteous by God, though, of course, that was not a revealed basis of standing before Him. And this is confirmed by what we read of Abraham in Rom. 4:3:

And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Abraham was held by God to be righteous in virtue of faith. See the lengthy footnote by JND to this Scripture. Abraham was reckoned, or accounted, righteous by God. It follows, of course, that this is true of all OT saints. And so we read of them as the *just*. The spirits of *just* men made perfect (Heb. 12:23) refers to OT saints. Moreover, the OT saints have part in “the resurrection of the *just*,” which is the first resurrection.

So Rom. 3:22 refers to the actings of God’s righteousness, that which acts toward unbelievers, and that which acts upon believers. What is involved with God’s acting on believers in accordance with His righteousness is partially given in Romans. There is more than what we have in Romans.

W. R. Newell found JND on the subject of God’s righteousness more clear and *illuminating* than that of any other, he wrote; and WRN would repair JND where he was wrong-- and does that not mean, then, that the *most* illuminating treatment of all must be that of WRN? Fact is, he has *darkened* the subject. I mean no disparagement of the personal piety of any man when I say that there are numerous attempts at improving on J. N. Darby by those holding what is to me a pseudo-dispensationalism, the effect of adhering to it resulting in ignoring of truth, darkening of truth, and retrogression, all the while claiming improvement.

The NIV and Rom. 3:21, 22. W. Kelly spoke of the Revised Version of 1881 mutilating the text. Hear the NIV:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (Rom. 3:21, 22, NIV).

This perversion concerning the righteousness of God by the NIV is systematic in Romans. In Rom. 1:17 we read: “a righteousness from God is revealed.” In Rom. 10:3, the perversion reads: “the righteousness that comes from God.” Is it not apparent that there is an immense difference between “a righteousness from God,” and the NIV’s “the righteousness that comes from God,” and what we have seen the passages really teach?

1. *Justification and Acceptance With God*, Morganville: Present Truth Publishers, p. 26, available from the publisher.

What is involved in this false translation is the introduction of a quantum of righteousness being credited. It opens the door for the covenant theology notion of the believer being credited with a righteousness that come from Christ’s righteous law-keeping, rather than God’s accounting a person righteous. This much WRN rightly saw. On v. 22, the strictures, both as to the text and the false meaning of the resultant translation apply. “To all them that believe,” is as, WK noted, towards believers, if they want it. And so the truth of God is frittered away in favor of theological figments!

ROM. 5:18: TOWARDS ALL

If substitution were for the whole world, it would save the whole world. ²

Rom. 5:18 is properly understood as having to do with propitiation, not substitution. The bearing of this distinction on understanding this passage was pointed out by J. N. Darby:

Rom. 3:22: “The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe”; not unto and upon all them that believe, but the righteousness of God is unto all, and upon all them that believe; “δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ εἰς πάντας, καὶ ἐπὶ πάντα τοὺς πιστεύοντας.” The Jews had been convinced of sin; the Gentiles had been convinced of sin; they had no righteousness in which to stand with God. Whether Jew or Gentile, they had no hope in themselves; but the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ was not towards Jew or Gentile, but towards all, “εἰς πάντας.” Moreover it was upon all (ἐπὶ τοὺς πιστεύοντας) those that believe; they stood in that righteousness.

We have another most important instance in verse 18 of chapter 5. “Therefore as by one offence towards (εἰς) all men, to (εἰς) condemnation.” This was the aspect of the result of the offence (intercepted, as regards them that believe, by the death of Christ); “so by one righteousness towards (εἰς) all men, to (εἰς) justification of life”; if, as in the English translation, it had been “upon,” for which the scriptures use ἐπί, all would have been justified. We know it is not so, nor does the scripture say so. The aspect of the act is as wide as the aspect of the act of the first Adam; the effect is quite another and a distinct question. We have, in the former passage, seen it to be pronounced *upon* them that believe. These remarks make, I believe, quite clear what the English translation renders very difficult to comprehend. The word translated (Rom. 5:18) “upon all” is the same as “unto all” in Rom. 3:22, not as “upon all” them that believe. It shows that the free gift was unto (that is, towards) all in its aspect; but that its effect, and the acceptance of people under it, is quite a distinct question. The accuracy and perfectness of scripture is additionally illustrated. Εἰς seems to exhibit the natural consequence, the effect of anything looked at in itself: it may or may not involve the coming to the result; taken in itself it has the effect, for the tendency of anything is that which *per se*, or left to itself, it would produce or arrive at. The word may be seen in many passages

2. *Collected Writings* 19:245.

of Rom. 6 so used.³

Then what is the explanation of Rom. 5:19?

In v. 18 we have the universality of the bearing of the act of Adam and of the blessed Lord; in v.19 the positive efficiency or effect on those who were actually connected with these two heads. "Many" is "the many" -- the mass of persons actually connected with each of these heads. The sin of Adam did not confine itself, in its effect, to him. By the disobedience of one, the many connected with him were constituted sinners. By the obedience of Christ, the many connected with Him were constituted righteous. This is not responsibility and imputation (there every one is dealt with according to his own works, to which judgment and propitiation apply), but a state into which the many were brought by the head to which they belonged, in contrast with personal responsibility. One man's -- Adam's -- disobedience involved those connected with him in the condition of being sinners; the obedience of One -- Christ -- constituted those associated with Him righteous, putting them in that state and condition before God. It is in contrast with individual responsibility, though each individual connected with the head is placed in the state consequent on what characterized his conduct. The "many," in their condition, were such before God in consequence of the conduct that characterized the head. It was not what met the actual conduct of the individuals, but a state of the individuals, which was the result of the characteristic action of the one who stood as the representative and head of his race before God. It was a state dependent on the conduct of the head. This is the great point here. The Lord and Adam, by their act and conduct, bring those connected with them into a certain condition.⁴ ♦

By one righteousness the free gift came towards all, not in the sense of application, the meaning in each case is to or towards all (Greek *eis*), not upon all (Greek *epi*). As the one offence did not rest in its effect on Adam only, but run over to all, so the effect of the one work of righteousness did not end in Christ, but passed on toward all, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Verse 19. When it is a matter of application, it is the "many," not "all," that is, the many respectively connected with each head, therefore I can go to all to preach the gospel to every creature, saying to the sinner, the blood is on the mercy-seat; but to the believer I can say, You are righteous, "so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."⁵ ♦

FOR THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE

God has everyone in view. No one, not even the Jew, has any advantage now. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.⁶

3. *Collected Writings* 13:11.

4. *Collected Writings* 26:148. See also *Letters* 1:98, 99 for important comments on these matters.

5. *Collected Writings* 26:337.

6. Why does the Scofield age-ism system teach that man is still under testing when God has pronounced all come short; and all under sin (Rom. 3:9)? That signifies a conclusion of the test.

THE GLORY OF GOD

It has been pointed out that this (Rom. 3:23) does not refer to God's essential glory -- because all creatures fall short of that. It means that no person is fit to stand in His presence, in the glory of His presence; all are unsuited to it. Yes, the glory of God is involved in this matter of the righteousness of God. It has been noticed that righteousness can meet the claims of righteousness but only a cloud can meet a cloud! -- referring to the cloud of the incense that rose from the hot coals from the altar, rose in the tabernacle to cover the mercy-seat (Lev. 16). Oh, my soul, a cloud met a cloud -- glory met glory! The Shekinah was there between the cherubim of glory. There was the glory-cloud of the presence of Jehovah between the cherubim. And there rose up a cloud that spoke of the unspeakable glory of the person of the Son of God giving Himself upon the cross -- imparting the glory and value of His person to the work being done. The incense was compounded of ingredients that speak of His glories -- and a sentence of death hung over all who would attempt to compound its like. It rose up before the Shekinah from off the hot coals and glory met glory. The cross brought out that which met the glory of God. There arose, as it were, from the cross, nothing but what glorified God. And the blood was brought in to be put on and before the mercy-seat.⁷ It typified the blood of the One who glorified God on the cross. And so Scripture presents propitiation as commensurate with His person. Scripture language is: "He is the propitiation." It is Himself that is the propitiation. It is the sacrifice of Himself that is the propitiation; and as we shall shortly see, He is also the mercy-seat.

All sinned but Christ, and not only did He not fall short of the glory of God, He brought infinite glory *to* God. It is instructive to observe that there is now the gospel of the glory of God:

. . . the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God, with which *I* have been entrusted (1 Tim. 1:11).

"Glorious gospel" is a translation which lowers what is meant. The same is true in another passage:

. . . in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is [the] image of God, should not shine forth [for them] (2 Cor. 4:4).

What about the gospel of the glory? What is almost always preached is man's need, not God's glory.

7. When the soldier pierced the Lord's side there came out blood and water. Then the vail was rent, from the top down. The work was done and its effect felt immediately before God, who, in virtue of that precious blood, rent the veil. Years ago I remarked to A.C. Brown that I noticed in W. Kelly's book on Mark, that he said that the blood rent the veil. He squinted his eyes slightly, stared at me for a moment, and then with great feeling, said: "*Of course* it did!" Praise God!

When therefore he was gone out Jesus says, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in him, God shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately (John 13:31).

There are two glories of Christ spoken of here. Note that in John 17:4 the Lord Jesus that the He had glorified God *on the earth* and finished the work given to do. Of course, He spoke anticipatively, as having accomplished the work. His whole course had glorified God on the earth, but there was something special to occur in glorifying God; and that was that on the cross he glorified God. But note that the Son of man was glorified on the cross: “Now is the Son of man glorified.” The incense rose up from the hot coals of the altar. The cloud of the incense covered the mercy-seat (Lev. 16). It was glory meeting glory. It was the glory of Christ rising up as the cloud, one glory meeting the other.

Not only was God glorified in the cross, but Him who so glorified God must be glorified in Himself, and it must be done immediately – not wait for the millennial kingdom, but enter glory then.

And not only did the Lord Jesus enter as man into the scene of glory in heaven, and acquire glories that He will share with us, but there is that mind-prostrating statement in John 17:5:

and now glorify *me, thou* Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was.

This is more than entry into heaven itself. It is to enter *as man*, as to presence and place, into the **Godhead glory** that the Father and Son had before the world was! Oh, indeed, the relationship of Father and Son was from eternity to eternity, and here it is seen. There is the eternal glory of the relationship of Father and Son in Godhead glory; and now, having glorified God on the earth, and having finished the work He was given to do, as man He entered that very glory! That, of course, is a glory He cannot share with us – but we will behold it (cp. 2 Cor. 4:6; Acts 7:55).

Christ the Mercy-seat

. . . being justified by his grace through the redemption which [is] in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:24, 25).

In the tabernacle, the mercy-seat was where the glory of God rested. The blood of the first goat, typifying propitiation, was presented before the Shekinah. The Shekinah now rests on Christ. *God must be approached in accordance with His righteousness*. What righteousness? -- the righteousness of God Himself! There is a mercy-seat that is presented to man. What is that mercy-seat? It is Christ! By what does he approach? -- “through faith in his blood”! God has now set forth Christ as a mercy seat and it is through Christ that God is approached --

“through faith in His blood,” the very blood presented in the sanctuary. When

“The very spear that pierced Thy side,
Drew forth the blood to save,”

the infinite, unspeakable value of that blood was *immediately* in the sanctuary before God, and consequently the veil was rent from the top to the bottom.

It is in the power of that blood that we are justified with respect to our guilt and our sins (Rom. 5:9).

Of course, it is by grace we are saved, through faith; and that faith itself is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). You would be utterly wrong to think that the words “it is God’s gift” means that grace is the gift. The view in Eph. 2 is that the sinner is *dead* in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1),⁸ hence *quicken*ing (being made alive) is applied and faith is imparted. Eph. 2 is so obviously the divine operations that it is only the perversity of our natural hearts that would pretend that we are not totally lost by nature and pretend that we somehow conjured up faith, instead of it being implanted within us by God. All of this is because of God’s grace acting on our behalf. Faith is the divinely communicated instrumentality of appropriation -- “*through* faith in His blood.” We are justified by God’s grace through an instrumentality -- “*through* the redemption which [is] in Christ Jesus.” Redemption goes further than the ransom of 1 Tim. 2:6. The “ransom for all” spoken of there is connected with propitiation, as is Christ’s death for all (2 Cor. 5:14). Redemption means setting the believer free and has to do with substitution.

Here is a helpful quotation on the subject of Christ as the mercy-seat, or propitiatory:

And what was the result of Christ’s coming? That God was shown to have been righteous throughout Old Testament times, as, indeed, He is now, in blessing every soul who receives the gospel. “Whom [Christ Jesus] God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare (1) his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God to declare (2) I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:25, 26). God’s righteousness is, therefore, said to be declared in regard to His remission (or, strictly, the praetermission {Rom. 3:26b}, that is, forgiveness based on that which was coming) of the sins of Old Testament believers, and also in regard to His present act of justifying the believer in Jesus.

Now, observe that this public declaration of God’s righteousness is connected with Christ as the propitiatory. It is in this character that Christ displayed God’s righteousness: “Whom God set forth a propitiatory . . . to declare His righteousness.” For it is a remarkable fact that a different word is

8. The view of the sinner in Romans is that he is alive in sins.

used by Paul from that used in John's Epistle. This fact can be verified by anyone having the slightest acquaintance with the Greek tongue, and is noted in most versions. In John's Epistle, Christ is said to be the *ἰλασμός*, but in the Epistle to the Romans He is called the *ἰλαστήριον*. We have one other instance only in the New Testament of the use of the latter word, which establishes its meaning beyond just question. The apostle, when enumerating the furniture of the holy of holies in the ancient tabernacle, spoke of the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat (*ἰλαστήριον*, Heb. 9:5). From the two passages, therefore, there can be no doubt that Christ is the Antitype of the mercy-seat, or propitiatory, as He is also the *ἰλασμός* or propitiatory sacrifice (1 John 2:2; 4:10, whose blood was sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat (Lev. 16:14)).

It will be remembered that Moses was to make the mercy-seat of pure gold, and to place it upon the ark of testimony. "There I will meet with thee," said Jehovah, "and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat" (Ex. 25:17-22). Fine gold was emblematical of the intrinsic righteousness of God, as brass was of His judicial righteousness. Hence, when the blood of the victim, on the great day of atonement, was sprinkled upon the golden mercy-seat, the act clearly signified, in type, that the claims of Jehovah's righteous nature were glorified thereby. And the seven-fold sprinkling before the propitiatory indicated that a foundation was thus laid for communion with Jehovah, as He had said to Moses.

In the epistle to the Romans (to which we have been referring) we find the mercy-seat, the blood, and the righteousness of God, all associated together. For Christ Jesus is shown as the propitiatory through faith in His blood to declare God's righteousness. This declaration He has made. As the exceeding riches of God's grace will be declared in coming ages (Eph. 2:7), so God's righteousness has been already declared "at this time." Moreover, it was done here below. For this Epistle deals with the position of the believer in this world, not in the heavenlies as is done in the Ephesians. So the moral history of the world is summarized to prove it guilty before God; and where the fruits of man's unrighteousness abounded, there -- not in heaven -- God's righteousness in justifying the ungodly was demonstrated. In Old Testament times, as may be seen in the book of Job, the possible relation of unrighteous man to a holy God was unknown; but now Christ has declared it to be consonant with God's righteousness by becoming a propitiatory. In His own blessed Person lifted upon the cross, He formed the blessed answer to all the righteous demands of God.

Is there a difficulty in that Christ is the sacrifice, and, moreover, the mercy-seat where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled? It is no greater difficulty than in Christ being both the Shepherd of the sheep and the Door through which He leads them (John 10). It was unbelief that could not understand how Christ could be both David's Son and David's Lord. Such paradoxes do not stagger faith. All the difficulties vanish when we remember He was "God manifest in flesh." An ancient writer (Theodoret) has put it: "The Lord Christ is God, and the Mercy-seat, and the High Priest, and the Lamb, and in His blood He has worked out our salvation." Christ is indeed all. His

Person is one, and His work is one. Herein was the great distinction between the Antitype and the types. They were many and varied and terrestrial; and they were, by reason of their very nature, in all points exceeded by the Antitype, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

To insist on the necessities of the type in the Antitype is to speak derogatorily of the Person of the Son. In the type you must have a person to take the blood of the sacrifice from the altar to the mercy-seat; but in Christ the sacrifice and mercy-seat coincided, and hence there was no necessity for such transference of His blood, as in the type. And, on the word of Christ Himself, the work was finished when He bowed His head, and dismissed His spirit (John 19:30).

Moreover, the fact of the closure of the work was attested by the veil of the temple being supernaturally rent from the *top* to the bottom (Mark 15:38). The veil signified of old that the way into the holiest of all, for communion with God from above the mercy-seat, was not then made manifest (Heb. 9:8); but when rent thus it proclaimed that a new and living way into the holiest had been dedicated; so that by the blood of Jesus we may enter with boldness. But the veil was emphatically a figure of Christ's *flesh* (Heb. 10:19, 20), and plainly points that the work whereby the restrictions of the most holy place were removed was accomplished in His flesh ^{9*} on the cross, and not in heaven after death. For Christ's death (the rent veil) declared the way open, which implies that the work on which this could be righteously done had then been accomplished, and, moreover, accepted by Him for whom it was accomplished. ¹⁰

In the tabernacle, the mercy-seat was hidden. Not so with the antitype, for Christ has been set forth by God.

Showing Forth His Righteousness

What God's righteousness requires He has provided in the work of Christ. The work of Christ has satisfied God with respect to His righteousness. By the cross, the righteousness of God dealt with the guilt of the old man, the first man -- dealt with his sins in a manner that glorified Himself and allows Him to act consistently with His own glory and righteousness. It is righteous and owing to Christ that God act as He does in view of the work of Christ on the cross.

REGARDING SINS OF OT SAINTS

Here we look at the translation of Rom. 3:25 by W. Kelly:

whom God set forth as a propitiatory through faith in His blood, for a declaration of his righteousness on account of the praeter-mission of the sins

9. Cp. Col. 1:22 -- "You . . . hath he reconciled in the *body of his flesh* through death." Scripture speaks of no atoning work in the disembodied state.

10. W. J. Hocking, *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 10:344-346.

that had been before, in the forbearance of God . . .

One of the reasons that God has set forth Christ as the mercy-seat, the propitiatory, is for the declaration of His righteousness with respect to the sins of the saints in OT times. He showed forbearance with them in view of the cross – looking toward the coming work of Christ that would glorify Him and manifest His righteousness. So the work of Christ includes provision for the OT saints. God has settled the matter of those sins and there can be no charge of unrighteousness against God. The cross has vindicated God against any such charge, showing Him righteous in all His ways.

IN THE PRESENT TIME

The first reason that God set forth Christ as a mercy-seat, we saw, was to show Him righteous with respect to praeter-mission of the sins of the OT saints. Now we come to another reason for setting forth Christ as the mercy-seat:

for [the] showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

W. Kelly translated it:

with a view to the declaration of his righteousness in the present time, in order to his being just and justifying him that [is] of faith in Jesus.

The God-glorifying work of our Lord Jesus is the righteous foundation upon which God can act in justifying those whose faith is in the One who wrought that work. God is just in justifying such.

But the righteousness of God also required that He set Christ in glory above. It was due Him.

Conclusion

Rom. 3 concludes with the statement:

Do we then make void law by faith? Far be the thought: [no,] but we establish law (Rom. 3:31).

The claims of the law are upheld by faith in Christ. How so? The Word teaches that Christ rendered a satisfaction to God. The claims of the law are thus upheld and honored – and faith in the work that accomplished this thus establishes the law. It is not done by trying to keep the law but by acknowledging the work of Christ. Thus, law is maintained in all its force -- and the blood has met all its claims.

We will keep in mind that there was much more involved in the work on the cross than upholding the claims of the law; but here in our text, the point made is about the law in relation to the work, based upon which, the righteousness of God is manifested.

(To be Continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

Touch Not What is Unclean

What the Lord Said About Defilement

(17) Do ye not yet apprehend, that everything that enters into the mouth finds its way into the belly, and is cast forth into the draught? (18) but the things which go forth out of the mouth come out of the heart, and those defile man. (19) For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnessings, blasphemies; (20) these are the things which defile man; but the eating with unwashed hands does not defile man (Matt. 15:17-20).

(18) And he says to them, Are ye also thus unintelligent? Do ye not perceive that all that is outside entering into the man cannot defile him, (19) because it does not enter into his heart but into his belly, and goes out into the draught, purging all meats? (20) And he said, That which goes forth out of the man, that defiles the man. (21) For from within, out of the heart of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (22) thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, deceit, licentiousness, a wicked eye, injurious language, haughtiness, folly; (23) all these wicked things go forth from within and defile the man (Mark 7:18-23).

Is it true that from these verses we can eat whatever we want? -- anything at all? What about things offered to idols (1 Cor. 10), for example? There are considerations that must be taken into account. The moral lesson of these verses is to instruct our consciences with respect to what comes out of our mouths, not to give license to put into our mouths everything that we can imagine or lust after. Let us now see what *The Lake Geneva Conference Report* says:

. . . the Lord confronted the Pharisees who had constructed elaborate interpretations of the Law concerning the nature and mechanics of defilement which placed undue emphasis on externals while disregarding the motivations of the heart (Matthew 15:1-20; 23:25-28; Mark 7:14-23).

. . . His teaching effectively reversed the commonly held, but erroneous perception that a man was made unclean by his exterior contacts. Instead, the Lord establishes that a man is made unclean by what emanates from his own heart (p. 41).

. . . James (1:13-15) reflects the same perspective as he states that sin flows out of a man's own heart, thus negating any attempt to blame outside influences for the sins which originate within . . . Therefore an individual or assembly is not held accountable to God as a result of proximity to those who sin, but for sin in their heart (p. 42)

The effect of this *Report* is to set aside the teaching that association with evil defiles, that fellowship with leaven leavens a person. The method used to arrive at this denial has two parts:

(1) to say that the teaching that association with evil defiles is a Pharisaical doctrine that the Lord rejected in these passages quoted above; and,

(2) make the teachings of the NT concerning dealing with the Christian's responsibility for holiness in associations not really apply, or else assert that no personal defilement takes place by being in "proximity" to evil.

The Lake Geneva Conference Report caricatures, with the word “proximity,” the doctrine that association with evil defiles. The *Report* is very concerned to portray those who adhere to the truth about associations and fellowship as holders of a doctrine of defilement by mere physical contact. At the same time the *Report* perverts the force of various passages so that they appear not to teach that there is a *moral contact* and *moral identification* which is defiling.

The goal of the doctrine in the *Report* is given in the last sentence of the quotation above. Why does it say “proximity to those who sin” instead of ‘fellowship with those who sin’? The signatories substitute external touching, or “proximity” (nearness in space) to evil, for the real meaning of fellowship (*koinonia*), which means to ‘make one with.’ They try to escape the issue: *moral contact* and *moral identification with the evil in another person*. Look again at their words:

Therefore an . . . assembly is not held accountable to God as a result of proximity to those who sin, but for sin in their heart.

This is a truly amazing statement. Whose doctrine of proximity (nearness in space) to those who sin are they speaking about? No one’s. The signatories concocted (or, invented) that notion in their own minds! Having thus blatantly misrepresented the true teaching, they set about to knock down this fraud of their own making.

What the system in the *Report* leads to is that they could break bread with those who, for example, deny the divine and eternal Sonship of Christ, or deny the eternal, conscious punishment of the wicked, or affirm that Christ could have sinned, etc., etc., but they are “not held accountable as a result of proximity {nearness in space}” to such persons. Very true; it never was a matter of “proximity” -- an invention, a subterfuge, of their own making. But we are held accountable for the *moral contact* and *moral identification* with leaven that God sees in our associations. They believe that if they break bread with such persons, there is not sin in their own heart on account of doing so! In what we are examining, there is a system of teaching that fosters and promotes the sin of fellowship (*koinonia* -- meaning, making one with) with what we know to be leaven, fostered by perverting the holiness of Christian fellowship. James, who is quoted in the *Report*, traces sin to the heart. The heart is where there is *moral contact* with the evil tolerated. There is in the heart *neutrality* regarding a true or a false Christ. They will break bread with one who holds to a true Christ, or with one who holds to what we know to be a false Christ. It is the sin of *neutrality* concerning Christ even if they cannot discern it. It is *indifference in the heart* to the honor of Christ that causes acts of fellowship (*koinonia* -- making one with) with evil, and “wicked persons,” and “wicked works.”

The bread which we break, is it not the communion {*koinonia* -- fellowship} of the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 10:16).

If anyone come to you and bring not this doctrine, do not receive him into [the] house, and greet him not; for he who greets him partakes {*koinoneo*} in his wicked works (2 John 10, 11).

The system laid out in the *Report* is an elaborate effort to get rid of this fact of *making oneself one with what one has fellowship with*. Most certainly breaking bread

with a person who holds a fundamentally evil doctrine involves *koinonia* with that person in his “wicked works.” Indeed, Gal. 5:9 with 1 Cor. 5 shows that a professed Christian who holds fundamentally evil teaching is a “wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:13).

Now, what the apostles have written is the commandment of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37), the same Lord quoted at the beginning of this section. There is nothing contradictory between not being defiled by external, physical contact (and “proximity” to) and being defiled by *moral contact* through fellowship (*koinonia*) with evil. James 1:13-15 is used in the *Report* as if it demonstrates their false position. But James shows the starting point from whence comes this effort to have a wider fellowship at the expense of separation from evil unto the Lord. James refers to “lust” in the heart which “gives birth to sin.” If I have a lust in my heart to have a wider fellowship than allowed by Scripture, it can give birth to the (very evil) sin of writing just such a paper as this *Report*. It is the *sin of neutrality and indifference to Christ*. This sin results in *moral contact* and *moral identification* through fellowship with evil. It is the intent of the *Report* to get rid of this truth by talking about “proximity” (nearness in space), and by making it appear that the Lord Jesus is the author of their doctrine:

According to the Lord’s teaching on defilement, a man is made unclean by the sin which emanates from his own heart, and not by contact with others who sin (p. 39).

The truth is that a man is made unclean by the sin which emanates from his own heart, and what emanates from his heart when he has fellowship with “wicked works” and “wicked persons” is the sin of *neutrality and indifference* to the honor of Christ by having *koinonia* (fellowship -- making one with) with them -- *moral contact with the evil*.

The *Report* has much to say about external contact not being defiling -- as if that is the issue! -- and is devoid of the thought of *moral contact* and of *moral identification*, as if they did not exist. In connection with their view about external contact, let us learn from the warning in 2 Cor. 6:14-18 not to touch the unclean thing. There we learn that it is possible to morally touch the unclean thing: a *moral touch*.

2 Cor. 6:14-18:

Be Separated and Touch not What is Unclean

(14) Be not diversely yoked with unbelievers; for what participation [is there] between righteousness and lawlessness? or what fellowship of light with darkness? (15) and what consent of Christ with Beliar, or what part for a believer along with an unbeliever? (16) and what agreement of God’s temple with idols? for ye are [the] living God’s temple; according as God has said, I will dwell among them, and walk among [them]; and I will be their God, and they shall be to me a people. (17) Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith [the] Lord, and touch not [what is] unclean, and I will receive you; (18) and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for

sons and daughters, saith [the] Lord Almighty (1 Cor. 6:14-18).

This passage shows that a believer must not be yoked with an unbeliever. This seems to be quite plain and that point will, therefore, not be labored. Neither is it purposed to discuss the various ways in which a diverse yoke may be contracted.

Many see clearly enough that we must not break bread with unbelievers. But why not? It is because fellowship (*koinonia* -- to make one with) is expressed (1 Cor. 10:16) with the unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14). The breaking of bread together identifies us practically as one. I fellowship with those with whom I break bread (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16). I identify myself with them practically. (Of course, this is true as to those who teach evil doctrine also. If I break bread with them, I identify myself with them, I make myself one with them (*koinonia*, make one with), whether I think so or not, and whether I believe it or not. Now consider the import of the words “and touch not [what is] unclean.” Where have we heard such words before? They are found in Isa 52:11. There, of course, the touch was physical. The physical touch made the Israelite unclean; ceremonially, of course. He became defiled by that touch:

. . . touch not what is unclean; go out of the midst of her, be ye clean, that bear the vessels of Jehovah (Isa. 52:11).

That reminds us of Hag. 2:12, 13. In 2 Cor. 6 the touch is *moral*. It is a link of fellowship with what is unclean. Such a touch is forbidden because evil associations defile. Evil associations involve the sin of indifference to Christ’s honor being in the heart. The heart has in it neutrality and the person’s acts spring from these sins in the heart.

Surely the Apostle did not write about putting one’s finger on something unclean. It is not a matter of physical touch; it is *morally touching* -- a moral connection and link to what is morally unclean. Moreover, we are thus taught how to use the types in the OT. The *Report*, in its systematized effort to overthrow the truth regarding holiness in fellowship, also rejects OT types as having a use (pp. 10, 11, 40-42).

What would you think if someone tried to contradict the force of this passage with an argument that “proximity” (being near in space) to Beliar, or unbelievers, or idols is not defiling?

Therefore an individual or assembly is not held accountable to God as a result of proximity to those who sin, but for sin in their heart (*Report*, p. 42).

‘Well,’ they might say, ‘we are speaking of believers’ fellowship with other believers.’ But that will not do. We read: “what fellowship (*koinonia* -- make one with) of light with darkness.” How do they touch? The “proximity” argument is bogus; it is a sham, a shameless and impudent caricature of what they so strenuously try to get rid of. The touch is a *moral touch*; just as there is moral identification and *moral contact*, with evil.

Having fellowship with evil is evil!

“Touch not [what is] unclean, and I will receive you . . .” Were they not saved? Yes, they were! Had God already received them? Yes, He had. What then was this condition of receiving them consequent upon their not touching (i.e., not

fellowshipping with) what is unclean? God has received all of the saved. They were accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). This is position and this is *standing*. But what of our *state*? What about practical fellowship? I want to have fellowship with you, says God, but you therefore must not have fellowship with the unclean, with Beliar, with unrighteousness, or with darkness. My receiving you, My practical fellowship with you, depends on your associations.

While we are considering this passage, we may consider a point before passing on. A Christian should not marry an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:39) as surely *the principle* of 2 Cor. 6:14-18 should show. However, the application of 2 Cor. 6:14-15 is as follows, in the words of another:

2 Cor. 6:14 -- Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. But this {application of the passage to marriage} is an error, though it is true that marriage ought to be “only in the Lord”, as is exhorted in 1 Cor. 7. The subject is the service or ministry of Christ. In service and worship, fellowship is forbidden with unbelievers, or unfaithful men. If I, a servant of Christ, am among such, I am to come out. What confirms it is -- 1st, That a yoke is a scriptural badge of service, not of marriage. 2nd, That the believing wife is not to be separate from her unbelieving husband (1 Cor. 7:10-16). On the other hand, the true inference from 2 Cor. 6 is that all communion between the Christian and the world in the service and worship of God is interdicted in every form and measure.¹¹

If 2 Cor. 6:14 applies to marriage, then the Christian should get a divorce from the unbeliever. That is not the intent of this passage. For a Christian to marry an unbeliever brings in other considerations already touched on.

Even Professors Have Responsibility

Luke 11:47-51: Judaism

(47) Woe unto you, for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, but your fathers killed them. (48) Ye bear witness then, and consent to the works of your fathers; for *they* killed them, and *ye* build [their sepulchres]. (49) For this reason also the wisdom of God has said, I will send to them prophets and apostles, and of these shall they kill and drive out by persecution, (50) that the blood of all the prophets which has been poured out from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, (51) from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the house; yea, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation (Luke 11:47-51).

We learn from Luke 11:50-51 that there was a generation at whose hands God would require the blood of Abel down to Zacharias. How could they be held accountable for Abel’s blood? The Lord Jesus, who spoke those words to the Pharisees about what goes into the mouth, here speaks of those He regards as guilty by association:

Ye bear witness then, and consent to the works of your fathers; for they killed

11. *Bible Witness and Review* 1:312.

them, and ye build [their sepulchers].

Do you imagine they *stated* that ‘we consent to the killing of the prophets’? God saw through them. The “blood of all the prophets” will be required of that generation (from Moses onward) as well as from ecclesiastical Babylon (see next section).

Luke 11:50, 51 speaks of God’s governmental vengeance upon them, which happened in A. D. 70 as a foreshadow of the final dealings of God with the nation (Psa. 79, 83; Zech. 12:1-3, etc.). Both Luke 11:47-51 and Rev. 18 speak of those professedly in the place of testimony and relationship to God. They must account for their own sins as well as those of others who occupied the place that they profess to occupy.

But how were these in Luke 11:47-51 associated with previous evil? W. Kelly noted:

Although it seemed the opposite of what their fathers had done, it was the same love of the world which slew the martyrs in that day, and now led man to build their sepulchers in order to make religious capital out of this pious honor.¹²

So God sent them a test shortly thereafter. He sent prophets and apostles (v. 49) whom they killed and thereby confirmed their association with the others. Hence the need of such a warning as is found in Rev. 18:4.

Those to whom the Lord Jesus addressed Himself had identified themselves with their fathers who had killed the prophets. They had not done it themselves. Their fathers had done the deeds (v. 48) but their action showed fellowship and identification with what had been done (v. 48). God brings upon them even the blood of Abel (v. 51). It would do no good to say, “Oh, why quibble over the past? That happened long ago.” **The passage of time does not alter the moral character of an action.** Have we ever learned this divine principle? Does it have any practical meaning in our lives? What should they have done when the Lord said this? They should have acknowledged that the Lord was righteous and true, that their fathers were unjust and false. Confession of, and judgment of, the past, as well as their present condition, was their proper course. They were associated with the history of the evil course of their forebears. It was God the Son who said so, and so it must be true. They should have judged the past, confessed it, taken sides with God against what had been done; i. e., dissociated from that which made them guilty. Plainly, the Lord considered them as in fellowship with what their fathers had done and therefore they must bear the guilt even if they didn’t do the deed personally. They were morally guilty of the same thing.

Revelation 18:4, 24: Christendom

Come out of her, my people, that ye have not fellowship in her sins, and that ye do not receive of her plagues.

12. *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*, p. 200.

And in her was found [the] blood of prophets and saints, and of all the slain upon the earth” (Rev. 18:4, 24).

We might well wonder how she is held guilty for all that blood. Guilt by association is the answer. Rome claims to be the spiritual and temporal ruler of the earth. In accordance with her spiritual pretension, God renders to her account the blood of prophets and saints. In accordance with her temporal pretension, God renders to her account the blood of all the slain upon the earth.

Ed. Dennett wrote:

It must be remembered then, in the first place, that Babylon represents a spiritual system, and that this system, in its main moral features, has been in existence ever since the days of John. Thyatira and Laodicea, in fact, contained the root of all the evils which are afterwards seen fully developed in Babylon. The instruction therefore is for all ages, calling upon God’s people to come out, and to be separate from that which can be spiritually discerned as Babylon, in which, as in Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s days, so many saints are enslaved. (Cp. Jer. 50:8; 51:6-9.) And they are also reminded that, if they continue to be mixed up with such a system, they will become partakers of her sins, and be governmentally subject to her plagues. Was there ever a day since these words were written when this solemn, urgent call needed to be more persistently sounded out through the length and breadth of Christendom than now? For what do we behold? Babylon plainly manifesting herself, and boldly rearing her head with her arrogant claims, as well as insinuating herself into popular favor and acceptance by her subtleties and flatteries. Let God’s people therefore everywhere be obedient to this heavenly voice, and come out of her; for her sins are fast reaching up unto heaven, and the cup of her iniquities is already nearly full.

The question still returns, Is there no application to the eve of Babylon’s destruction? That there can be no Christians in Babylon, at this period, is seen from the fact that the church is already in heaven. There will be Jewish saints on the earth, and, as chapter 7 teaches, also Gentile believers, who will have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; but we have no information as to whether any of these, wearied out with their persecutions, may be tempted to seek shelter within the precincts of Babylon. If so, the call would be also addressed to such; yet the main significance of the cry is to all who may have become at any time mixed up with the principles that will finally concentrate and express themselves in Babylon.¹³

Ed.

The above article is extracted from the fifth paper in the series on the holiness of Christian fellowship, namely, *New Testament Directions for Correction, Discipline and Fellowship*; available from the publisher. Several of the papers in this series contain an Appendix on an aspect of *The Lake Geneva Conference Report* in keeping with the subject of the respective papers

13. *The Visions of John in Patmos*, pp. 231, 232.