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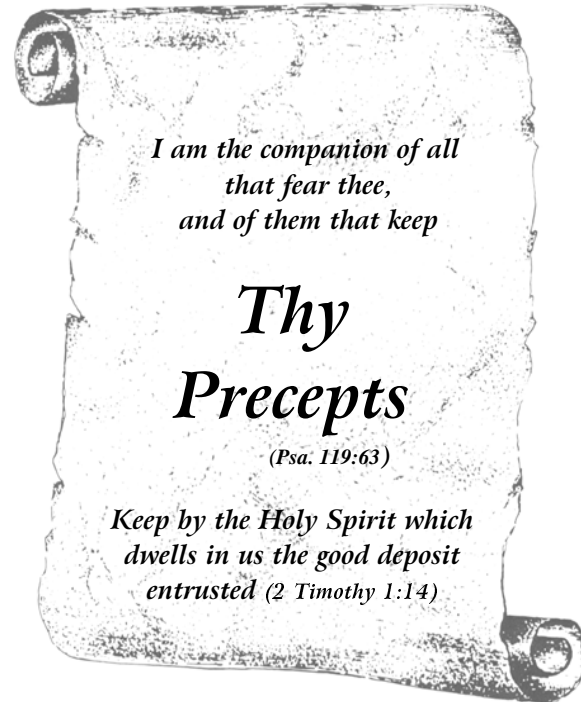
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Vol. 19, #5

CONTENTS

The Christian's Heavenly Place and Calling Eviscerated by
Messianic Judaism: A Heavenly Sanctuary (continued) 160
The Sovereignty of God in Peter 172
Dr. Arnold Fructenbaum's Advocacy of "The Hebrew
Christian Distinctives" Examined (continued) 178
Note on Christ's Human Personality 190
The Mystery of Christ and the Church and the Covenants 191

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The complete Table of Contents may be seen on:

presenttruthpublishers.com

Introductory Notes	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Some General Considerations	1
Is Scripture Typical? A Word on Interpretation	1
Types Are of Different Characters	2
Resemblances and Contrasts	3
Types and Their Teachings	3
What About the Mystery and the Types?	5
Types of Christ	7
Direct Types of Christ with Scriptural Proofs Annexed	7
Indirect Types and Figures of Christ	8
Scripture Imagery	11
Outlines of Lectures On the Tabernacle of Witness, T. Newberry	127
The Temple	199
The Temple of God	203
The Two Temples	203
The Worship	204
The True Worshipers	205
David on His Throne a Type, C.E.S.	207
Christ the Substance of Every Shadow	217
Inspired Prophecy, W. Kelly	219
Chapter 1: Its Nature	219
Chapter 2: Its Object	227
Chapter 3: Its Occasion	231
Chapter 4: Its Sphere	233
Chapter 5: Its Language	237
Chapter 6: Some Old Testament Prophecies Referred to in the New Testament	241
Chapter 7: General Remarks	243
Symbols, J. N. Darby	247
The Symbols of The Apocalypse Briefly Defined	251
Extract from The Catholic Apostolic Body, Or Irvingites, W. Kelly	263
Subject Index	
Scripture Index: Old testament	
Scripture Index: New Testament	

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*The Christian's Heavenly Place and
Calling Eviscerated by Messianic Judaism*

Chapter 7

A Heavenly Sanctuary Part 2

Following upon the last article, "A Worldly Sanctuary," we continue the subject of the heavenly worship in the heavenly sanctuary. There is no room for any official Christian in the worship in the heavenly sanctuary. To have an official is Judaistic. Let us bear in mind that the Apostle Paul wrote from prison¹ and the time of patience with 'Messianic Judaism' had come to an end, and told the Jewish Christians to go outside the camp, i.e., Judaism (Heb. 13:14). Soon, the destruction of Jerusalem would take place, God thus governmentally removing the seat of Judaism. So, the Jewish saints had a short time to act in faith before that happened, obeying the Word of God by separating from Judaism. Of course, Gentile Christians have largely embraced Judaistic elements from the time of the so-called Apostolic Fathers. From all this we must stand in separation, as going "forth unto Him, without the camp, bearing his reproach." Ed.

The Priesthood and the Law Changed

Heb. 7:12

Among the various aspects in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us, it is well oftentimes to distinguish between that which he is properly in his own Person, and that which he is as constituted of God.

It is most legitimate to trace him from the manger of Bethlehem, to His coming in the clouds of heaven in fully manifested glory. The Holy Spirit delights in this theme -- in tracing the lowly rod of the stem of Jesse, growing up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, to the stately BRANCH in manifested beauty (Isa. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Luke 1:78). So, again, it is now the special office of the Holy Ghost to glorify

1. See *Thy Precepts* 18:5, pp176-194, for the change that took place.

Jesus by testifying to us what He is, and is owned to be in heaven, whilst He is rejected on earth. In the reception of this testimony is found the great strength of the Church in its militant state here in the world.

But there is something before all this. There is the tracing him down from heaven to earth, as well as tracing him up from earth to heaven, to return thence in manifested glory. It is this character of testimony to Jesus which the Holy Ghost presents to us in the commencement of the epistle to the Hebrews. It is true that the prominent subject is the official dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle, Captain, and High Priest of our profession, elevated far beyond Moses, or Aaron, or Joshua. But this elevation, whilst true of him officially, is far more true by reason of the essential dignity of his own person. God hath in these last days spoken to us by the SON {"Lit. 'in Son,'" JND, Heb. 1:2}. This is not an official title, it is his own real, proper, native standing {divine relationship}, -- belonging to Him in a sense in which it belongs to no other.

And herein is the grand characteristic difference between the Lord Jesus and all others. Many indeed are those of old upon whom the Lord hath put honor, who would have been nothing but for the honor thus put upon them. They were constituted, and appointed to various offices, and not to own them in those offices would be to reject God. So also God has *made* Jesus both Christ and Lord. But who is He who is thus constituted, or made, of God? He is the SON. These constituted dignities cannot excel His own real {personal, as distinguished from acquired} glory, that which He had with the Father before the world was {John 17:5}. His offices, dignified though they be, cannot in this sense exalt Him. But He can give, and does give, the power and character of His own divine person unto every office which He sustains, unto every work which He has done. If He could be stripped of all His official {acquired} glories, His own personal excellency and glory must remain untouched and undiminished. It is this which makes Him alone the fit one "to bear the glory" {Zech. 6:13} which God may put upon him. When God put various glories on others, as on Moses, or Aaron, or David, or Solomon, their failure to sustain the glory was marked in them all. And why? They were but men, having no power in themselves to stand at all. But Jesus is the SON, and "in him was LIFE." And let it be remembered, in passing, that the only security for the saints bearing the glory which grace has made theirs, is that they are in union with Him who is thus in His own person above all glory.

He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one {Heb. 2:11}.

To have office conferred by God is indeed a solemn responsibility, both as it respects Him who is so honored, and as it respects others to acknowledge the honor conferred of God. It is thus our responsibility to acknowledge office in magistrates, and not to speak evil of dignities. To resist the power is to resist God. Those who bear the dignity may be nothing, the vilest of men, but the

honor is put on them of God, and is to be acknowledged by us. If this be so, how fearful in the sight of God must it be to refuse to acknowledge any of the offices, styles, dignities, which God has conferred on His own Son. How fearful in any wise to trench on them by arrogating them to ourselves. This is the last form of manifested evil under the present dispensation, and that which will bring down the terrible judgment of God. It is the denial of "Jesus Christ, the only Lord God, and *our* Lord" (Jude); that is, the denial of Him both in His own essential glory, and his conferred mediatorial glory. Let us then beware of anything which derogates from the honor due to Jesus, the Son of God. For how infinitely elevated is He above all others on whom official dignity has been conferred by God. God will strip men of all the glories He has conferred on them, and then what are they? Nothing. Man being in honor is like the beasts that perish. But when man is thus abased, in that day the Lord Jesus Christ alone shall be exalted (Isa. 2).

I desire, because of the importance of the subject, to refer to the eighty-second Psalm for illustration of the truth, that any honor conferred by God on men brings them out of obscurity, taken away it sinks them into their own proper nothingness. On the other hand, honor conferred on the Son adds nothing really to Him {in His essential glory}: if it be taken from Him or disowned by man, it only leads to his exaltation by God to every office in which man has failed,

that in all things he might have the pre-eminence {Col. 1:18}

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among *the gods*. How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. They know not, neither will they understand: they walk on in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you children of the Most High: but ye shall die *like men*, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O GOD, judge the earth, for thou shalt inherit all nations {Psa. 82}.

The reference of the Lord Jesus to this Psalm, in the tenth chapter of John, is very remarkable. He had asserted, in the most unequivocal manner, His own proper divinity, "I and my Father are one" (v. 30). This, they said, was making himself God (v. 33). Afterwards in v. 38, Jesus again asserts this, and again they sought to take him (v. 39). But he had previously (vv. 34, 35) referred to this Psalm, to prove that they ought at least to have owned Him in His official authority and power. His works testified of Him that He was the sent one of the Father. Not one "unto whom the word of God came," merely, but Him whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world; He could say, "I am the Son of God." They should have believed him for His works' sake, for He did the works of *His Father*, and He and the Father were one. To others the word of God has only come -- "I have said, Ye are gods." They had no dignity at all in

themselves, they were of the earth, earthy, raised in official dignity by God. But He was the SON; He had been "sanctified and *sent into the world*"; He was "*the Lord from heaven*." How infinitely contrasted is Jesus the Son of God to all those of whom God has said, "Ye are gods." The moment their conferred dignity was taken from them, they would die like the common herd of men. They had no essential, inherent power or dignity. But He was one with the Father, He was in the beginning with God; nothing therefore could really touch His dignity, for it was intrinsically divine. It was not the word coming to him which made him what He was -- though He had indeed been sanctified and sent into the world -- it was what He ever was in Himself, which enabled Him to be so sent, and to sustain and give efficiency to all that was laid upon him. Hence, though in his humiliation his judgment was taken away, yet God would divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong. This shall be manifestly true when all official and delegated power shall be taken out of the hands to which God has entrusted it, and actually assumed by Jesus. Then shall that word be proved true of him -- "Arise, *O God*, judge the earth; for *thou* shalt inherit all nations" {Psa. 82:8}.

The connection between the personal and the official glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, is indeed the prominent subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first chapter the Son is presented to us as both in person and office far above angels. And it is the Son who is also the apostle of our profession. In the second chapter He is presented to us as our High Priest; and then we are exhorted, in the third chapter, to "*consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus." Moses indeed was great. God had magnified him before Pharaoh, yet he was but a servant -- one to whom the word of God had come -- although God humbled Miriam and Aaron before him. But, mark; Jesus was not only officially greater than Moses, but it was His personal greatness which gave Him the infinite superiority. He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he that hath builded the house hath more honor than the house; and every house is builded by some man, but *he that built all things is God*. Moses was faithful as a servant in another's house, but Christ as a *Son over his own house* {Heb. 3:6}. So again as concerning the high priesthood. Aaron was the high priest, but Jesus is the *Great* High Priest, -- higher thus indeed than Aaron even officially. But this is not all; it is "Jesus the Son of God," infinitely higher personally than He is officially. "Seeing then that we have a *Great High Priest*, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus *the Son of God*" (Heb. 4:14).

But yet further. It pleased God to constitute one individual a perfect type of the Lord Jesus Christ; that individual was Melchizedec. He stands before us typical of Jesus, both in person and office. The mystery with which God has so remarkably surrounded Melchizedec, makes him a fit type of the Person of the Son; for "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father"; and so, no man knoweth

Melchizedec but God. And his being thus presented to us without genealogy, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," shows us also how truly he is "*made* like unto the Son of God."² Thus, Melchizedec is so brought before us in the word of God, as to be made a most wonderful type of the divine and eternal Son of God -- he is thus the personal type. "Abideth a priest continually"; for we know not when Melchizedec's priesthood began or ended; he had not as Aaron an official life -- "beginning of days and end of life," -- in this he is the official type. Melchizedec is indeed the only individual mentioned in the scriptures, as one whose own person qualifies him for office. And in this respect how apt a type is he of Jesus.

With this general opening, let us meditate on the contrasts presented to us in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; that we may be able to draw the character of the worship from the order of the priesthood.

Most prominently do we here find the Person of the Priest set before us "the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3), in contrast with every office-bearing person. This might have been enough; but there are contrasts immediately resulting from the Person of the Priest, which must also be noticed. After the order of Aaron, they were men that die; but after the order of Melchizedec, it is He that liveth -- liveth because He is the Son -- because He has life in himself. True, He has laid it down and taken it again, that He might enter on his priesthood, having first by Himself purged our sins.

Again. The order of Aaron was continued by succession. It was necessarily so. Aaron was a man in the flesh, and provision was made in case of his death for his son, that should minister in his stead; as it is written,

And the priest whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments (Lev. 16:32).

This was the carnal "commandment," by which the priesthood of the Aaronic order was to be perpetuated. Succession is the only mode which man knows of perpetuating anything; this is necessary human order. The king cannot die, we are told; why? Because his last breath is the placing his successor on the throne; so that the functions of royalty may never for a moment be suspended. Succession is necessarily after the law of a carnal commandment. We need not wonder, therefore, that men should have turned back to this order, as being that which is most natural and human. But God has made other provision for his Church; *His Church knows no successional priesthood*. The Son is made Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. It is still what he is in himself that gives the character to his priesthood. And that

2. {Since he is made like unto the Son of God, clearly, he is not himself the Son of God.}

which is characteristic of this priesthood, is equally so of *the whole order* of priesthood in the Church -- it is unsuccessional. The Church's position in this dispensation is in life and in power. There is no room for a carnal commandment in the matter of priesthood or worship either, because Christ's Priesthood in heaven is perpetuated in Himself. No one succeeds to Him there; He is "a High Priest *for ever*"; "and none is needed to succeed the Holy Ghost in the Church on earth; "he shall abide with you *for ever*" {John 14:16}. If man were to succeed man as the head of authority in the Church, a carnal commandment is necessitated -- the order cannot be maintained without it. And this is what man has introduced into the Church; thus putting the Church under human headship and carnally appointed authority. But how awful is this, when God's order for his Church is the presence of the Holy Ghost dispensing gifts according to His will. Where, under this divine order, is there room for a carnal commandment?

I no longer marvel at the strength of the language of the preceding chapter, relative to the certain consequences of turning back from the proper order and hope of the Church. It must be subversive of the whole order of the dispensation. It must be virtually putting Jesus out of his priesthood, crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame. Once admit succession, and, as a necessary consequence, union with Jesus in the power of an endless life is denied; for such union must be utterly incompatible with the law of a carnal commandment.

And let the contrast be distinctly marked; it is not after *the law* of an endless life, but *after the power* of an endless life. The kingdom of God is *in power*; the Spirit we have received is the Spirit of *power*; the peril against which we are warned is the form of godliness, but the denial of *its power*. It is not now form against form, carnal order against carnal order, place against place; but it is *power*, that is life, *against everything*.

We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice *in Christ Jesus*, and have *no* confidence in the flesh {Phil. 3:3} . . .

But to pursue the contrast. The priests after the order of Aaron were called indeed of God; but Jesus was constituted by an oath.

The Lord *swore* and will *not repent*, thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec {Heb. 5:6}.

The priesthood in Israel under the law, like all with which it was connected, stood on the ground of the competence of the priests to maintain their place in faithfulness to God. It was based upon a carnal commandment -- it was conditional. The word of the Lord to Eli was,

I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed {1 Sam. 2:30}.

And the oath to Eli was an oath of irreversible judgment on his house (1 Sam. 3:14.) And this setting aside of the house of Eli was to raise up a *faithful* Priest, (1 Sam. 2:35; Heb. 2:17), to do according to all that was in the heart and mind of God, even the Priest who is made with an oath.

And how blessedly in keeping is the New Covenant with this new order of priesthood. It is a covenant of promise, of promise made sure by God's having engaged His own power to render it effectual; and, therefore, to show the immutability of His counsel, He has confirmed it with an oath (Heb. 6:17). The New Covenant, therefore, belongs to the Melchizedec priesthood,³ and both are with *an oath*. And it is here written,

And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made Priest . . . by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant {Heb. 7:20 & 22}.

Once more; although it has been somewhat anticipated. Under the order of Aaron there were "many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death."

The high priesthood passed from one to another; *there was succession*. God in judgment had indeed set aside one family of Aaron, and brought in another; still, there was a succession of men through whom the high priesthood descended. This alone was enough to destroy all dependence on that priesthood; for though there might be a merciful and faithful priest, still he would die, and he might be succeeded by one who would make the offering of the Lord to be abhorred, as did Eli's sons, using their office for exaction of their dues, and more than dues, but not aiding the worshipper. This must always attend the connection of office with a succession of men appointed after a carnal commandment.

But Jesus, because he *continueth ever*, hath a priesthood that passeth *not from one to another*. Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost [i.e., from the beginning of their career unto the end] those who come to God by him, seeing he *ever liveth to make intercession for them* {Heb. 7:25}.

3. {The Lord Jesus is presently exercising a heavenly priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary. This is not the Melchizedec priesthood, which is the priesthood the Lord Jesus will exercise when He is priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13), reigning over the new Israel then under the new covenant. Presently, He is on the Father's throne with the Father (Rev. 3:21), not His own throne, which He will soon take (cp. Matt. 25:31; etc.). In the millennial order, the sons of Zadok will have a special place in the priesthood (Ezek 40-48), in accordance to God's promise to faithful Phinehas, when he thrust through Cozbi and Zimri in the sight of Israel -- being jealous with Jehovah's jealousy (Num. 25:11). The fulfilment of the promise of the priesthood to Phinehas was typified when Solomon thrust Abiathar from the priesthood and made Zadok the priest. Abiathar came from the line of Eli, who came from the line of Ithamar, the brother of Eliazer, the son of Aaron. Phinehas was the son of Eliazer, *the correct line*, and Zadok was of the line of Phinehas. Thus did Jehovah correct the matter through Solomon, providing a type of how Christ will adjust everything for God's glory. Ed.}

This necessarily, and most simply, perpetuates the perfectness of High Priesthood after the order of Melchizedec; one divinely perfect is for evermore consecrated thereunto.

How marked is it, that in everything which came under the law of a carnal commandment, there wanted perpetuity; it was so, whether we look at the persons, the sacrifice, or the intercession. But now that there is perpetuity in the Person, the like character attaches to the priesthood, the sacrifice, and the intercession.

Surely, the priesthood being changed, there must of necessity be a change in the whole law and order of worship. To go back to the old pattern now, what is it but virtually to deny the personal glory of the Son, as giving efficacy to His work and office? It is, as has been before noticed, to tread under foot the Son of God. It must necessarily transfer the thought from his order of priesthood to another order. It must introduce human copies of patterns and shadows once given by God, claiming for such things the value due only to the heavenly things themselves. It must sink the place of worship from heaven to earth. It must consecrate that which God has left out as profane. It must establish form, instead of leaving room for power: producing uniformity, to which the flesh can bend, but to the utter denial of unity in the Spirit, of which the flesh must be ignorant.

Let us then most seriously consider what Christian worship really is. Whether we look at our own standing, or at the change which has taken place in priesthood, there is necessitated an entire change in the order of worship. We have seen Aaron's priesthood adapted to the law, and Christ's to the new covenant.⁴ Aaron's priesthood was intercessional, so, also is Christ's. The Church is alone sustained by the constant intercession of Christ. It is what our necessities require, beautifully and graciously adapted to them. But whilst this is most blessedly true, is there not another and very different sense in which it is said, "such an High Priest *became us*." The intercession of the Great High Priest for us, is only for us whilst the Church needs it, -- it has, so far as the Church is in question, a termination, and it may well be said to be an Aaronic service carried on after the Melchizedec order.⁵ But if we take a larger thought of the

4. {This might be confusing. My impression is that the writer correctly knows that the new covenant is for Israel when Messiah reigns in glory. Christ's present, heavenly priesthood is a heavenly order, but has a function like the Aaronic order *in the intercessional character* .}

5. {I am aware that there is confusion in minds about this matter of the application of the Melchizedec priesthood, because some have thought that Hebrews seems to imply that there is a functioning of the Melchizedec order now. Not so. The *Melchizedec order* is for earthly Israel under the new covenant in connection with an *earthly sanctuary*. Christ's priesthood now is of a *heavenly order* in a *heavenly sanctuary*. Just as there was an Aaronic function of intercession in the Aaronic order, the heavenly order of Christ's priesthood has an intercessory function also. As the

priesthood of Jesus, comprehending his Person and the whole Melchizedec order, do we not find his priesthood adapted to us, not only because of our infirmities and necessities, but likewise because of *that high standing which we by his grace have received -- that we might hold fast our profession?*

Surely when the Church needs not a priesthood of intercession, as it will not in glory, it will enjoy all the peculiar privileges proper to the Melchizedec order -- a constant reciprocation of blessing and praise. But our standing is really as high now as then -- "*now* are we the sons of God" -- and the saints are now to know the High Priest suitable to their greatness. We are "*holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling*" {Heb. 3:1} -- to such Aaron's priesthood is not suitable. "For *such* an High Priest *became us*." What is it that has constituted us holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling? Surely these two things -- that the Son has by Himself purged our sins, and that He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren {Heb. 2:11}. If there is not the same life in them as in Himself, He could not call them brethren. "Because I live," says he, "ye shall live also" {John 14:19}. Is He anointed with the Holy Ghost? they too, in virtue of having been cleansed by His blood, and united with Him as risen, are anointed with the same. He indeed above His fellows, but they with the same blessed Spirit; for He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit {1 Cor. 6:17}. Now the High Priest suitable to such a standing as this must not only be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, but also "*made higher than the heavens*" {Heb. 7:26}.

The old order would necessarily keep the holy brethren out of the holy place, making those who are partakers of the heavenly calling mere earthly worshipers. And is not this present fact? Worship should so elevate the soul of the worshiper that nothing should be known between him and God, save the Great High Priest; but instead of this the ritual to which many saints are subjected causes them to bow the head like a bulrush.

But to proceed. Such an High Priest became us,

who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins and then for the people's: for this he did *once*, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh *men* high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law -- the Son, who is consecrated for

5. (...continued)

Melchizedec order functions in the power of an endless life -- no succession -- so the heavenly priesthood of Christ functions in the power of an endless life -- no succession. But the orders of priesthood differ. Aaron's priesthood was based on an unfinished work. Since the cross, priesthood must be based on the once-for-all finished work of Christ. Christ is priest in two different spheres, the earthly and the heavenly; an earthly, Melchizedec order of priesthood, and a heavenly order of priesthood. These must not be confused.)

evermore {Heb. 7:28}.

How unlike Aaron is Jesus our Great High Priest! All his present priestly ministrations is based upon the one accomplished sacrifice of *Himself*. This entirely affects the order of worship and changes it; for our worship is just as truly based upon the already accomplished sacrifice as is his Priesthood. It is our starting point as worshipers. We are only in the profane place, if we approach not God on the ground of our sins having been for ever purged by Jesus; we cannot avail ourselves of his priesthood until this be acknowledged. The Great Priesthood is alone suitable for those who *have come to God through Him*. Into what an elevated place then has that one sacrifice brought us! No place *under heaven* is suitable for His {present} ministry or our {heavenly} worship. Both are properly heavenly. Worship therefore should ever lift us up to where Jesus is -- the Great High Priest who *is passed into the heavens*. Aaron was called of God to his priesthood in the tabernacle made with hands, but Jesus has been called of God to His priesthood *in the heavens, the true tabernacle*, and we are made *partakers of the heavenly calling*. The dignity of his Person, the groundwork of His priestly ministry, and the place of its exercise, all alike, proclaim the necessity of a change in the law and order of worship. The law with its ritual and worship all hang consistently together, but it made *nothing perfect* -- it bore on its front plain marks of infirmity. There is great strength of contrast in the last verse; it is not merely men contrasted with the Son, but *men having infirmity*. And so the word of the oath has its priesthood and order in beautiful harmony; but to attempt to blend the two, as the Church has done and is doing, is to introduce the worst confusion. Jesus has not his honor, and the saints have not their privilege.

Let us remember that under the Levitical priesthood there was no provision made for any, either priest or people, to follow Aaron within the veil. Aaron in this respect had *no fellows*. Now the Son also takes this place of Aaron's. He has *no fellows* in any of His sacrificial work, or in offering the incense. But He *has fellows within the place of His ministry*. Under the Levitical priesthood there was no fellowship *even as to place* between the people and the priests, they worshiped in distinct places; but now all is changed, for that order is now introduced of which it is said,

He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one {Heb. 2:11}.

We are one *in life*, and therefore identified as to position with Christ Jesus. He can say in heaven itself,

Behold I and the children which God hath given me {2:13}.

There was indeed the great principle of representation in the Levitical priesthood, -- Aaron bore the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart, -- but there *was not* the truth of *union*. There could not be; or even on the supposition that there could have been, what would it have availed -- union with

a man having infirmity. But now that we have such an High Priest as the Son, in the power of an endless life; and that He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; to have such an One not only as our representative, but as Him with whom we are united, what an entire change must this effect as to the whole order of worship.

Aaron bore the names of the tribes as something apart from himself, but our High Priest as completely identified with Himself. How far all typical representation falls short of the reality! Just as in the sacrifices, one might see the innocent suffering for the guilty; but the reality -- the Holy Lamb of God suffering for sin, feeling the shame of it as His own, and enduring the wrath of God -- was incapable of being represented. So there might be some faint shadow of identity between the priest and the people; but the reality of living union with the Son, was incapable of being typically expressed. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus {Rom. 8:2} which is now the great order of God. It is not only *through Him* that we come, but

now *in* Christ Jesus ye who were far off are brought nigh by the blood of Jesus (Eph. 2:13).

There is now therefore the anointed High Priest, even Jesus, but He has fellows anointed also; those who worship through Him are not the people who stand without, but priests sanctified for the immediate presence of God. The law of worship now is entirely priestly.

By him therefore *let us offer the sacrifice* of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name {Heb. 13:15}.

Can we find language so suitable to describe the danger of returning to ordinances, or the setting up again a priesthood on the earth between the Great High Priest and His fellows, as that found in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews? May not these passages well make the ear that hears them, in these our days, to tingle? And can we find any occupation so blessed whilst journeying through the wilderness, -- any so fitted to raise our souls out of the dust, and make us tread in spirit the heavenly courts, -- as to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus?

Holy brethren, does it appear to you that this paper is not strictly on the subject of worship? You will find it only so in appearance; for our power of real acceptable worship is in allowing nothing to come in between our souls and our Great High Priest. It is what He is, not what we are, that we have to consider. And are we ever so truly exalted as when magnifying him? Is it not most practically true in this sense also, that he which humbleth himself shall be exalted?

From *Bible Subjects for the Household of Faith* 3:317-331.

God's Sovereignty and Glory in the Salvation of Lost Man

Chapter 7

God's Sovereignty in Peter: Election and Foreknowledge

Elect According to the Foreknowledge of God the Father

The Epistles of Peter, as also Hebrews, view the saints as pilgrims and strangers in this world. These books answer to the type of the wilderness journey of Israel. God's sovereignty is an encouragement to His own who are now on the journey in wilderness circumstances. Thus, the subject of God's government is seen, in 1 Peter in support of His own, and in 2 Peter as against the world and evil. 1 Peter begins with a most precious truth for the pilgrims and strangers in this world:

. . . elect according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, by sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2).

This epistle is addressed to the sojourners of the Jewish dispersion (the diaspora) who, really, are those spoken of in Rom. 11:5:

Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to the election of grace.

Besides that fact, these are also the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). This is not to say that 1 Pet. 1:2 has no application to Gentile believers. Moreover, while an elect one may not be part of a remnant, election itself is always of grace. Considering the text, we may view 1 Pet. 1:2 in three parts, forming one whole.

ELECT ACCORDING TO [THE] FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD [THE] FATHER

Later we will look at 1 Pet. 1:20 where the word "foreknown" is used. What is said there has a bearing on the use and intent of the word "foreknowledge" used here, as does Rom. 8:29, 30. Peter had also used the word in Acts 2:23 as had

Paul in Rom. 8:29 and Rom. 11:2.

Here we have not the *national election* of Israel as in Rom. 11:2. Now, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom. 11:29); i.e., they are unalterable and sure, and the ancient promises will be made good to the new Israel under the new covenant when Messiah reigns before His ancients in glory (Isa. 24:23). Here in 1 Pet. 1:2 we have not the choice of the people by Jehovah to be an earthly people for Himself. Here we have *individual election*. Of course it is individual. There is no such thing as a “corporate election” of the church. The *national* election of Israel is easy to show (see Rom. 11:2; Amos 3:2), but election is not said in the Word of God of the church, as such. Another remarked:

It would not be correct to speak of the church as “elect,” though it be true of all the members who compose it. Here some fail in their apprehension of the mind of God. They like to think of the church as a whole as elect, leaving it an open question as to individual believers, who may, in their judgment, be finally disowned¹ after all. But Scripture is decisive and clear. Election is a truth of God, but it concerns individual believers, not the church as such.²

These Hebrew Christians were those who, as we saw from Eph. 1:12, had “pre-trusted” in Christ, i.e., before (pre-) the reign of Messiah in the millennium. But we Gentiles share in the blessedness of 1 Pet. 1:2.

The epistle of Peter views the Christian as in the wilderness, hence the words to them about their being strangers and sojourners (1 Pet. 2:11) and the other features of the book that denote this view. Not having obtained the national blessing, they have been brought into something higher and they are immediately directed into the blessed truth of v. 2. This is not presented as in Eph. 1 where the glory of God is repeatedly brought before us in connection with our place before Him (Christ’s place being our place) and in view of Christ and the inheritance. Here, election is a great comfort for the pilgrim pathway. The Father has elected each one according to His foreknowledge, that particular and discriminatory foreknowledge that we observed when considering Rom. 8:29, 30, and wrought by the Spirit to bring the lost one to a place before Himself characterized by two things in *Christ’s own pathway* when on earth: namely, the obedience of Christ and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

Note well, in view of those whom Peter directly addresses, this is not law-obedience and it is not the blood of Jewish sacrifices. It seems that “sprinkling of [the] blood” has in view the OT sprinkling of blood, but not that Christ’s blood has been literally sprinkled. It speaks of the value of the blood of Christ and the believer’s place before the Father according to the value of that blood.

1. {Be “finally disowned” is referring to the idea of being lost again. That is because the doctrine of moral free will towards God is involved with the notion of a corporate election of the church.}

2. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 1:330.

BY³ SANCTIFICATION OF [THE] SPIRIT

Those to whom Peter wrote were not sanctified by ordinances. Briefly, this setting the believer apart to God (sanctification) by (ἐν), i.e., by virtue of, or in the power of, the Spirit, is positional sanctification⁴ and has an object -- pointed out below. Positional sanctification is a position of being set apart to God, referred to in other passages also (Heb. 10:10, 14 for example⁵), into which all are brought, though some passages (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 12:14) speak of progressive sanctification in the life of the believer. This non-progressive, positional setting apart to God is true from the instant of the new birth, whatever the ways of God with the soul subsequently.

UNTO [THE] OBEDIENCE AND SPRINKLING OF [THE] BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

“Unto” (εἰς) indicates that the objective is obedience . . . of Jesus Christ. Now, note that the order in 1 Pet. 1:2 states the reverse of what is said by those who allege man’s moral free will towards God. Their view really is that a person is elected because of his free-willed obedience to the gospel; that in God’s

3. W. Kelly’s critical comments on “by” or “in” are collected together in *Two Nineteenth Century Versions of the New Testament*, pp. 642-644 (available from the publisher) as well as comments on “unto” the obedience, etc.

4. W. Kelly remarked:

To speak of “imputed sanctification” is to diverge from scriptural truth. But sanctification is not merely in practice, which is always imperfect and admits of varying degrees. Mr. G. and his defender were not aware that the word of God speaks of a sanctification by a new nature coincident with being born anew, and antecedent not only to practical holiness but even to justification, of which popular theology is wholly ignorant. It is identical with saintship. This is meant in 1 Cor. 6:11: “But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The order stated is exact; but it perplexes all who draw their doctrines from man instead of from scripture. 1 Pet. 1:2 may make this truth clear to those that doubt: “elect according to foreknowledge of a Father God, by (or, in) sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ.” Here too the ordinary teaching is at sea. Yet the truth revealed is certain and plain. Election as God’s children is shown in sanctification of the Spirit for obeying as (not the Jews, but) Christ obeyed, and His blood-sprinkling which cleanses from all sin, that is, for justification. There is a real and vital sanctifying by the Spirit when we are converted to God before we obey as God’s sons and know ourselves justified. It is a life setting-apart to God, which precedes acceptance, and is overlooked by universal theology, Arminian and Calvinistic; but Scripture, as here shown, makes much of it.

5. “By the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). This is one among the number of “once for all” things stated in Hebrews, a characteristic of the book. Also, “For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified” (v. 14). If sanctified, you are perfected in perpetuity, which is quite contrary to the notion of being lost again, unless perpetuity means temporarily -- which it does not.

foreknowledge He saw that they would obey the gospel and therefore He elected them. This is the inverse of the direct statement, here, about the matter. Obedience is the *result, not the cause*, of the election and foreknowledge. Look again: “elect . . . unto [the] obedience . . . of Jesus Christ.” That is the opposite of saying ‘elect . . . on account of obedience’ of the sinner.

The obedience in view has a character, and that character is the character of Christ’s obedience, noted in the quotation below. God has sanctified us to obedience of the same character as Christ showed here on earth.

And also we stand in the value of the blood. These two things (Christ’s obedience and Christ’s blood) stand in contrast with Ex. 24, where there was only, really, an external separation to Jehovah, for law-obedience, with the blood signifying death.

The sprinkling of the blood in 1 Pet. 1:2 is used with reference to salvation. There is never re-sprinkling of the blood. There is the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant (the covenant sealed), and the leper sprinkled, and the priest sprinkled; but there is no re-sprinkling. In Num. 19 when a man had to be restored, the ashes were put into running water, and then he was sprinkled with it. The Spirit of God brought to remembrance what the blood had done in putting away sin long ago. For a ground of communion, the blood was always there before God, seven times sprinkled. The ashes were brought, to say, Sin was dealt with long ago: how came you to defile yourself, forgetting that you were purged? Leviticus is the book of the offerings, but we have this in Numbers as it applies to our path and journeyings.

In “sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood,” we are sanctified to the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Christ; and Christ’s obedience is not what we are apt to think of as obedience, but in its nature quite different from legal obedience, because the law of God meets a will of mine and says, You must not do this or that. But Christ says, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” And in Christ’s obedience the will of the Father was His motive. Suppose my child was anxious to run out and see the judges come in, and I say, Sit down and do your lesson; and he then does so cheerfully. This is all well, but Christ never obeyed in that way. He had no will of His own to be first stopped. I have a will, and it is obedience, when it is checked, to stop. The only apparent case of anything of the kind in Christ was when wrath was coming in, and in itself He could not desire that; yet He adds, “not my will but thine be done.” In ourselves we never ought to do anything, except because it is positively God’s will. In the passage, the object is put first, and the blood sprinkling next.⁶

See also the notes on “foreknown” in the discussion of Rom. 8:29 where we saw that the foreknowledge, being foreknowledge of persons, was selective and

6. *Collected Writings* 26:310, 311. See also 34:303; 16:184-185, 192-194.

discriminatory, not the general prescience or omniscience of God. Similarly, this foreknowledge is not about conduct, but of persons, and persons foreknown of Him as in Christ.

Christ, Foreknown Indeed Before [the] Foundation of the World

. . . but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, [the blood] of Christ, foreknown indeed before [the] foundation of the world, but who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes . . . (1 Pet. 1:20).

We must distinguish between blessings connected with the expression “from the world’s foundation” compared with what is stated to be from “before the foundation of the world.” What is for the nation of Israel, as such, is said to be from the foundation of the world. Here, the Hebrew believers, i.e., those chosen according to the election of grace as individuals, are brought into present blessings. Well did W. Kelly remark:

Such language is never employed about the divine dealings with Israel. Rich and large as are the promises to the fathers, they never go back into eternity as here. Men may reason in an abstract manner on prescience and omniscience; but the fact is plain, that God did not speak to the fathers nor through the prophets of blessings before the world’s foundation. They were made in time, however enduring they may be.⁷

In passing, we may observe that the national blessings for Israel endure as long as the present sun and moon endure, not in the eternal state. However, the church shall have a distinct, eternal place (Eph. 3:21, etc.).

But let us come to the issue; Christ was foreknown from eternity, really. “Foreknown” concerns His Person, not the blood (though omnisciently God knows all) -- as the words “who has been manifested” show. “Who” refers back to Christ, foreknown. Did God “look down the avenue of time” to see what Christ would do and then respond to that as if He is a contingent God? Really, it is a terrible thought. Really, it involves quite bad and unacceptable thoughts about Christ that lower His glory as God and man, for in Him Godhood and manhood are indissolubly united from the moment of conception by the overshadowing power of the Spirit. The manhood that the Son took into His Person was in itself holy (Luke 1:35).

The wonderful fact is that as Christ was foreknown from before the world’s foundation, so were we foreknown. God’s foreknowing us is of the same character as His foreknowing Christ. Think of such a thing. It is part of Christ’s place

7. *Exposition of 1 Peter, in loco*.

before the Father being our place also, as we considered in looking at Eph. 1 and 2. “Chosen us in him before [the] world’s foundation” (Eph. 1:4). Oh, how sweet to our souls is such wonderful truth. So much are we bound up with Christ that we read:

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn of many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

There will be many brethren before the Father, like His beloved Son, conformed to His image; Who, of course, as firstborn, has the preeminence.

Let us rejoice in the truth, then, that the character of God’s foreknowledge of Christ is the character of His foreknowledge of those who are to be conformed to the image of His Son. This is a *specific aspect* of God’s foreknowledge in connection with those He purposed to be *in Christ*. All this is un contingent on any alleged moral free will of man towards God. It is God’s acting for His glory in Christ in the heavenlies. And in keeping with this we Christians are bound up in the same bundle of the foreknowledge of God concerning this place before Himself.

Bound together in the Bundle of Divine Sovereignty

	ELECTION	CHOSEN	FOREKNOWN
CHRIST	1 Pet. 2:6	1 Pet. 2:4	1 Pet. 1:19, 20
CHRISTIANS	1 Pet. 1:2	1 Pet. 2:9	1 Pet. 1:2

. . . I have written to you briefly; exhorting and testifying that this is [the] true grace of God in which ye stand (1 Pet. 5:12).

Christ is also referred to as elect in Isa. 42:1. Cf. Matt. 12:18.

No doubt election and choice have something to do with Israel’s future as the new Israel under the new covenant, but that is not the subject here. What is in the table above has to do with saints who compose the assembly of God now.

Perhaps you have noticed that the entries in the table for Christ are all from 1 Peter, a book of Scripture which views the saints in what answers to the typical aspect of the wilderness journey of Israel. Note, also, the entries from 1 Peter regarding the saints. It is good for us as strangers and sojourners here (1 Pet. 2:11) to have the eye of faith fixed upon Christ presented in these ways. It brings before the pilgrim the sovereignty of God displayed in His Christ. The pilgrim is

bound up with Christ in the bundle of that divine sovereignty.

Moreover, the character of 1 Peter is the government of God in favor and support of His people, looked at as in the wilderness, as strangers and pilgrims. It is an appropriate thought for us in the wilderness journey to savor that we are bound up in the same bundle of divine sovereignty with Himself, though in present circumstances.

In 2 Peter we see the government of God also, but against the world and evil. In the midst of all this let us have the eye of faith on the Shekinah as we are led through this wilderness where we have no home; for we really are strangers and pilgrims here, our commonwealth being in heaven from where we are looking for the Savior (Phil. 3:20, 21).

(To be continued if the Lord will)

Ed.

***Dr. Arnold G. Fructenbaum’s
Advocacy of
“The Hebrew Christian Distinctives”
Examined***

(Continued)

The Seed of Abraham

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT WILL BE FULFILLED IN THE MILLENNIUM

In the millennium, the new Israel under the new covenant will be the seed of Abraham, and it will be accompanied by the distinctive difference between Israel and the nations. This will be the time when Israel, the nation, will be pronounced Ammi (my people, Hos. 2; Rom. 11:15, 25ff). They will not be merely the natural seed; they will all be the spiritual seed also. Moreover, the *nation, as such*, will answer to the description “the Israel of God.” The OT prophets show that it is sovereign action and grace that brings about the restoration of the nation. Many Jews will not enter the kingdom because the rebels will be purged, as Ezek 20:38 plainly declares. Concerning those that are left, Jehovah declares, “. . . I will bring you into the bond of the covenant” (Ezek. 20:37). That is how He will turn ungodliness away from Jacob (Rom. 11:26).

And this is the covenant from me to them, when I shall have taken away their sins” (Rom. 11:27).

Clearly, this refers to a one-sided covenant, from God's side unconditionally, as we see is the case with the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the new covenant. All is unconditional and sovereignly secured in grace to Israel. To Israel belong the covenants (Rom. 9:4) and these are referred to as "*covenants of promise*" to which we saved Gentiles are "strangers" (Eph. 2:12). This raises the question in our minds, how is it, then, that we Gentile believers at this time, are "children of promise" (Gal. 4:28)?

THE BLESSING FOR BELIEVERS MEANWHILE

The phrase "the seed of Abraham" is used in several different ways in Scripture. There is a natural seed and there is a spiritual seed. The natural seed is in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ¹ Paul was such (Rom. 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22). But the claim of the seed according to the flesh is of no avail (John 8:33-37). It only brought increased responsibility on them. The law addressed Israel as part of God's trial of the first man, man in fallen Adamic responsibility, to see if he was recoverable. ²

There is another use of "seed of Abraham" and that regards the Lord Jesus:

But to Abraham were the promises addressed, and to his seed: he does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed; which is Christ (Gal. 3:16).

This points to Gen. 22:18, one seed being meant. Christ is that seed. Addressing Jewish and Gentile believers in the province of Galatia, Scripture says that they are Abraham's seed. How can that be?

. . . but if ye {are} of Christ, then ye are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29).

It is our connection with the great Seed of Abraham that makes us Abraham's seed. There was not a single believer in the province of Galatia, whether a Jewish or Gentile believer, who was not Abraham's seed. And they were the seed of Abraham in exactly the same way and the same degree. True, this is not the highest aspect of our blessings, but it is a blessing from God, held in common by all believers now, because of being in Christ. Being of the natural seed warranted not a single spiritual blessing that we possess, nor does it affect the degree of the blessing. There is nothing distinctive in this for a Jewish

1. Rom. 9:6-13 shows that natural descent does not in itself impart salvation or privilege. Those things are subject to God's sovereign working.

2. This was not to educate the omniscient God, of course, but was part of the trial of the first man under varied conditions, finally including the presentation of the Father and the Son (John 15:22-24). The cross ended the trial of the first man, and the second Man has been established in resurrection, displacing the first man altogether. Meanwhile, before bringing all under Christ's universal Headship in the millennial era (Eph. 1:10), He is forming a heavenly people to be the heavenly bride of Christ.

believer. He is the spiritual seed of Abraham *now* in the same way a Gentile believer is -- by being in Christ.

THOSE NEAR, AND THOSE FAR OFF, NOW ONE NEW MAN

In the administrative ways of God (or, if it is helpful, the dispensational ways of God), the Jew was in a place of nearness. But that was an external thing. It was an external position of nearness. ³ In the nation there were many who were not saints of God. But they all stood in covenant relationship under the conditional covenant of the law. And this left the Gentile far off as described in Eph. 2:11, 12.

The Gentile blessing of which the OT spoke will be fulfilled in the millennium -- when the Jewish-Gentile distinction will be in force again. Meanwhile God is doing another work, a work called the "one new man" (Eph. 2:15). This is new, not having existed before. This work does not bring Gentile believers into the nearness spoken of above as Israel's *external* nearness. Rather, both the believing Jew and the believing Gentile have been brought into a vital place before God as "one new man." They are removed out of their respective places into a new place. And this involves fellow-citizenship of saints, and of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). All this denotes equality and sameness, not distinctiveness of place and function for certain of the fellow-citizens of the saints. See also Eph. 2:21, 22.

So, this is an extraordinary work of God. It is of a different character than what will be true in the millennium concerning the saved Gentiles and the saved Jews, where the Jews will have Jewish distinctives and function, which they do not have now.

The present work of God concerning Gentiles is not a subject in the prophecies of the OT prophets. This work involves the mystery, the secret concerning which silence was kept in the past (Rom. 16:25, 26). It was hidden from time-periods and from people (Col. 1:26). It was hidden throughout the

3. They were in a place of special privilege, and this is what the olive tree (Rom. 11) is a figure of. Most of the natural branches were broken out, and Gentiles were brought into this place of privilege. While there are Jewish branches and Gentile branches that are really saved, many Gentile branches, particularly, are not; and God's judgment will come. In fact, the Gentile will be removed from the olive tree, the special place of privilege, and the new Israel under the new covenant will be reinstated into the olive tree. The olive tree does not figure reality of salvation, but rather special privilege. It figures what is external. However, there are branches who are saved. In the millennium both things will be true of the nation of Israel; namely, that they are in the place of special privilege (Rom. 11:24) and at the same time all Israel is saved (Rom. 11:26).

ages in God (Eph. 3:9), not hidden in the OT. ⁴ And this explains something said in Eph. 1:12:

. . . who have pre-trusted in the Christ . . .

This refers to trusting before the millennial time (spoken of in Eph. 1:10). It is pre-trusting. This includes all who now are believers.

WHAT IS THE BASIS OF GOD DOING THESE THINGS?

The believer taught of God will answer that these things are done on the basis of God's acting in grace. Grace is "God for us in all that He is, in spite of what we are in ourselves" (A. C. Brown). The OT promises and the unconditional covenants are all the expression of God's grace. It is clear in Galatians that being Abraham's seed is connected with promise. Being Abraham's seed is because of God's grace. In considering the following texts attention is directed to the omission of the word "the." Take for example the difference between being "under law" and being "under the law." Being under law means being on that kind of basis before God. It does not necessarily involve being under the law of Moses. However, being "under the law" is a reference to being under the Mosaic law. So, being "under law" means one is under law *in principle*. One is before God on that basis. Let us observe this distinction in these texts regarding "promise":

But if ye [are] of Christ, then ye are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29).

It does not say "the promise," or, "the promises." This does not point to every detail of what Abraham was promised; rather, it points to the basis, or principle, on which we are heirs. And what is that basis? It is the basis of promise, i.e., sovereign grace. So this is about how God is operating, not the content of promises and heirship. This is seen also in Gal. 4:28:

But ye, brethren, after the pattern of Isaac, are children of promise.

In addition to the fact that again the word "the" does not appear in front of "promise," an additional matter is brought to bear: we are children of promise after the pattern of Isaac. Sonship is also on the basis grace! Well, the fact is that every blessing we have is ours on that basis.

ALL OF THIS IS FOR JEWISH AND GENTILE BELIEVERS EQUALLY

Notice in both texts just quoted the word "ye." No Christian in the province of Galatia was excluded. Let me rephrase that. All believers in the province of Galatia were heirs and children of promise in the same way. None of this

4. That we from the Christian vantage point can look back and see types of certain things (though no type of *the body* of Christ) does not contradict this. Types are not revelations and/or prophecies.

involves "Hebrew Christian distinctives" in place or function. Actually, the truth bears against, resists, and refutes, such a notion. We are all of Christ, all children of promise, and all are Abraham's seed. And being Abraham's seed, we are so on the very same basis. And none of us are under the Abrahamic covenant (nor under the new covenant). It is not true that some of the seed is, and the others not. In the millennium the seed of Abraham will be under the covenants of promise. Christians are under none of them. It is necessary to maintain dispensational distinctions, else our walk is adversely affected.

Let us keep in mind that the occasion of writing the epistle to the Galatians was the Judaizing that was going on. We all being Abraham's seed and children of promise was meant to counter the Judaizing. Yes, the Judaizing was meant for Gentile believers -- but as well for the Jewish believers. There was to be no Judaizing, period. Well, says, Dr. Fructenbaum, that was a Judaizing on the basis of the law. What I want is Hebrew distinctives not for the Gentiles; and besides, I base what I say on the Jewish believers being under the Abrahamic covenant, not the law of Moses. I hope we all see this for what it is: Judaizing, and lowering Jewish believers that are in Christ downward in practice towards the position of a millennial Jew. And this must necessarily affect how one views the Christian place and privileges.

It is true that a Jew who is now saved is of "the Israel of God." That refers to an ethnic Jew who trusts Christ and His finished work. Gal. 6:16 notes first Gentile believers and then "the Israel of God." They are all to walk, not by Jewish and Gentile distinctives but, rather, "walk by this rule." What rule should saved Jews and Gentiles walk by? The previous verse (Gal. 6:15) tells us: "new creation." Verse 2 speaks of the law of Christ by which we are all to walk.

The reader is urged to read one of J. N. Darby's early (1839) outlines: "The Purpose of God." ⁵

The Bearing of 1 Peter 2:9-12

The following is from W. Kelly:

But ye [emphatically, are] a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set out the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness unto his marvelous light; who once [were] no people but now God's people, the unpitied, but now pitied (vv. 9, 10).

5. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 2:266-277.

It is true that as “a holy priesthood,” the exercise of the heart by faith is toward the God who brought us to Himself by His grace in Christ, and could righteously bring us thus near by His blood. We hence approach within, and offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What the sons of Aaron did in the sanctuary after a material sort, which derived all its value from being a shadow of Christ and His acceptance to God as a perfect and constant odour of rest, the saints are now exhorted to do. As the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, “By Him therefore let us offer sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, fruit of lips confessing to His name.” Can any privilege be higher or more intimate than to be in His presence, walking in the light as He is, delivered from the egotism which breaks out into the variance of separate will, and cleansed by the blood which effaces every sin? to adore the Father, the only true God? to pour forth our thanksgivings for all the grace that has reached even to us? to praise Him, in spirit with all saints, for all that He is and has done, and given us to receive and know?

Christ is the ground and substance of it all, and hence without cloud or change, and the Holy Spirit given, that a divine power and character might be in vessels though still earthly. This is a wondrous assimilation to the everlasting worship which shall be in heaven and throughout eternity; but we own it now and are invited to it now, not as a title merely but as a joyful occupation, especially as gathered to His name. It will be perfectly without alloy in the day of glory to which we look on; but it does become us to abound in it here, seeing that the light and the love and the known accomplishment of that work which secures the blessedness of all to God’s glory are already ours, and Christ is revealed to us in that glory as the fullest witness and pledge that it is ours.

Never should we confound worship with the ministry of the word. Precious as this is, it is but the means of conveying to us the truth, which received by the Spirit fits us for the praise and adoration of our God. It is rather the service of the Levite than the approach and the offering of the priest. But no communication of blessing from God to our faith, however essential as the basis, has the same nature, character, and effect as worship; for this is the return of the heart, when made free of His presence and strengthened by His Spirit, to present our thanksgivings and praises in the communion of all saints, acceptable to God through the Savior.

Yet it is not all. The believers are also viewed on another side. They, and they only, are “a chosen race,” at the very time when the elect nation had proved itself more than ever guilty to its own ruin. Now to a remnant of the Jews is this word primarily addressed; not as if it were not true of all who believe, but that those might be comforted who were saved from that perverse generation, over which a fresh judgment was suspended, about to scatter them once more, and more than ever. If Israel’s place was for the time forfeited, the

believing remnant get the blessing and are pronounced “a chosen race.” The distinction in Christianity acquired a higher character and more personal.

Next, they were “a royal priesthood” (which the Aaronic was not), but rather after the pattern of Melchizedek in its display of the blessing. In the day that is coming He will exercise that priesthood, sitting as Priest upon His throne, instead of bearing us up as He now does within the veil. Meanwhile those who are His are even now said to be a royal priesthood to manifest His praises before the day of His power. It is not of course preaching the gospel to the lost that they might be saved, but telling out His virtues or excellencies, as our testimony to Him who alone is worthy and exalted of God in the highest.

Then again they are “a holy nation,” when the nation, who ought to have been so, stood with the stamp on it of evil to the uttermost, not of idolatry alone but of disdain of the Holy One of God, the Messiah. Had they not cried in their blind and mad hatred, His blood be on us and on our children? The remnant, on the contrary, who owned Him and were washed from their sins in His blood, were now “a holy nation” accepted in His name.

Finally they were “a people for a possession.” If God was morally bound to discard at length the people who were always resisting the Holy Spirit, as their fathers had done, those of them who believed on Christ became “a people for a possession.” They were the more dear, because their faith broke through the manifold hindrances by which unbelief, pride, and judicial darkness encompassed the Jewish nation. Few as they were, compared with the mass hurrying on to destruction, they were “a people for a possession” to God, that they “might tell out the excellencies of him that called them out of darkness unto his marvelous light.”

Such is the Christian position here below. By-and-by Israel shall have the place in power and glory before all the nations, where the blind people see and the deaf people hear in the rejected Messiah the Lord Jehovah, the only Savior. Then will it be plain that “this people have I found for myself; they shall show forth my praise.” And men shall know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides Him, who is Jehovah, and none else; and the heavens from above and the skies shall pour down righteousness, and the earth shall open and bring forth salvation, and righteousness shall spring up together. But even now, while the rejected Christ sits on the Father’s throne, and the Spirit is sent forth to glorify Him after a spiritual sort in a world of darkness and rebellion against God, those who confess Christ are to tell out His excellencies. And well they may: seeing that He called them out of darkness unto His marvelous light. If these should hold their peace, as He said, the stones would immediately cry out. They were once as dark as any. So were all who now believe, darkness itself as the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, but now light in the Lord. And truly the light is wonderful unto which He

called us, Himself the genuine light which never deceives nor grows dim. Though it has not yet arisen to shine on Zion, as it will surely come, it has shone in our hearts who believe, the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now it is only from heaven and for heaven, as we wait for Him. But He will return and appear in manifest and indisputable light for Zion and repentant Israel; and the earth, which darkness still covers, shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah and of His glory as the waters cover the sea.

Meanwhile those He called out of the Jews are consoled by the assurance that in Christ all that can be theirs, consistently with walking now by faith and not by sight, is their assured portion. The failure of the ground (their own obedience), taken in Ex. 19:5, 6, Ex. 24:3-7, does not compromise those who believe. Christ suffering for their disobedience established what could not fall. Their faith rests on Him, not on themselves; whosoever believeth on Him shall not be confounded; and they did believe on Him who secures all for the weakest that is His. Hence they anticipate Hosea 2:23 before it can be verified to Israel, as ver. 10 clearly proves. They are warranted to appropriate now the prophet's words. It is due to Christ whom God delights to honour. But it is full of interest and instruction to apprehend that Paul, writing to both Jews and Gentiles that believed, quotes Hosea 1:10 no less than 2:23; whereas Peter, writing to the believing Jews of the dispersion, does not go beyond the latter. Each inspired writer was perfectly guided of God for the divine aim in view. This Wiesinger totally failed to discern, and Alford, who endorses his error, confuses the two truths, and thus destroys a distinction of all moment for spiritual intelligence. The once "no people" were now God's people; the unpitied as to their settled state, which the perfect implies, were now pitied. How truly great His mercy now! And it is good and wholesome for the soul to feel habitually that it needs nothing less in the day of temptation in the wilderness. So the apostle Paul reminds the believing Hebrews in the close of 1 Pet. 4. Indeed it is what the priesthood of Jesus constantly implies. All saints should cherish His sympathy and God's mercy throughout our earthly path.

The Bible Treasury, New Series 3:347-349.

The Bearing of Romans 14

Dr. Fructenbaum treats this passage in ch. 11 under the title "Legalism."⁶ Let us keep in mind that this objective is to have the practice of Jewish things, as sanctioned under the Abrahamic covenant, which he says is in force. If it was in force while the Mosaic covenant was in force, that is one problem to deal with: a covenant of

6. *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History & Philosophy*, Tustin, Ariel Ministries, 1992 [1983].

promise operating while a covenant of works was in process to see if Israel could obtain the promises by works. Thus, Israel stood under the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant, each having a mutually-opposed basis, at the same time. Or, the Abrahamic was not in force during the time of the Mosaic covenant, but was reinstated at some point so that Christian Jews could be under it. Of course, Dr. Fructenbaum has no Scripture proof of either case. So various Scriptures must give way to allow Christian Jews to have their Jewish feasts and other Jewish practices. It is self-evident from Rom. 14 that the weak brother is Jewish, having scruples about Jewish practices.

The first step is to point out that, yes, the abstainer from certain things is the weaker one and the stronger has liberty. Secondly, there is to be mutual respect; but, those "free to do certain amoral things are not to look down on those who have problems with them."⁷ And those who refrain are not to condemn the others. Pause and note the word "amoral," keeping in mind that Dr. Fructenbaum says that Jewish boys should be circumcised under the Abrahamic covenant. Is that "amoral"? And so is it with the practice of feasts and other things that are alleged to be of spiritual value to Christian Jews. Is something of spiritual value "amoral"? Thirdly, having stated that the issue is what is "amoral," he concludes:

. . . each believer has the right to be persuaded in his own mind concerning amoral issues and then live according to his convictions without expecting others to live in accordance with them.⁸

Besides noting the inconsistency of treating circumcision (and other things) under the cover of the Abrahamic covenant as things "amoral," as well as the false claim that Jews are under that covenant now, let us note that there is no supposition, hint at, or room in Rom. 14 for setting up Jewish Christian assemblies. The statement that Gentile Christians are free to come and worship with them not only does not change anything, it confirms the setting up of such assemblies.

It is true that the distinctions in Rom. 14 are not moral but ceremonial. Circumcision is not in view in Rom. 14. Circumcision is more than a thing indifferent since it put the Jew in covenant relationship. Dr. Fructenbaum knows that it is condemned in Galatians. Yes, it is connected there with the law of Moses, and that is the reason he has sought to circumvent this condemnation by grounding the circumcision of Jewish boys, not in the law of Moses, but in the Abrahamic covenant, allegedly in force. And if that is the case, it is really binding on all Jews, and not a thing indifferent or "amoral."

Dr. Fructenbaum is regarded as a "dispensationalist." His system of "Hebrew Christianity" is a perversion of dispensational truth. Rom. 14 speaks of patience

7. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

8. *Ibid.*

in the assembly of Gentiles and Jews regarding Jews who trusted Christ, in the case where some things from a system that had once been sanctioned by God were clung to, and patience with such is the order given in this chapter (while, hopefully they learned their liberty in Christ).

The “days” referred to are Jewish days, not heathen holidays upon which the name of Him Who is holy, Him Who is true, has been placed by an unfaithful Christendom.

More on this is found in *Thy Precepts* for July/August 2003, pp. 131-134.

Col. 2:16

Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matter of feast. Or new moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ.

As do Messianic Jews, Dr. Fructenbaum, with his system of “Hebrew Christianity,” inverts the meaning of this instruction. In the verse, “therefore” refers to what was said before this text. On the basis of the truth presented up to this verse, the Colossians were not to practice these things. The Christian is complete in Christ (Col. 2:10). They were not to be led astray by “elements of the world” (v. 8), which were taken up in Judaism while the first man was under trial to see if he was recoverable from the fall. And those things were done away in the cross (v. 14). Indeed, we Christians, Jew and Gentile, are circumcised by the circumcision not made with hands (v. 11). *We* are the circumcision (Phil. 3:3) as answering to what circumcision had pointed to, having been circumcised in Christ’s death. But Dr. Fructenbaum sees the need to circumcise with the circumcision made with hands, because, he claims, Jews are under the Abrahamic covenant.

And in accordance with this serious error, he wants feasts and Sabbaths. Thus, Col. 2:16 must be made to concur with what he wants. So the meaning is imposed upon the text that it supports this and the Jewish Christian doing such is not to allow himself to be judged by others when he engages in these things but to continue in them:

. . . since all amoral issues are clean in and of themselves, the person who has liberty is never to allow himself to submit to judgment in amoral things but is to continue in the superior way of living.⁹

W. Kelly remarked:

A Christian man who knows the victory of Christ for us should not surely entertain the idea of going back to these elementary forms of working good. Hold fast your actual place in Christ, act consistently with it. As to eating and

9. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

drinking or ordinances relative to the year, month, and week (and the Apostle takes particular care to speak not merely of feast or new moon but of sabbaths) remember that these things but prefigure the body or substantial good found really and only in Christ. In fact, these times and seasons point chiefly to what God will give His people by-and-by. The new moon was a remarkable type of Israel being renewed after fading away, as the sabbath was the type of the rest of God which He will yet enjoy and share. But whether it be peace or drink offerings or the feasts in general, they are connected as the shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. This we have. The Jew had the shadow, and he will have the things to come by the grace of God under the new covenant by-and-by. We are given the substance of Christ now. It is a question here of Jewish days. The Lord’s day has nothing to do with Judaism; it is not only apart from, but in contrast with that system.

The Lord’s day is as distinctly a Christian institution as the Lord’s supper, the Jew having nothing to do with either. It is very important to see that God has put honor upon the day of resurrection and grace. When people are radically loose or begin to slip away from the Lord, an early symptom is carelessness about this day. There ought to be an exercised conscience about it, not only for our own selves, but also as to servants within and others without our houses. It is of very great consequence that the sense of liberty and grace should not even have the appearance of laxity or selfishness.

It is not exactly said the body is Christ. It is said “the Lord is that spirit,” not that body, which was within the letter of the law. “The body” is used in contrast with “the shadow.” There is no substance in a shadow, but we have the body which is of Christ. The twofold idea is that, while the substance is of Him, He is the spirit of all. Verse 16 deals chiefly with a Judaizing character of evil; but verse 18 goes farther and shows a kind of prying into the unseen, not so much the religious use or misuse of the seen, which was the Jewish snare, but dabbling with philosophy, specially of the Orientals.¹⁰

More on this is found in *Thy Precepts* for July/August 2003, pp. 121-131.

Observing Days, etc.

In *Thy Precepts* for Sept./Oct. 2003, we reviewed the subject, “Was Paul a Messianic Jew all His Life?” In particular, Acts 28:17 was considered. A change in the ways of God concerning the patience of God regarding the ‘Messianic Judaism’ practiced in the epoch up to Paul’s imprisonment took place. In prison, and before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the book of Hebrews was written and the Jewish Christians were told to go outside the camp (Heb. 13:13). “The camp” refers to Judaism. Of course, and not surprisingly, Messianic Jews

10. *Notes on the Epistle to the Colossians, in loco.*

will find another meaning for that. Thy Precepts for Nov./Dec. 2003 and Jan./Feb. 2004, had an article, "The Camp Set Aside." Then in the March/April issue, we have "From Judaism to Christianity." And finally, in the May/June issue, there is an article, "Christian Jews Now."

Rom. 14 (written before Paul was in prison and had written Hebrews) directed patience to be shown the weak brother. The weak brother is a Jewish believer in the assembly who is not in Christian liberty as he should be, and free from things ceremonial in Judaism. Subsequently, in prison Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians to go outside the camp. In prison, he wrote to the Colossians that they were complete in Christ, were spiritually circumcised, the handwriting in ordinances that stood out against us was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:10-15). None was therefore to judge them in meat or drink, or matter of feast, or new moon, or sabbaths (Col. 2:16); i.e., as being participants in such Jewish practices. This was written "to the holy and faithful brethren in Christ which [are] in Colosse" (Col. 1:2). Who was "in Christ" in Colosse? Any Jewish or Gentile believer in Colosse was "in Christ" and the Apostle's direction applies to all Christians equally.

Dr. Fructenbaum, along with Messianic Jews, wants those practices (along with circumcision for Jewish boys), but in his case he uses the strategy of claiming to be under the Abrahamic covenant rather than deriving authority to do so from the law, seeking thus to avoid the condemnation of Galatians.

Concluding Remarks

Dr. Fructenbaum system depends on his erroneous scheme that the law was added to the Abrahamic covenant and now the law is done away and leaves the Jewish Christian under the Abrahamic covenant, which continues in force for Jewish believers, giving them Hebrew Christian distinctives of position and function. That means the Jewish males should be circumcised, etc. The Abrahamic covenant is unconditional and the Mosaic covenant is conditional. So Dr. Fructenbaum has the OT Jews under two mutually opposed principles of covenants at the same time. It is confusion confounded.

Moreover, here is the present truth:

For [in Christ Jesus] neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation (Gal. 6:15).

But Dr. Fructenbaum says that "the Israel of God" is under the Abrahamic covenant, and that means the Jewish boys *should be* circumcised -- so circumcision *is* something. He may say that Gal. 6:15 applies to those who base it on the law of Moses, but the text gives the "new creation" as the rule for "the Israel of God":

. . . but new creation. And as many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (Gal. 5:15, 16).

It is the same rule for all! That Jewish believers are under the Abrahamic covenant is a fabrication of Dr. Fructenbaum in order to keep up Jewish distinctives.

Moreover, *in effect*, it denies our having died with Christ and risen with Him, and being new creation. In effect, it denies our heavenly position, and rather connects "the Israel of God" with an earthly order (the Abrahamic covenant is for an earthly people). This is the meaning of his teaching, whether he intends that or not.

Though he does not base matters on law-keeping, seeking to avoid the condemnation of the book of Galatians, his system is hardly in accord with Eph. 2:11-22, while at the same time opposed to the Scriptures that we have reviewed. Practically speaking, his system produces results that come under the word *Judaizing* as well as *divisiveness* in the assembly of God. His system is not found in Scripture and certainly is not dispensationalism. Ed.

Note on Christ's Human Personality

In his *The Truth of Christ's Person: Is It Taught by Mr. F. E. Raven*, W. T. Whybrow has a heading that reads, "TO SAY THAT CHRIST HAD NO HUMAN PERSONALITY IS HERESY." Notice also that the notion of charging opponents with Nestorianism seems to come from FER:

Mr. R. considers that to reject his teaching on this subject approaches very near to heresy, and infers a dual personality. But he may remember Nestorius was anathematized because he taught that there was a separate basis of personality in the human nature of our Lord, that He was, in fact, a double being.¹¹ It is Mr. R. who now would view Christ as man, *distinct and apart* from what he is as God and divine. And in avoiding the Scylla of Nestorianism he has fallen into the Charybdis of an impersonal humanity . . . There is no human personality, but only human condition. This is the High-church doctrine of the incarnation. It is strange that Mr. R. should have imbibed it, coupled, indeed, with other thoughts, which they and most Christians would repudiate with abhorrence. It is this, too, that Mr. Darby so strongly condemned in his article on "Christological Pantheism" . . . (pp. 12, 13).

His paper is reprinted in *The Eternal Relationships in the Godhead*, pp. 91-97, available from Present Truth Publishers. Help on this matter may be found in:

An Affirmation of: The Divine-Human Personality of the Person of Christ, His Human "I" and Human Will, With a Note on His Impeccability.

Human Personality of the Man Christ Jesus Denied by F. E. Raven and T. H. Reynolds: Heretics and Heterodox . . .

These pamphlets are available from Present Truth Publishers.

Ed.

11. { Actually, it is disputed that Nestorius himself did really hold that, though some followers did. }

The Mystery of Christ and the Church and The Covenants

Chapter 1

The Mystery of Christ and the Church Not Spoken of in the OT

Introduction

If the Lord will, this is the first of a series regarding the mystery and the covenants. We begin with the silence that had been kept in OT times regarding the mystery of Christ and the church, then the objections of covenant theology, claiming that the silence was only partial, and why this objection is made. After that, we will consider some aspects, or features, of the mystery, and follow that with an examination of the subject of the OT covenants. The “covenants of promise” (Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenant) are said in Scripture to belong to Paul’s kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:43-5). Of course, in the ways of God, these will be made good to the new Israel under the new covenant. We will also consider the bearing of the Mosaic covenant, which is not a covenant of promise, as the other three are.

The place to begin is to have *God point to* how to understand; and He has done so in several Scriptures that tell us that silence was kept in the OT regarding the hidden mystery of Christ and the church. This tells us that the spiritualization of the OT prophets by those who hold to covenant theology flies in the face of what God has expressly stated. Thus, being so guided, and *submitting* thereto, we are on our proper ground of *faith* -- which comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. This is “*the obedience of faith*” (Rom. 16:25, 26), regarding the mystery (not the gospel -- cp. Rom. 1:1-5), which we will consider below. We have the Scriptures that are written to Christians, as such, and turn to them **first** for guidance. The *first* thing to be settled is not ‘literal’ versus ‘spiritual’ interpretation.¹ Listen to what the

1. This is not to say that discussion of that matter is unimportant. I am speaking of priority from
(continued...)

Apostle to the Gentiles wrote:

Now, I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body, which is the assembly; of which *I* became minister, according to the dispensation of God which [is] given me towards you to complete the word of God, the mystery which [has been] hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to his saints . . . (Col. 1:24-26).

The great secret that had been “hidden throughout the ages in God” (Eph. 3:9), which completes the Word of God, ought surely to be before our hearts, providing light and guidance in our understanding of the purpose of God for His own glory in Christ, and how to rightly understand what He formerly did. How this bears on the subject of the coming kingdom predicted in the OT is this: since the prophets did not speak of the mystery of Christ and the Church, the mystery of Christ and the church are not the fulfilment of those prophecies. This precludes the spiritual alchemy that transmutes those prophecies into prophecies concerning Christ and the church. Thus, the OT prophecies which speak of Israel’s future glory are to be understood just as a Jew at that time could only have understood them -- literally (with due allowance for figures of speech and symbols), and there is no fulfillment of the prophesied kingdom during the present period. In order to have these prophecies fulfilled now, it is necessary in covenant theology to ‘spiritualize’ the statements of the prophets so that no literal kingdom is meant. Among other things, appeal is made to the fact that the prophets do use obvious figures of speech and symbols and so it is claimed that when they prophesied about Jerusalem, Israel and Judah, the new covenant, etc., the church was meant. This involves two things:

- the mystery of Christ and the church is defined to be something that it really is not, so as to have the OT prophets speak of it; and,
- contradict the Word when it says silence was kept concerning the mystery.

Any sensible literalist allows, of course, for the use of figures of speech and symbols.² But, he rightly says, Judah, Jerusalem and Israel mean just that and not the church. Accordingly, the new covenant (Jer. 31; Heb. 8) is for the future nation of Israel during the millennium.

Let us now look at those Scriptures which show that the OT prophets did not speak about the church. It is claimed by spiritualizers of the OT prophets that the OT

(...continued)

having the Christian Scriptures before us. The subject of interpretation is discussed in my *Daniel’s 70 Weeks and the Revival of the Roman Empire*. The reader will also be helped in reading *The Mystery; and The Mystery and the Covenants*, available from Present Truth Publishers.

2. See W. Kelly’s “Language of Prophecy” in *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 13:49-54; and the first chapter in my *Daniel’s 70 Weeks and the Revival of the Roman Empire*, obtainable from Present Truth Publishers.

quotations found in Acts and the Epistles show that the prophets spoke of the church. Suffice it to say here that while those texts will be fulfilled in the coming 1000 year reign of Christ, they are cited by the NT writers as having some bearing or application *in principle* meanwhile, and designate neither a complete nor partial fulfillment of them, either in the church, or to Israel before the Millennium.

Silence Had Been Kept Concerning the Mystery The Three Scriptures Concerning The Hiddenness of This Mystery

We are going to look at three Scriptures concerning the mystery of Christ and the church. Received into the soul, via the conscience, which is the inlet of truth, we will see that the OT prophets did not speak about the church. These three Scriptures are:

Rom. 16:25	Col. 1:26	Eph. 3:9
silence	hidden	hidden
kept in	from	throughout
<i>the times of</i>	<i>ages &</i>	<i>the ages</i>
<i>the ages</i>	generations	in God

Something can be learned by weighing the various emphases in the above diagram.

Listening to What Scripture Says

Once I was asked to visit an Arminian and we came to Heb. 6:1-6, where it is said that if a person falls away it is “*impossible*” to renew him again unto repentance. That is not good for the lost-again saved-again notion. But he had a triumphant reply. He said that “impossible” meant “almost impossible.” Well, that brought the discussion to an end. That was the sign of a determined agenda, not of subjection to the Word of God. It is like when pointing out that “silence has been kept,” retorting that “silence has been almost kept.”

On another occasion I wrote to someone who had written statements subversive of the holiness due God’s house. I asked him what a “*partaker*” of his wicked works (2 John 11) meant. He replied that it meant a “partial partaker.” He could not embolden himself to flatly deny it to entirely get rid of what was distasteful to his unholy view so he did his best to water it down by qualifying it as “partial.” He too had an agenda. It is like when pointing out that “silence has been kept,” retorting that “silence has been partially kept.”

The same is true with the fact that God’s Word expressly declares that silence was kept about the mystery. The opposition amounts to this: that the mystery was *almost* secret, that it was *partially* hidden. We see here the same phenomenon as in the above two cases. There is an agenda -- and that agenda is to find the church in the OT; to find that the prophets did speak of the mystery; to make the church be the spiritual Israel. ³ It is a fact that different opposers of this silence use different explanations, but the agenda is that the mystery was not unknown in the OT.

If we will receive into our souls, through our consciences, that in Heb. 6 “impossible” means just that, and in 2 John 11 “partaker” means just that, and that “silence” in Rom. 16:25 means just that, we will have light from God instead of the mist of a human agenda. The mystery is “made known for obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:26). When God says that silence was kept, the obedience of faith believes that.

The Mystery is Not the Gospel

To repeat, from our vantage point of having the completed Scriptures, the *first* thing to be settled is not ‘literal’ versus ‘spiritual’ interpretation. What needs to be done first is to bow within one’s soul to the force of Rom. 16:25, 26 and several other Scriptures.

Now to him that is able to establish you, according to my glad tidings and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to [the] revelation of [the] mystery, as to which silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages, but [which] has now been made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures, according to commandment of the eternal God, made known for obedience of faith to all the nations . . . (Rom. 16:25, 26). ⁴

W. Kelly’s translation of the passage is this:

Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to [the] revelation of [the] mystery kept in silence in times of the ages but now manifested and by prophetic scriptures according to commandment of the everlasting God made known for obedience of faith unto all the Gentiles, to God only wise, through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] the glory unto the ages of the ages (or, for ever), Amen. (Rom. 16:25-27). ⁵

We are going to discover that opposers of dispensational truth undermine the word “silence,” as they must necessarily do, since their object is to find references in the OT to the mystery of Christ and the church, concerning which silence was kept in the

3. During the millennial reign of Christ, the new Israel under the new covenant, will have the law written in their hearts (Heb. 8). They shall all be saved (Rom. 11:26). They shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). Thus, the new Israel under the new covenant will be the spiritual Israel, as well as the head of the nations.

4. Scripture quotations are from the translation by J. N. Darby, unless otherwise indicated.

5. See his *Notes on Romans, in loco*.

times of the ages. We take note here that Arndt and Gingrich's Lexicon says:

μυστήριον χρόνοις αἰώνιους σεσιγημένον a secret that was concealed for long ages Rom. 16:25. ⁶

Notice from this quotation that not only was it a secret and concealed, but concealed for long ages. Some say that "The most natural reference, however, is to 'eternity past' . . ." ⁷ Well, that is an attempt to allow for *no-silence* in the OT concerning this mystery. Many objectors to dispensational truth regard the time-reference -- "silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages" -- as being to the OT times, as is evidenced by their claim that there was not a *total* silence in OT times, and that it was only partially hidden, as we shall see below.

It is clear that the OT spoke of future salvation for the Gentiles. ⁸ That is not the mystery. The OT had witnessed to the manifestation of the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21) and many other things concerning Christ (Luke 24:44-46). These things are not the mystery. When anti-dispensationalists say that these things are the mystery, I ask: are they doing even the slightest justice to the statement, "as to which silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages"?

Why not forthrightly state, "No, silence was not kept. I can find the mystery in many places in the OT -- it is easy to find predictions of salvation for the Gentiles"? Is not this what the erroneous notion that the mystery is salvation for the Gentiles, equally with the Jews, really amounts to? You may say that I am caricaturizing the opponents. We shall see about that below. ⁹

Now, not only does the fact that silence was kept concerning the mystery tell us that the predicted salvation for Gentiles is not the mystery, ¹⁰ but Rom. 16:25 makes

6. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, sec. ed., p. 749.

The interested reader may consult the NT use of *sigao* in *The Englishman's Greek Concordance*, p. 685 (#4601 in the cross reference to *Strong's Concordance*).

7. Everett F. Harrison on Romans in F. E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, vol. 10, p. 170, 1976.

8. There will be saved Gentiles in the millennium.

9. As an example of what we shall see to be the general approach of "Reformed interpreters," note that Robert L. Reymond claims that "The meaning of the word {secret} is not in dispute between dispensational and Reformed interpreters; it is the content of the "'mysteries' that is the matter of dispute" (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Nashville: Nelson, p. 536, sec. Ed., 1998). Is that to be believed for even one second? Yes, the content *is* in dispute; and so is the word -- for to the Reformed, silence means something less than silence. Why pretend otherwise? On p. 540 he tells us that Paul did not say in Ephesians "that the mystery had been hidden to previous generations in an absolute sense." He then refers to some fifteen OT texts concerning future blessings that Gentiles would share with the Jews. Of course they point to Gentile blessing; but that blessing pointed to is millennial and earthly.

10. Charles Hodge wrote:

(continued...)

an instructive distinction. "Now to him that is able to establish you, according to":

- "my glad tidings
- and
- the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to [the] revelation of [the] mystery."

Clearly, there are two things here, not one. We do not read, 'according to my glad tidings, the revelation of the mystery.' But I suggest that this is the way, in effect, that anti-dispensationalists take the passage.

The loss in not seeing this is great. Look at the words, "*Now to him that is able to establish you.*" This verse tells us that **two** things are necessary for establishment. The glad tidings only does part of this. A right apprehension of the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery (and, of course, a corresponding Christian walk in this truth -- not mere profession about it), is necessary for establishment. Oh, you object, just because I do not accept 'dispensationalism' with its distinction between Israel and the church, etc., I am not established? Well, I did not say it, the text says it.

It is the same concerning the gospel. What is needed is a right apprehension of the glad tidings concerning "that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures," etc. (1 Cor. 15:34) (and of course, a corresponding Christian walk in this truth -- not mere profession about it -- is necessary for establishment). Oh, you object, "just because I do not accept your dispensational distinction between the way of approach to God in Israel, and what you say about approach to God *now*, I am not established? Well, I think we still need priests today who can offer a sacrifice."

The Mystery

At this point it would be well to have a few introductory remarks concerning what a New Testament mystery is and what this one entails. W. Kelly wrote:

10. (...continued)

The mystery or secret, is not the simple purpose to call the Gentiles into the church, but the mystery of redemption . . . In all these places the mystery spoken of is God's purpose of redemption, formed in the counsels of eternity, impenetrably hidden from the view of men until revealed in his own time. It was this plan of redemption thus formed, thus long concealed, but now made known through the Gospel, that Paul was sent to bear as a guiding and saving light to all men (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 170, 1856, 1980 reprint).

The reader needs to bear in mind that the idea of covenant is the concept in covenant theology that is the unifying idea in Scripture; i.e., covenant structures Scripture. As part of this, understanding the unfolding of the progress of redemption is what unifies all Scripture for covenant theology. The result is that covenantism hinders understanding the mystery of Christ and the church.

We must, however, guard against the notion that “the mystery” or secret means the gospel. The gospel in itself does not and never can mean a mystery. It was that which in its foundations always was before the mind of God’s people in the form of promise, or of a revelation of grace not yet accomplished. But nowhere in Scripture is the gospel called a mystery. It may be connected with the mystery, but it is not itself a mystery. It was no mystery that a Savior was to be given; it was the very first revelation of grace after man became a sinner. The Seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent’s head. A mystery is something that was not revealed of old, and which could not be known otherwise. Again, you have in the prophets a full declaration that the righteousness of God was near to come; the plainest possible statement that God was going to show Himself a Savior-God. So again you have His making an end of sins and bringing in reconciliation and everlasting righteousness. All these things were in no sense the mystery. The mystery means that which was kept secret, not that which could not be understood, which is a human notion of mystery; but an unrevealed secret, -- a secret not yet divulged in the OT but brought out fully in the New. What, then, is this mystery? It is, first, that Christ, instead of taking the kingdom, predicted by the prophets, should completely disappear from the scene of this world, and that God should set Him up in heaven at His own right hand as the Head of all glory, heavenly and earthly, and that He should give the whole universe into the hands of Christ to administer the kingdom and maintain the glory of God the Father in it. This is the first and most essential part of the mystery, the second, or Church’s part, being but the consequence of it. Christ’s universal headship is not the theme spoken of in the OT. You have Him as Son of David, Son of man, Son of God, the King; but nowhere is the whole universe of God (but rather the kingdom under the whole heavens) put under Him. In this headship over all things, Christ will share all with His bride. Christ will have His Church the partner of His own unlimited dominion, when that day of glory dawns upon the world.

Hence, then, as we know, the mystery consists of two great parts, which we have summed up in Eph. 5:32: “This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Thus the mystery means neither Christ nor the Church alone, but Christ and the Church united in heavenly blessedness and dominion over everything that God has made. Hence, as we saw from {Eph.} chapter 1, when He was raised from the dead, God set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, “and put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church.” It is not said, “over the church,” which would overthrow, not teach, the mystery. He will be over Israel and over the Gentiles, but nowhere is He said to reign over the Church. The Church is His body. I admit it is a figure, but a figure that conveys an intense degree of intimacy, full of the richest comfort and the most exalted hope. The saints who are now being called are to share all things along with Christ in that day of glory. Hence it becomes of the greatest interest to know what the nature of the Church is. When did its calling begin, and what is the character of that calling, what the responsibilities that

flow from it? ¹¹

The following from J. N. Darby might provoke further thought:

. . . The mystery formed no part of revelation, no subject of promise. It was hid in God. I have already remarked that an historical type does not reveal a thing at all till the antitype comes. It is a simple history. Romans 16:25 does not simply relate to the preaching of the gospel, as is said. It speaks of a mystery kept secret since the world began, but not made manifest.

The bringing in of the Gentiles was not an unrevealed mystery. It is referred to in many scriptures; but Romans 16:25 speaks of a mystery kept secret since the world began, and to say that this is what is plainly taught in the Old Testament scriptures referred to is a bold defiance of scripture, and that is all. To say that “Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people,” and “I will set thee for a light to the Gentiles,” is a matter kept secret since the world began, is to trifle with the word of God. The only thing it proves is that the writer is ignorant of the mystery, now it is revealed, and knows nothing beyond the passages quoted. The Lord, it is said, expounded after His resurrection the things concerning Himself. It is scarcely conceivable that He should have left out the calling of the Gentiles in His exposition. Concerning Himself is not concerning the Church, but as to His own person. The Spirit was to come to guide them into all the truth. It is expressly stated, that He was showing them “that Christ must suffer and enter into his glory” (Luke 24:26, 44-46). A person must be singularly hard driven up to quote such scripture as this, and in the face of positive scriptures that it is *now* revealed by the Spirit, and had been kept secret since the world began -- hid in God. The calling of the Gentiles is not in itself the formation of the Church. “Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people” is a different thought. It justifies blessing to the Gentiles which the Jews would not hear of, “forbidding to preach to the Gentiles that they might be saved.” But it treats the Jews as God’s people, whereas in the Church there is neither Jew nor Gentile at all.

. . . No one denies that Christ spoke prophetically of the Church, though the Church itself was not yet revealed; but John 10:16 does not even do this. Gathering individuals into a flock does show the calling of the Gentiles, which had always been revealed, and approaches the outward state of things here. But the doctrine of the Church is not in it at all (that is, of the body of Christ). All this still only proves (what indeed makes all plain, as to the whole of these teachers), that they have not the scriptural doctrine of the Church at all. John *never* speaks of the Church -- once of a local church -- but never of *the* Church, but of Christ and individuals. None of the apostles speaks of the Church, nor uses the word of Christians as a whole, but Paul. It was a dispensation committed to him, as he tells us. Christ prophesies of it; the Acts relate historically its being founded; but no one speaks of it as a teacher, or doctrinally, but Paul. The nearest approach is an allusion in 1 Peter 2 to the temple: “We are built up a

11. *Lectures on . . . the Ephesians*, ch. 3.

spiritual house.” T. M. {Mansell?} is forced to admit that this purpose of God in gathering the saints into one was revealed in a manifested form and visible unity, never known or seen before. It is easy to say, never known or seen. When did it *exist* before? Where was the head to which the body was to be united? or did it subsist without any head at all? ¹²

If Rom. 16:25, 26 were simply received into the soul, one would understand that the OT does not speak of the mystery of Christ and the Church, which is His body. It expressly states that “silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages.” Why not bow in heart to the fact? But that would mean acknowledging that the prophets did not prophesy concerning the church. *Types* are not prophecies; nor is a type the uttering of something about the church, nor the uttering of anything else. “Silence” is the word. The truth of Christ and the Church “has now been made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures.” These prophetic Scriptures are New Testament writings, and in particular, Paul’s writings. These things are now made manifest by this instrumentality “according to the commandment of the eternal God.” All has unfolded as it has because He is sovereign and has commanded it to be thus.

The Obedience of Faith Regarding the Mystery

And what are we to do? Obey. “. . . made known for obedience of faith to all the nations.” What was made known? The mystery. Rom. 1:5 speaks of “obedience of faith among all the nations.” I believe all Christians, sealed with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13), have participated in what Rom. 1:1-5 refers to concerning “obedience of faith.” But at the end of Romans we find something further made known for the “obedience of faith.” Here, the mystery is mentioned. ¹³ In Rom. 1 it is a matter of our calling: in Rom. 16:25, 26 it is a matter of the mystery. There are many who have “obedience of faith” regarding their calling, but not “obedience of faith” regarding the mystery. I hardly think there is “obedience of faith” regarding the mystery when Scripture says *silence* was kept concerning it and a Christian labors to prove that silence was not kept in the OT concerning it. The force of Rom. 16:25, 26 is resisted because to receive what it expressly states means that some highly developed theological systems will collapse.

In direct opposition to the express statements of Scripture, covenant theology (now joined by retrograde dispensationalists) says that the mystery can be found in the OT prophets but not to the degree “*as* it has now been revealed” (Eph. 3:5). That is the use made of the word *as*. So instead of understanding *as* in the light of Rom. 16:25, 26, theology attempts to force Rom. 16:25, 26 into conformity with this false construction put upon *as*, and in effect turning the word “silence was kept” (Rom.

12. *Collected Writings* 10:248, 249.

13. The subject of the mystery of Christ and the Church is not developed in Romans, though something to do with it is touched on in Rom. 16. It is developed in Col. but fully so in Eph.

16:25, 26) into “talk was made.” Eph. 3:5 indicates, not a comparison, but a fact, a contrast.

When, and From Whom, Was the Mystery Hidden?

The fact that Scripture declares when, and from whom, the mystery was hidden is consistent with Rom. 16:25, 26, in affirming silence in OT ages. Col. 1:26 speaks of it also:

. . . the mystery which [has been] hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to his saints.

This means that the mystery was hidden both from past time-periods (ages) and from persons (generations). I suggest, therefore, that “obedience of faith” in respect of the mystery will acknowledge that these Scriptures declare that the OT was silent about it. Thus the issue of ‘literal’ versus ‘spiritual’ interpretation of the OT prophets to see if they spoke about the church or not is settled by the *express* statements of Scripture itself. (Of course, the use of figures of speech and symbols is a subject of inquiry, but in no way affects the issue.) What this means is that the OT prophets really meant Judah, Israel and Jerusalem (not the Church), and thus they have to be understood that there will be a future for national Israel. Also, the Church is not the continuator of Israel, nor the spiritual Israel. And in that day of Israel’s glory, when she is purged of every rebel (Ezek. 20) and all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 11:26), Israel will not be part of the Church, the body of Christ.

Where Was the Mystery Hidden?

We have seen that silence was kept in the times of the ages, that it was hidden from those ages and the peoples. *Where*, then, was it hidden? We should have thought that it was not hidden in the OT without even God telling us so. But He *has* told us where it was hidden.

To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and to enlighten all [with the knowledge of] what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things . . . (Eph. 3:8, 9).

Here we learn that the mystery was “hidden throughout the ages *in God*.” It was not hidden in the OT. During the OT ages it was hidden in God. *Types* have nothing to do, really, with the issue. Moreover, there are no types of a Head in heaven united to a body on earth. Types are history, incidents, or persons, not prophecy or revelation. The issue is that the OT prophets did not speak of the mystery of Christ and the church. There was “*silence*” about it; it was hidden from ages and from generations; it was *hidden in God*, not in the OT, not in the prophetic utterances. How is God to say it, if this does not mean what these texts are stating? Moreover, it is written in such a manner as to call for “*the obedience of faith*.” Ed.