



Essay One

A Faithful Creator

“And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26). If we are to rightly understand God’s plan and purpose for mankind, we must not forget that it was our Creator’s expressed purpose to make man in his own image and after His likeness. Is it possible that the eternal suffering or annihilation of the creature was what God had in mind? ***“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.”*** (Romans 8:20) ***“Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?”*** (Isaiah 50:2) ***“The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: . . . For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”*** (Isaiah 14:24&27)

We are God’s Workmanship Created in Christ Jesus

God is not like the craftsman or artisan who lays aside the marred work of his hands in disappointment and despair. ***“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*** (Ephesians 2:10) This promise isn’t limited to Christians, for **all** are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. ***“For by him (Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”*** (Colossians 1:16) Therefore, ***“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*** (Philippians 1:6)

Job, reflecting on the vanity of the creature exclaims, ***“If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.”*** (Job 14:14&15) Job does not base his hope for the redemption of his body on his own righteousness, but rather on the fact that he is God’s workmanship, and his confidence that the Creator has a desire to perfect the work of his hands. ***“But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not***

wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.” (Isaiah 64:8-9) *“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”* (I Peter 4:19)

When God said, *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,”* he was not speaking of Adam alone, but of the entire Adamic race. God’s creative work, begun in Eden, has been proceeding without interruption. Thus far, God’s creative purpose has been completed only in the case of *“the perfect man”*, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has become the pattern and the model after whom all the redeemed shall be fashioned, *“being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”* (Hebrews 1:3) *“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:13) In God’s creative process we are like the unplanted acorn which bears little resemblance to the stately oak which it is destined to become.

As in Adam All Die, so in Christ shall All be made Alive

We should remember that God’s creative process to perfect the creature is as much a work of God as was the conception of the creature. *“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be . . . But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. . . The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”* (I Corinthians 15:35-38, & 47-49)

What a simple creative principle! If we have been born in the flesh, we shall just as surely be reborn in the spirit, ultimately, *“being the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of his person.”* (Hebrews 1:3) *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”* (I Corinthians 15:22&23)

We Are Conceived by the Word of Truth

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18) *“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,*

heard I say, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Revelation 5:13)

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6) We shall have as little to do with our spiritual birth as we did with our physical birth, as both are of the Creator’s design and doing. *“As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:5) *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (II Corinthians 3:18)

Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord

Therefore, *“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”* (Psalm 100)



Essay Two

The Nature of Man

Throughout the history of the Christian church there have persisted two schools of thought on the nature of man, apart from the Spirit of God. One viewpoint holds that the natural man is totally corrupt, incapable of fulfilling the conditions for salvation, and without the sovereign intervention of God, the natural man is irretrievably lost. The second school of thought contends that the natural man, through the exercise of **'free will'**, can initiate or reject God's plan of salvation for the individual.

These divergent views of the nature of man were as prevalent at the time of Martin Luther as they are today. Erasmus, the Christian humanist of Luther's day, brought this issue into sharp focus when he published a tract titled, **On the Freedom of the Will**. Erasmus was urged by the ecclesiastical leaders of the day to state at what point he differed from Luther, for in many ways these two men were fellow laborers during the birth of the Reformation.

There are None Righteous, No not One

Luther thanked Erasmus for centering the discussion on the nature and destiny of man. He wrote to Erasmus, **"You alone have gone to the heart of the problem instead of debating the papacy, indulgences, purgatory, and similar trifles. You alone have gone to the core, and I thank you for it."** Luther responded to Erasmus by writing **The Bondage of the Will**, said to be the greatest piece of theological writing that ever came from Luther's pen. Luther recognized that "the natural man can practice the civil virtues as a responsible husband, an affectionate father, a decent citizen, and an upright magistrate. He saw that man was capable of the integrity and valor as displayed by the Romans of old, or the Turks of his day. Furthermore, he acknowledged that most of the precepts of the gospel can be outwardly kept. But in the eyes of God, ***"there are none righteous, no not one."*** Motives are never pure. The noblest acts are vitiated by arrogance, self-love, the desire of the eye, and the lust of power. From the religious point of view, man is a sinner. He has therefore no claim upon God. If man is not irretrievably lost, it can only be because God deigns to favor him beyond his desert. The problem then shifts from man to God." (**Here I Stand - A Life of Martin Luther**, by Roland H. Bainton, page 253)

Luther Believed Man was Impotent in Matters of Salvation

Luther wrote, “God has surely promised his grace to the humbled: that is, to those who mourn over and despair of themselves. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he realizes that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will and works, and depends absolutely on the will, counsel, pleasure, and work of another – God alone. As long as he is persuaded that he can make even the smallest contribution to his salvation, he remains self-confident and does not utterly despair of himself, and so is not humbled before God; but plans out for himself (or at least hopes or longs for) a position, an occasion, a work, which shall bring him final salvation. But he who is out of doubt that his destiny depends entirely on the will of God despairs entirely of himself, chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work in him; and such a man is very near to grace for his salvation.” (Bondage of the Will, by Martin Luther, translated by J.I. Packer & O.R. Johnston, page 100)

Erasmus believed Man could fulfill the Conditions for Salvation

Erasmus, as do many of our modern evangelical preachers, conceived of free will as, “a power of the human will by which a man may apply himself to those things that lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from the same. Is it not unjust that God should create man incapable of fulfilling the conditions for salvation, and then at whim save or damn for what cannot be helped?” (Bondage of the Will, page 137)

Luther responded, “Doubtless it gives the greatest possible offence to common sense or natural reason, that God, who is proclaimed as being full of mercy and goodness, should of his own mere will abandon, harden and damn men. . . It seems an iniquitous, cruel, intolerable thought to think of God; and it is this that has been a stumbling block to so many great men down the ages. And who would not stumble at it? I have stumbled at it myself more than once, down to the deepest pit of despair, so that I wished I had never been made a man. (That was before I knew how health-giving that despair was, and how close to grace) This is why so much toil and trouble has been devoted to clearing the goodness of God, and throwing the blame on man’s will.” (Bondage of the Will, page 55)

Luther rightly saw that the natural man was incapable of contributing to his eternal salvation. However, he had not yet been given understanding of God’s ultimate plan for the reconciliation of mankind, which reveals to us the fullness of God’s mercy and goodness.

Reformation or Crucifixion of the Natural Man?

The danger of the Erasmian view of the nature of man is that Christians will substitute the reformation of the natural man for crucifixion of the natural man. Erasmus declared, **“If this be so, who will try and reform his life?”** Luther replied, **Nobody! Nobody can! God has no time for your practitioners of self-reformation, for they are hypocrites. The elect, who fear God, will be reformed by the Holy Spirit; the rest will perish unreformed. Who will believe (you say) that God loves him? I reply, Nobody! Nobody can! But the elect shall believe it; and the rest will perish without believing it, raging and blaspheming, as you describe them.”** (Bondage of the Will, page 99)

Transforming Themselves into Apostles of Christ

Because of the Erasmian view of the nature of man, we find many Christians building their lives on the reformation of the natural man. The difficulty in dealing with the natural man arises from the fact that he can accomplish his self-exalting purposes either through evil, hostile, anti-social behavior, or, through cleverly concealed altruistic behavior manifest in apparent good works. In fact, the natural man can be reformed to the point of appearing as an angel of light, or a minister of righteousness. In II Corinthians 11:13-15 we read, **“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”** In Matthew 7:22, the apostles of Christ working through the natural man claim to prophecy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works in the name of Jesus. Christ says he will profess unto them, **“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”** Certainly Christ is not talking to the new creature which is borne of the spirit, but to the old carnal nature which cannot enter his kingdom.

Thomas Jefferson's Erasmian View of Christianity

Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States, author of the Declaration of Independence, author of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and founder of the University of Virginia, believed that a Christian was saved by his good works. Gary Scott Smith, author of Faith and the Presidency, wrote on pages 61 and 65, **“Jefferson wished that Christians and other theists would stop debating Christ's divinity, and focus on**

his character and moral teachings. The planter rejected the doctrines of Christ's virgin birth, vicarious atonement, and bodily resurrection. He was convinced that people had an intrinsic disposition to do good rather than evil, to live an upright rather than an immoral life. He maintained that if he ever founded a new denomination, "its fundamental principle would be the reverse of Calvin's belief, that is, we are saved by our good works which are within our power, and not by our faith which is not in our power." Jefferson's Erasmian view of Christianity, founded on the belief that man's first duty is the reformation of the natural man, now permeates our Christian communities and institutions.

Ye are the Temple of God

Instead of putting off the old man, we try to give him an extreme makeover and hope that God will accept him. However, the scriptures are very plain that the old nature is totally unacceptable to God no matter how upright the old nature may appear. The Christian is warned that he must build his spiritual life wholly on the new creature, which is Christ in us. In I Corinthians 3:11-16 we read, "*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*"

Put off the Old Man and Put on the New Man

The scriptures tell us there are two natures dwelling within the body of the Christian. In Ephesians 4:22-24 we read, "*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*" These two natures are engaged in continual conflict to control our minds, which in turn controls our behavior. Proverbs 23:7 says, "*For as he (man) thinketh in his heart, so is he.*" In Romans 12:1-2 Paul beseeches us to "*present your bodies a living sacrifice*", and that we be transformed into the new nature "*by the renewing of your mind*" in the word of God. "*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*" (John 15:3)

As Luther indicated, this transformation is impossible until we utterly despair (or repent) of our whole sinful nature, not just the sins of the old nature. In Romans 7:18 Paul

declares, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.”* In Romans 8:6-7 we read, *“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”*

Beware of our Reformed Carnal Nature Posing as God

Most Christians acknowledge that the carnal nature (or carnally controlled mind) cannot keep God’s law, but at the same time they assign to this carnal nature the capacity to believe God, to receive spiritual gifts, and to confess Christ as Lord and Saviour. As soon as we assert this element of goodness in the carnal man we set the stage for his reformation and eventual exaltation in the temple of God, *“which temple ye are.”* (I Corinthians 3:17) In II Thessalonians 2:3-4 we read, *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”*

The Natural Man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God

In I Corinthians 2:12 we read, *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God.”* We can’t even appreciate the things God has for us until he first gives us his Spirit (new nature), let alone receive spiritual gifts. In I Corinthians 2:14 we read, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

The only thing God asks us to do with our old carnal nature is to crucify it. In Romans 6:6 we read, *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him (Christ), that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* In Colossians 3:3-5 we read, *“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.”*

Death is swallowed up in Victory

Once we acknowledge and accept the appointed destiny of our carnal nature, God gives us victory over sin and death. We are assured that this sinful nature, which we all must wrestle with, will be finally put off at death. Paul rejoices in this fact in I Corinthians 15:54-55. *“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,*

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The scriptures admonish us not to know (or identify) ourselves, or our brethren, by the old carnal nature. In II Corinthians 5:16 we read, ***Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh.*** In Galatians 5:17 we read, ***For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*** While our flesh is still lusting after the Spirit in this mortal body, we are to reckon our carnal man as already dead, and in faith, trust God for our eventual and complete transformation, as death is swallowed up in victory.



Essay Three

What Shall I do to Inherit Eternal Life?

A young man came to Jesus and asked, ***“Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”*** (Matthew 19:16) What a Pandora’s box of spiritual remedies has been opened by this question posed by the rich young ruler. How easily we miss the message of hope in Christ’s answer.

In Matthew 19:17, Christ advises the young man, ***“But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”*** Did Christ actually believe this young man had any hope of earning eternal life by keeping the commandments? ***“Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*** (Romans 3:20&23)

All these Things have I Kept, what Lack I yet?

Why didn’t Christ reply? ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*** (John 14:6) It should be obvious that this young man had not yet learned the lesson which God’s law was meant to teach. After hearing Christ outline the requirements of the law, ***“The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?”*** (Matthew 19:20)

How quick we are to commend this young man for his diligence in keeping the commandments, without ever recognizing the enormity of his pride, and total lack of understanding of the demands of God’s law. Christ’s “sermon on the mount” makes it clear what God’s law requires. ***“But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment. . . . But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*** (Matthew 5:22&28) What young man can stand uncondemned before such a righteous law as this?

Sell what you Have and Give to the Poor

Christ, seeing the pride and unbroken spirit of the young man, in love, further increases the demands of God's righteous law. ***"If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."*** (Matthews 19:21-22)

What a pity! If only the young man had sold his possessions and followed Christ, he could have earned eternal life. Such nonsense! If it were possible for men to earn eternal life by keeping the commandments, the kingdom of God would be populated with arrogant egotists as proud as Satan himself. Thank God we cannot meet the demands of his righteous law in the flesh. Christ put it this way: ***"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*** (Matthew 19:24) What is true for the rich man is true for all of us, if we are trusting in our own righteousness.

The Commandments are given to Show us our Impotence

Luther, in **The Bondage of the Will** makes plain the role of God's law as ***"our school master to bring us unto Christ."*** (Galatians 3:24) ***"The commandments are not given inappropriately or pointlessly; but in order that through them proud blind man may learn the plague of his own impotence, should he try to do what is commanded. Hence, the work of Satan is to hold men so that they do not recognize their wretchedness, but presume that they can do everything that is stated. But the work of Moses the lawgiver is the opposite of this, namely, through the law to lay open to man his own wretchedness, so that, by thus breaking him down, and confounding him in his self-knowledge, he may make him ready for grace, and send him to Christ to be saved."*** (**Bondage of the Will**, pages 160 & 162)

With God All Things are Possible

In Matthew 19:25, the disciples begin to see the futility of trying to obtain eternal life under the conditions of the old covenant. ***"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."*** (Deuteronomy 30:15) ***"When the disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."***

I'm afraid that in most evangelical circles Christ would have received rather low marks for the way he witnessed to this young man. Why didn't he concentrate on the grace of God, and keep quiet about the demands of the law?

Luther expressed it this way. **“God has surely promised his grace to the humbled: that is, to those who mourn over and despair of themselves. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he realizes that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will and works, and depends absolutely on the will, counsel, pleasure and work of another. God alone. As long as he is persuaded that he can make even the smallest contribution to his salvation, he remains self-confident and does not utterly despair of himself, and so is not humbled before God; But plans out for himself (or at least hopes and longs for) a position, an occasion, a work, which shall bring him final salvation. But he who is out of doubt that his destiny depends entirely on the will of God despairs entirely of himself, and chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work in him; and such a man is very near to grace for his salvation.”** (Bondage of the Will, page 100)

God is not willing that Any should Perish

I wonder if Christ is able to complete the good work which he began in that young man? If eternal life is in any way dependent upon our own merit, then the answer is no. But if salvation is wholly a work of grace by a sovereign God, then there is hope for all. ***“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*** (II Peter 3:9)

Is obedience to God’s commandments an essential part of our Christian experience? Certainly! But let those good works spring forth from the fountain of the new creature which God has created in us, and let us forever abhor the notion that apart from Christ’s indwelling we can author any good work which will please God. ***“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*** (Philippians 2:13)



Essay Four

The Yoke of Sign Seeking

How many sincere and well intentioned evangelical ministers seek signs from members of their congregation that they have given their hearts to Christ, rather than preaching the gospel of reconciliation in Jesus Christ?

If Thou be the Christ tell us Plainly

We piously censure the Jews when we read in John 10:24, *“If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly?”* In our hearts we wonder, didn’t those Jews know the scriptures which testify of Christ? Yet, do we not ask the same faithless question of our brethren? If you’re a Christian, tell us plainly? Don’t the scriptures teach us that our sonship was settled by God before the foundations of the world were laid? (Ephesians 1:4-5), and as promised to our fathers and the prophets in Genesis 17:7 and Hosea 1:10, and fulfilled by Jesus Christ in sealing the new covenant with his blood at Calvary? In John 10:25 we read, *“Jesus answered them, I told you and you believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.”* Is not this how Jesus said we could identify his sheep? *“Ye shall know them by their fruit.”* (Matthew 7:16)

There Shall No Sign be given this Generation

In Mark 8:11-12, *“The Pharisees came forth, and began to question him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith. Why does this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.”* Do we not grieve the Spirit of God when we seek a sign from the Christ indwelling the heart of the believer? Or worse yet, do we imply that the sign is a condition of becoming a Christian? By the upraised hand have your sins forgiven, by the upraised hand receive eternal life, by the upraised hand become a child of God. Such nonsense!

The Sign of Circumcision

The apostles had to contend with those seeking signs in the days of the early church. In Acts 15:1-2 we read, *“And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”* Now we know that circumcision was a sign or a token of the unconditional covenant which God made with Abraham. In Romans 4:11 we read, *“And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.”*

Why tempt God to put a Yoke on the Neck of the Disciples

In Acts 15:10, Peter speaking on this matter says, *“Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”* Are we not reverting back to the yoke of the conditional old covenant when we ask the people to give us a sign of their faith. At the sealing of the old covenant the people said in Exodus 24:7, *“All that the Lord hath said will we do,”* At the sealing of the new covenant, the people remained silent, and the Spirit of God descended upon them to speak the words of the prophets concerning the grace of Christ. (Acts 2:4& 16-39)

We are Children of the Promise

In Galatians 4:28-31 Paul tells us to cast out the bondwoman (the old covenant) with all of its vestiges, and to stake our faith on the unconditional new covenant which frees us from all dependence on the flesh. *“Now we brethren, as Issac was, are the children of promise. . . Cast out the bondwoman and her son (old covenant): for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman (new covenant). So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”*

God has broken the yoke upon his people that teaches we are saved by works, a teaching which prevailed until the time of Martin Luther. God must, and will, break the yoke that teaches we are saved by signs. Many of God’s children have borne this burden of trusting in signs of the flesh, and not trusting wholly in the finished work of Christ. Indeed it is too heavy a burden.

That They may Glory in Your Flesh

In Galatians 6:12 Paul says, ***“As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised: only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.”*** Unfortunately, if you teach that Christ finished the work for man’s salvation on the cross, independent of the will of man, you’re going to be persecuted, as were the apostles. Paul goes on in Galatians 6:13, ***“For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.”***

How many ministers judge the success of their ministry by the number of signs of upraised hands, or responses to altar calls? In Galatians 6:14 we read, ***“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”***

These Signs shall Follow Them that Believe

The Lord has given us the ordinance of baptism as a token or sign (not a condition) that we are God’s workmanship. ***“That he might sanctify and cleanse it (the Church) with the washing of water by the word.”*** (Ephesians 5:26) In Mark 16:17-18 Christ says, ***“And these signs shall follow them that believe.”***

“In my name they shall cast out devils.” This includes devilish doctrines as spoken of in I Timothy 4:1, ***“In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”***

“They will speak with new tongues.” In John 8:28 Jesus said, ***“but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.”*** Even so, we must speak the words of God and not our own.

“They shall take up serpents.” Luke 10:19 says, ***“behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing by any means shall hurt you.”*** In Matthew 23:33, Christ identifies these serpents as religious unbelievers.

“And if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them.” Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 20:23, ***“Ye shall drink indeed of my cup,”*** and so they did, caring not about those who could destroy the body, but not the spirit.

That Ye Break Every Yoke

In Isaiah 58:6 we read, *“Is not the fast which I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”*



Essay Five

Christ's Decision for Us

The thrust of modern evangelical preaching is to encourage sinners to ‘**make a decision for Christ**’, and on the basis of this decision, the sinner **gets saved**, obtains the gift of eternal life, and is assured of going to heaven when he dies, providing he does not commit some unpardonable sin. The scriptural basis for this message is of course, John 3:16. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Romans 10:9 adds the further condition of, *“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus.”*

Making a Decision for Christ

These two conditions of believing and confessing are euphemistically referred to as: **making a decision for Christ**, accepting Christ as our personal Saviour, or, giving our heart to Jesus. With this theology in mind, wouldn't it be nice if the preacher could keep track of who was saved, and who wasn't, and be able to tell how effective his preaching was by counting the converts? So, we add to the process of getting saved, the raising of hands, the altar call, or some other sign that the sinner is genuinely saved. Well, what's wrong with that? Nothing, except Satan has now been given the perfect instrument to immobilize the babe in Christ – namely, **doubt**.

If Satan can get us thinking that we had something to do with our salvation, he can just as easily persuade us that we didn't do it quite right. Maybe we weren't truly repentant. Maybe we promised God we would not commit a certain sin, and then we backslid. Maybe we weren't really serious about becoming a Christian. Maybe we didn't understand the scriptures about salvation. Maybe we didn't really give Christ our whole heart, as if our desperately wicked heart could play any role in our salvation. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9)

The Natural Man Receiveth Not the Spirit of God

But sinners must have something to do with their salvation. After all, we have to believe and confess, don't we? Can the carnal man believe God? I Corinthians 2:14 says, *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him"*. Can the carnal man confess Christ as Saviour and Lord? Matthew 16:16-17 says, *"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"*

The Words I Speak are Spirit and Life

God's Spirit must already dwell in the minds of sinners **before** they can believe or confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. *"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."* (I Corinthians 12:3) The source of God's spirit is the word of God. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17) *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* (John 6:63) *"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."* (James 1:18)

Chosen in Him before the Foundation of the World

What do the scriptures say about man's role in his salvation? Ephesians 1:3-6 says, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."*

If Christ made a decision to save us **before** the foundation of the world, then we must conclude that we had absolutely nothing to do with our salvation. Furthermore, if Christ reckoned us as saved before the foundation of the world, then we must have been saved in our mother's womb (Isaiah 49:1), the day we were born, and the day before God opened our eyes to the fact that he had saved us before the foundations of the world were laid. Where then is there room for doubt in so great a plan of salvation?

Luther put it this way. **"Man, before he is created to be man, does and endeavours nothing towards his being made a creature, and when he is made and created he does and endeavours nothing towards his continuance as a creature; both his creation and his continuance come to pass by the sole will of the omnipotent power and goodness of God, who creates and preserves us without ourselves. . . So, too, I say that man, before he is renewed into the new creation of the Spirit's kingdom, does and**

endeavours nothing to prepare himself for that new creation and kingdom, and when he is re-created he does and endeavours nothing toward his perseverance in that kingdom; but the Spirit alone works both blessings in us, regenerating us, preserving us when regenerate, without ourselves . . . But He does not work in us without us, for he re-created and preserves us for this very purpose, that He might work in us and we might co-operate with Him.” (Bondage of the Will, page 53)

If God be for Us who can be Against Us?

Romans 8:29-32 says, “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things?*” Lord, you don't understand. I wasn't really saved until I made a decision for Christ, until I gave you my heart. Such nonsense!

Nothing can Separate Us from the Love of God

Instead, our reply must be, “*If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:31-39)

If our salvation is in any way founded upon the will of man, then we could just as easily lose it through a decision of the flesh. Thank God it is not, as clearly stated in John 1:13, “*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*”

Are we just splitting doctrinal hairs? Are we making much to do about nothing? Or, is the issue our confidence that “*nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus*”, versus the doubt caused by putting just a little confidence in the flesh? Jesus

Christ made a decision for us before the foundations of the world were laid, and his Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). God's children need to know this **Good News!**



Essay Six

The Word of Reconciliation

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (II Corinthians 5:18-20)

What is this word of reconciliation of which Paul is speaking? Is it the teaching that only a small remnant will be saved, while the vast majority will be permanently claimed by the grave or suffer eternal torment? If God is not willing that any should perish, how can we as his ambassadors preach a gospel which limits reconciliation to a few?

All Men to be Reconciled

The idea of the universality of God’s love embracing the ultimate rescue of all men from sin and death is the very essence of the Gospel, and it behooves us as his ambassadors to understand this ministry of reconciliation. In II Peter 3:9 we read, *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* If God is not willing that any should perish, who then is able to thwart the purpose of him, *“who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will”* (Ephesians 1:11). Christ promised, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”* (John 12:32) Was not Christ lifted up, to offer one sacrifice for sins forever? (Hebrews 10:12) Why then, do we count the Lord as slack concerning his promise to draw all men unto him, simply because we have not seen the ultimate fulfillment of this promise?

The apostle Paul was certainly fully persuaded of Christ’s promise to reconcile all men. In I Timothy 2:3-6 we read, *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth . . . Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”* In Titus 2:11

we read, *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”* In Hebrews 2:9 Paul declared, *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* In Colossians 1:20 Paul assures us that this reconciliation is not based on man’s will or his behavior, but it is based on the blood of Jesus Christ. *“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”*

That All Men through Him might Believe

John also testified to this word of reconciliation. *“In him (Christ) was life; and the life was the light of men . . . that all men through him might believe . . . That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”* (John 1:4, 7&9)

In Romans 5:18 Paul declares, *“Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam), judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”* Some may contend that the word **all** in these contexts is not all inclusive. Well, if that is the case, how can we be sure that **all** scripture is given by inspiration of God, that by him were **all** things created, and that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from **all** sin. Indeed our Christian faith rests upon the inclusiveness of this word **all**.

At the name of Jesus every Knee Shall Bow

In Philippians 2:9-11 we read, *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Perhaps we can limit the inclusiveness of the word **all**, but how can we limit the inclusiveness of things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth? The confession of every tongue, *“that Jesus Christ is Lord”*, does not imply the coercion of God’s enemies. John tells us that *“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”* (I John 4:15)

In spite of these promises, it is apparent that only a small remnant has been reconciled to God in this present age. How and when will the vast majority be reconciled to God?

All to be Resurrected

The scriptures plainly teach that there is to be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. Jesus speaking to the Jews in John 5:28-29 said, *“Marvel not at this; for the hour*

is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (judgment).”

The apostle Paul defending his faith in the resurrection of all men, spoke the following words before Felix, *“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”* (Acts 24:14-15)

In Romans 14:12 we read, *“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”* Again, in II Corinthians 5:10 we read, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* If the unjust are to be permanently consigned to the grave or eternal torment, would not God’s resurrection of them make as much sense as beating a dead horse?

A Better Resurrection

If all are going to be resurrected and eventually reconciled to Christ, what advantage or purpose is there to being reconciled in this present age? While the answer to this question is very plain in the scriptures, it has been all but obscured by modern evangelical preaching. The apostle Paul gives us the answer in Hebrews 11:35. Speaking of those who died in faith he declared, *“Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.”*

What is this **better resurrection** of which Paul is speaking? In Revelations 20:4-5 we read. *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.”*

Obviously the qualifications for being included in the first resurrection and entrance into Christ’s Millennial Kingdom, involves something more than making ‘a decision for Christ’. After fourteen years as a faithful apostle, Paul exclaimed in Philippians 3:13-15, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (unto this better resurrection): but*

this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.”

The Post Millennial Resurrection

The glory to be revealed in those who have part in the first resurrection is replete throughout the scriptures, but what happens to the rest of us, who, *“lived not again until the thousand years were finished”*?

The apostle Paul tells us that while **all** will be resurrected there will be an order to the post-millennial resurrection. Everyone will not be resurrected simultaneously. *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”*

(I Corinthians 15:23-26)

Moses speaks of those who sleep (or perish) during the millennial kingdom in Psalm 90:3-5. *“Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as asleep: in the morning they are like grass which growing up.”*

A further picture of this post-millennial resurrection is given in Revelation 20:11-14. *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (the grave) delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”*

In II Peter 2:9 the apostle declares, *“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”* Obviously, the judgment is not going to be a pleasant experience for those in the post-millennial resurrection. Nevertheless, it will have a pleasant outcome as we put off the old man and take on Christ’s nature.

What is the Second Death?

In Revelation 20:14, John indicates that *“death and hell (the grave) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”* Again, in Revelation 21:8 we read, *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”* From these two verses, many have been led to believe the vast majority of those in the post-millennial resurrection will either return to the grave a second time, or suffer eternal torment in the lake of fire.

Those that are Christ's have Crucified the Flesh

In Revelation 20:6 we read, *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* Why doesn't the second death have power over those in the first resurrection? The scriptures teach that the reason it has no power over them is because they have already experienced the second death. In Galatians 5:24 we read, *“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”* Paul declares in Romans 8:13, *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*

If we through the spirit do judge the deeds of the body now, there will be no need to go through this second death experience later. Notice that the judgment of the deeds of the body, which every Christian must suffer in this present age, is identical to what must be suffered by those in the post-millennial resurrection. Furthermore, just as this judgment of the deeds of the body brings life to the Christian, so will it in like manner bring life to those in this post-millennial resurrection. It is not the unjust who are destroyed, but rather their sin nature and death.

In Colossians 3:3-6 Paul again admonishes us to go through this second death experience now, rather than waiting until after the Millennial Kingdom. *“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”*

What is the Purpose of the Lake of Fire Experience?

In Revelation 20:14, we have already seen that the purpose of the lake of fire is to destroy death and bring life. But how will this be accomplished? In I Corinthians 3:13-15 we read, ***“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he had built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”***

Wash away the Filth by the Spirit of Burning

While the works of the flesh (wood, hay and stubble), which are not built upon Christ, will be consumed by the cleansing fire of God, yet the individual will be saved by this fire. The scriptures teach that ***“our God is a consuming fire”***. (Hebrew 12:29) In Malachi 3:2 we read, ***“But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.”*** Isaiah 4:3-4 declares, ***“And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.”*** The scriptures plainly teach that the purpose of the spirit of judgment and spirit of burning is to wash away filth and to cleanse. Again, in Isaiah 26:9 we read, ***“for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”***

Victory over Death

In Matthew 12:20 we are told that Christ shall send forth judgment unto victory. What victory? In Hosea 13:14 the Lord declares, ***“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.”*** In Isaiah 25:8 we read, ***“He (Christ) will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off the earth: for the Lord hath spoke it.”*** In I Corinthians 15:55&56 we read, ***“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

How can Christ claim victory over the grave so long as it holds a single captive? How prone we are to compromise the atoning work of our Lord, and limit **the Holy One of Israel**. What a message of hope and reconciliation we are privileged to share with all of

God's children. *“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”* (Ephesians 1:9-10)



Essay Seven

A New Song

“And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.” (Revelation 14:1&3)

The Goodness of God leads to Repentance

Perhaps never before in the history of God’s people, has there been a greater need to hear the comforting, faith building song of the new covenant. Yet the shepherds of Israel continue to sing the disquieting words of condemnation and judgment which we so richly deserve under the administration of the old covenant. Certainly our sin is great, and the cleansing fire of God’s judgment burns in our midst, but it is at just such a time that we need to be reassured of God’s grace and mercy. *“knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”* (Romans 2:4)

Maybe the reason the song of the old covenant is so popular is its appeal to the flesh. The natural man is attracted to self-improvement programs, and exhortations to self-righteousness. It was at the inauguration of the old covenant that Israel in their own ignorant self-confidence, uttered those fearful words, *“All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.”* (Exodus 24:7)

The Confirmation of the Old Covenant

Henry W. Soltau in his book, The Holy Vessels and Furniture of the Tabernacle, describes the consequences of Israel’s zeal without knowledge. **“And then Moses sprinkled both the book and all the people, and the covenant was confirmed, so that no one could disannul it; a covenant which bound them to obedience, and bound God to punish disobedience; a covenant that rested for the performance of its terms on their own faithfulness and strength; and in which God had, so to speak, nothing to do Himself, but to watch the results of their actions, and to deal with them accordingly.**

And what were they? Poor lost sinners at their very birth, children of wrath by nature – without strength at the very outset, save that they had the strength of the flesh, which could only act in the way of sin. Doubtless, it sounded well in the ears of men when they uttered the resolution to obey God. It doubtless gratified their own hearts, and seemed like humble obedience; but what was it in reality, but the expression of their own ignorance of God’s righteousness, and their own helpless and ruined condition? What was it but a proof that sin had so blinded their eyes that they were unable to discern their own state, and supposed themselves competent to obedience, when in reality they were in the helplessness of death? And does not many a good resolution, even at the present day, manifest the same ignorance of self – the same dream of strength when there is really none – the same thoughtlessness as to God’s holiness and man’s incompetence?”

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul expresses his grief at Israel’s unwillingness to cast off the old covenant, and find peace and rest in the new. *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.”* (Romans 10:1-5)

Our Righteousness is as Filthy Rags

Those who trust in their own righteousness, which is of the law, should take heed to Ezekiel’s warning. *“The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression . . . When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.”* (Ezekiel 33:12&13)

What a woefully inadequate covering is our works of righteousness! No wonder Isaiah exclaimed, *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”* (Isaiah 64:6)

We like to imagine that this admonition only applies to our works of righteousness before we became Christians. Afterward, we like to think our works are endowed with some merit whereof we can boast. In Paul’s epistle to the Romans, he warns us not to fall into this delusion. *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, Yea doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*

my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Philippians 3:7-9)

The Pharisees took great delight in advertising their works of righteousness in the ornamentation of their garments. During the administration of the old covenant, the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, *“Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribbon of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them: and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.”* (Numbers 15:38-40)

As with everything associated with the old covenant, the natural man managed to corrupt it, so that when Jesus spoke of this practice of the Scribes and Pharisees he admonished them; *“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.”* (Matthew 23:5)

The Lord is Our Righteousness

Why do we still insist upon being clothed in filthy rags, when Christ has provided us a garment, without spot or wrinkle. Christ said, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:22&23) These individuals laboring under the burden of the old covenant had not yet learned the song of the new.

Rather, let our song be, *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.”* (Isaiah 61:10) Jeremiah 23:6 says, *“He shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,”* and we are to have no confidence in the flesh.

Cast off the Old Covenant Garment

We are not to take the garment of Christ’s righteousness and use it to sew patches on our own righteousness. In Luke 5:36, Christ spoke the following parable. *“No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.”* How many

Christian's lives are torn and rent because they are trying to wear the garments of both the old and new covenants. Paul tells us in the fourth chapter of Galatians that we are to cast off the old covenant garment and put on the new.

In Revelation 14:3 we are told that no man could learn the song of the new covenant save them which were redeemed from the earth. For, *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

(I Corinthians 2:14)

He has put a New Song in My Mouth

Let us pray that God would put a new song in the mouth of his people that they might show forth his praise. For it is a song of good tidings and great joy which shall be to all people. *“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”* (Psalm 40:3-5)

“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with truth.”

(Psalm 96:1-4&10-13)

“O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice and sing praise.” (Psalm 98:1-4)



Essay 8

*Are You Standing or Staggering
on the Promises?*

How many Christian parents spend most if not all of their lives in a state of anxiety over the spiritual destiny of their children? Can we enjoy the faith which our father Abraham had concerning his son Isaac; that what God had promised he was able also to perform? Can we place our children in faith on the altar of God with the assurance that it is God's responsibility to change the hearts of his children? Or shall we stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, clinging to a 'do-it-yourself' gospel of salvation which makes the word of God of no effect?

That Ye Might be Partakers of the Divine Nature

There are those who would have us believe we are partakers of Christ's divine nature because of some decision of the flesh, rather than because of God's immutable promises made to our fathers and their seed. Peter, writing to the Isaac-sons in II Peter 1:3-4, reminds them, *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises: that by them ye might be partakers of the divine nature."*

When did God promise to the Isaac-sons that they would be partakers of Christ's divine nature? Was not this the very heart of the new covenant? In Isaiah 59:21 we read, *"As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord. My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."*

The apostle Paul declares in Hebrews 9:15, *"And for this cause he (Christ) is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."* Paul declared to the Isaac-sons dwelling in Corinth

that this promise was fulfilled in them. *“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.”* (II Corinthians 3:3)

For the Promise is unto You and Your Children

When the Holy Spirit descended on the Isaac-sons at Pentecost, to seal the new covenant, Peter reminded them. *“For the promise (gift of the Holy Spirit) is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”* (Acts 2:39) Isaiah identifies those that were afar off as the scattered ten tribes of Israel. *“I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”* (Isaiah 43:6-7)

To be a God to Thee and Thy Seed after Thee

In II Corinthians 7:1 Paul declares, *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* What promises is Paul talking about? In II Corinthians 6:16 Paul quotes God’s promises made to the Isaac-sons in Leviticus 26:12. *“I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”* The same promise was made to Abraham in Genesis 17:7. *“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”* In Romans 9:25-26, the apostle Paul also quotes that great promise from Hosea 1:10. *“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered, and it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”*

Christ Confirmed the Promises Made unto the Fathers

In Galatians 4:28 Paul reminds the Isaac-sons, *“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise.”* Does your Pastor remind you that you’re a child of the promise, or are you taught the traditions of men that ignore these sure promises of God? In Romans 15:8 we read, *“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”* Do we not despise the blood of Christ when we set aside his election of the Isaac-sons and substitute our own theory of election which appeals to the carnal mind? Paul testifies in Romans 9:8, *“They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of*

the promise (Isaac-sons) are counted for the seed . . . that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.”

Abraham Staggered not at the Promises of God

Do we stagger at these promises because we don't have the faith to see how God can fulfill them? Abraham being childless, was also faced with believing a seemingly impossible promise; *“that he should be the heir to the world”* (Romans 4:13), and *“a father of many nations.”* (Genesis 17:4) In Romans 4:19-20 we read, *“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”*

As we look over the spiritually dry bones of the Isaac-sons today, do we consider them dead, or do we trust God in faith for his promises. *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.”* (Romans 4:16)

“Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.” (I Kings 8:56)



Essay Nine

That Great Shepherd of the Sheep

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen” (Hebrews 13:20-21)

In these closing verses of Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews we are presented with a beautiful summary of God’s plan of salvation for his people Israel. We are told that the perfection of his sheep rests solely upon the promises of the new covenant, sealed with the blood of that great shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ. The heart of the new covenant promises is declared to be Christ working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight. The power of these new covenant promises springs from their total dependence on the working of God.

We Pollute the New Covenant with the Old Covenant

How sharply does this Gospel presented by Paul contrast with what we are taught in our pulpits today. We are told in effect, that the great shepherd of the sheep shed his blood in vain for the vast majority of his holy flock. Instead of focusing on the unconditional promises of God, we focus on man’s response, man’s behavior, and man’s experiences. In effect we pollute the new covenant with the old.

In Luke 5:36 Christ warned, ***“No man putteth a piece of a new garment on an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.”*** No matter how diligently we try to weave Christ into the fabric of the old covenant, our patchwork gospel unravels when we are confronted with the claims of the new covenant.

Can you imagine the ridicule and shame which would be heaped upon a shepherd who returned to the fold with less than ten percent of his flock? How then do we expect to build faith in that great shepherd of the sheep with a gospel which allows the loss of ninety

percent of his sheep? It simply can't be done. Either Christ will save all of his sheep, or he will have been derelict in his role as the great shepherd of the sheep.

It is not the Will of your Father that One should Perish

In Matthew 18:12-14, Christ makes it clear that he has no intention of losing a single one of his sheep. ***“How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”***

We are His People, and the Sheep of His Pasture

The old scriptures teach that the Israel people were God's sheep, and Christ their shepherd. In Psalm 100:3 we read, ***“Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”*** In John 17:9-10, Christ acknowledges that the Israel people are his responsibility. ***“I pray not for the world, but for them which thou has given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them”*** In John 6:37-39 Christ promises that of all those that the Father has given him, none would be lost. ***“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me; I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.”***

My Sheep Hear My Voice

God's sheep knows their Master's voice and follow him. ***“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”*** (John 10:27-28)

Some Christians when confronted with God's plan for the reconciliation of all mankind, express their concern that such a teaching discourages us from evangelizing the world. Quite the contrary is true. As long as we harbor the notion that God has written off ninety percent of his creation, our concern for his sheep can be quite shallow and superficial. This kind of thinking led the apostle Peter to regard Cornelius as unclean, and unworthy of salvation. The gospel of reconciliation teaches us not to call any man common or unclean, for ***“What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”*** (Acts 10:15)

Let us not forget that we were all lost sheep, and only through God's grace and mercy were we returned to the fold. In I Peter 2:25 we are reminded, *"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."* As ministers of the word of reconciliation, we have a responsibility to all of God's sheep. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28)

I Will both Search My Sheep and Seek Them Out

In Ezekiel chapter 34, the Lord is very harsh with those shepherds who fail to search for his flock, and feed them. *"Therefore ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."* (Ezekiel 34:7-12)

The prophet Amos speaks of the concern and watchfulness of the Great Shepherd for all his sheep. *"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."* (Amos 9:9)

Fear Not Little Flock

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)



Essay Ten

Dispersion of Ten Tribe Israel

One of the great mysteries of the scriptures, and secular history, is the apparent disappearance of the house of Israel at the time of their Assyrian captivity. Isaac Leeser, an eminent Jewish scholar who translated the Hebrew scriptures for the English speaking Jews, says in his work, The Jewish Religion, “Let us observe that by this return of the captives (i.e. the house of Judah from the Babylonian captivity) the Israelitish nation was not restored; since the ten tribes, who had formerly composed the kingdom of Israel, were yet left in banishment; and to this day the researches of travelers and wise men have not been able to trace their fate.”

The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel

Speaking of these people in Jeremiah 50:6, the Lord declares, “*My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have forgotten their resting place.*” Yet in Ezekiel 34:11 we have these words of assurance, “*For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.*” To fulfill this promise, Christ declared in Matthew 15:24, “*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” Again in Matthew 10:6 he instructed his disciples, “*But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*”

In spite of these admonitions, many of our shepherds consider it of little importance to search and seek out the holy flock, and lead them to the Good Shepherd. If knowledge of our ancestral roots is of no importance, why does our Lord say in Isaiah 52:1-2? “*Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him*”

For centuries the world has been content to leave these lost sheep in the graves of their captivity. However, the fulfillment of prophecy demands, and the record of history declares, that the Assyrian graveyard of Israel became the cradle of the Anglo-Saxon race.

It is our purpose to examine the scriptures and the record of history, that we might rejoice with the Lord upon finding these lost sheep.

God Promises to Enlarge Israel's Borders

God's promise to his people Israel was that he would enlarge their borders as they grew in number. In Deuteronomy 32:8 we read, *"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."* Again, the Lord speaking to Jacob in Genesis 28:14 says, *"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."* To his servant David, the Lord promised, *"Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime."* (II Samuel 7:10)

As the children of Israel multiplied in the land of Canaan, it became necessary for the Most High to transplant them into other lands in fulfillment of his promises to our fathers. While there were many transplants of this goodly vine, we will confine our study to the dispersion of ten-tribe Israel from their Assyrian captivity.

Israel is divided into Two Kingdoms in 975 BC

Following the death of King Solomon, Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom included the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and many from the tribe of Levi. They were united under Rehoboam, and were thereafter known as the house of Judah, Juda, or the Jews. The northern kingdom included the remaining ten tribes: Ephraim, Manasseh, Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Issachar, and Zebulun. They were, united under Jeroboam, and were thereafter known as the house of Israel, Israel, Joseph, or Ephraim. The account of this division is given in I Kings 12: 20-21. *"When all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel . . . And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel."*

God Gives the House of Israel a Bill of Divorce

Jeroboam proceeded to set up strange gods in the cities of Bethel and Dan to prevent his people from going to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. As a result of this idolatry, the Lord gave the house of Israel a bill of divorce. *"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill*

of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.” (Jeremiah 3:8) In Amos 5:27, the Lord sentenced the house of Israel to go into captivity. *“Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord.”*

The Lord began to mete out this punishment about 884 BC when Hazael, king of Syria, came against Israel during the reign of Jehu. In II Kings 10:32-33 we read, *“In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadities, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.”*

Assyrian Captivity Begins in 772 BC

However, the first Assyrian captivity of Israel did not begin until 772 BC when Tiglathpileser came, and took large portions of the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, Issachar, and Gad, into Assyria, as recorded in II Kings 15:29. *“In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.”*

In 720 BC Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, invaded Israel and laid siege to its capital, Samaria. After three years Samaria fell to Sargon II who succeeded Shalmaneser. The account of this siege is recorded in II Kings 17:5-6, and 18:9-12. *“Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. . . And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel into Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”*

A record of this fall of Samaria was found written on the walls of the palace of Sargon II at Dur-Sarraku which reads: *“In the beginning of my reign I besieged, I took by the help of god Shamash . . . the city of Samaria. Twenty seven thousand two hundred and eighty of its inhabitants I carried away . . . I took them to Assyria and put into places people whom my hands had conquered. I set my officers and governors over them, and laid on them a tribute as on the Assyrians.”* (Tracing Our Ancestors, by Frederick Haberman, page 123)

House of Judah also Taken into Assyrian Captivity

A fact that many Bible scholars ignore is, that more of the house of Judah were taken into the Assyrian captivity around 710 BC than were later taken into the Babylonian captivity one hundred years later. In II Kings 18:13 we read, *“Now in the fourteenth year*

of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.” From Sennacherib’s own record of his campaign against Judah we read, “As for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, 46 of his strong walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighborhood . . . by escalade and by bringing up siege engines, by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels and breaches I took 200,150 people, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle and sheep without number, I brought away from them and counted as spoil. Himself, like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city.” (Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon, by Daniel David Luckenbill)

These prisoners of Juda in Assyria never returned to Jerusalem, but eventually migrated westward settling in the Danish Islands and in Jutland or Judaland. A large number of these Jutes also settled on the east coast of Scotland during the fifth century Anglo-Saxon invasion of England.

In Isaac Shall Thy Seed be Called

At the time of the Assyrian captivity, the Phoenicians referred to the kingdom of Israel as the Beth-Sak or **The House of Isaac**. The Prophet Amos also calls them **the house of Isaac**, in Amos 7:16. The Assyrians referred to them as the Sak-Geloths, meaning **prisoners of Isaac**. In fulfillment of the prophesy of Genesis 21:12, “*In Isaac shall thy seed be called*”, the northern kingdom dropped the name of Israel, and called themselves: Saac, Aacae, or Sacae. While there were many variations of this name during their migrations, they eventually became known as the Saxons (Sons of Isaac).

While living in the Assyrian captivity semi-independently, these Saks or Saki became the predominant element in Media. One major group of these Saks (later called Angli) spread themselves east of the Caspian Sea, and settled as far north as the Jaxartes River, where they founded Samarkand, meaning, **New Samaria**. These Asa people of Ariana, as they became known, embraced the faith of Zoroaster, the religion of Asha. “*Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour.*” (Jeremiah 16:13)

About 200 BC these Asa or Anglai peoples began their migration northwestward to Asaland, north of the Black Sea. It was here that they came into contact with a much earlier migration of the Sons of Isaac (Saxons) out of Media.

House of Israel Escapes from Assyria

In 600 BC the Saks living in Media joined with the Babylonians under Nabopolassar and marched against the Assyrian capital of Ninevah, which was destroyed after a two year siege. The Sons of Isaac were then presented with an opportunity to escape their captivity. However, they could not return to their own land in Samaria for several reasons. Firstly, the Babylonian armies blocked the way to the southwest. Secondly, during the century they had been absent from Samaria, Assyria had populated it with other settlers – Arabs, Babylonians, Persians, and people from Susiana. An account of this repopulation is given in II Kings 17:23-34. ***“And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel.”*** Furthermore, the Egyptian armies had come up blocking their escape westward to the Mediterranean coasts. In Hosea 2:6 we read, ***“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she (house of Israel) shall not find her paths.”***

The prophet in Micah 2:10,12-13 describes this great moment in history. ***“Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction. I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of the fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker (Babylon) is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out of it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.”***

What gate is Micah talking about? Ezra declares in the Apocrypha, II Esdras 13:39-46, ***“And whereas thou sawest that he gathered another peaceable multitude unto him; those are the Ten Tribes, which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the King, whom Salmanasar the King of Assyria led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so came they unto another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river. For the Most High then shewed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half: and the same region is called Arsareth. Then dwelt they there till the latter time.”***

Isaiah 11:16 declares, ***“And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.”*** As God parted the Red Sea so Israel could escape from Egypt, so

he held back the waters of the Euphrates River that they could escape from their Assyrian captivity.

As recorded by Ezra, a large host of the Saks moved northward across the upper reaches of the Euphrates River, and through what is known as the **Israel Pass** in the Caucasus Mountains. From there they journeyed to the Arsareth River (**River of Seth**) north of the Black Sea, where they became known as the Scythians. The Caucasian Race refers to a group of people who came from the Caucasus Mountains.

Origin of the Saxon Race

While the people of Scythia included many different races, Pliny records: **“The Sakai were among the most distinguished people of Scythia, who settled in Armenia and were called Saccasani.”** The Scythians told Herodotus that their nation had been in existence for a thousand years previous to the invasion of Darius, or approximately the time of the Exodus from Egypt.

Concerning the etymology of the word Saxon, Yatman says: **“Its history is as follows: The Persians used the terms Sacae and Scythian as convertible.”** Strabo asserts that the most ancient Greek historians knew the Sacaea as a people who lived beyond the Caspian Sea. Diodorus says: **“The Sacaea sprung from a people in Media who obtained a vast and glorious empire.”** Ptolemy finds the Saxons in a race of Scythians, called Sakai, who came from Media. Albinus says: **The Saxons were a Scythian nation, and were called Saca, Sachi, Sacki, Sach-sen.”** (Tracing Our Ancestors, page 130)

Ten Tribe Israel was an Immense Multitude

A first century Jewish historian, Josephus, tells of an epistle which was written by Xerxes, the son of Darius, at the time the Jews (house of Judah) were getting ready to leave Babylon, about 480 BC. **“And when these Jews had understood what piety the king had towards God, and what kindness he had for Esdras, they were all greatly pleased; nay, many of them took their effects with them, and came to Babylon, as very desirous of going down to Jerusalem; but then the entire body of the people of Israel (house of Israel) remained in that country; (Media and Persia) wherefore there are but two tribes (house of Judah) in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans (AD 95) while the ten tribes (house of Israel) are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.”** (Josephus Complete Works, translated by William Whiston, Book XI, Chapter V, page 234)

To the Twelve Tribes Scattered Abroad

The tombs of these Scythian Sons of Isaac in southern Russia and the Crimea, bear record of these wanderers to whom many of the apostles addressed their letters proclaiming the good news of their redemption through Jesus Christ. ***“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”*** (James 1:1). Professor Herbert Bruce Hannay refers to a Hebrew manuscript found in one of those tumuli which reads: ***“I am Jehudi, the son of Moses, the son of Jehudi the Mighty, a man of the tribe of Naphtali, which was carried captive with the other tribes of Israel, by Prince Shalmaneser, from Samaria during the reign of Hoshea, King of Israel. They were carried to Halah, to Habor – which is Cabul – to Gozan, and to the Chersonesus – which is the Crimea.”***

Another inscription reads, ***“This is the tombstone of Buki, the son of Itchak the priest: may his rest be in Eden, at the time of the salvation of Israel. In the year 702 of the years of our exile.”*** If we date this exile from the fall of Samaria in 717 BC, then the 702nd year of the exile would be 15 BC.

Another inscription reads, ***“To one of the faithful in Israel, Abraham ben Mar-Sinchah of Kertch (a seaport in the Crimea), in the year of our exile 1682, when the envoys of the Prince of Rosh Meschek came from Kiou to our master Chazar Prince David, Halmah, Habor, and Gozan, to which place Tiglath Pileser had exiled the sons of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and permitted to settle there, and from which they have been scattered through the entire coast, even as far as China.”*** The inscription, “in the year of our exile 1682”, must refer to Israel’s Exodus from Egypt in 1486 BC, which would fix the date of the tombstone as 197 AD. ([Tracing Our Ancestors](#), pages 129-130)

The Asa or Angli Tribes from Samarkand Move Westward

The Asa or Angli peoples migrated westward by a route north of the Caspian Sea about 50 AD. Around 300 AD the Asa people, under the leadership of Odin, started on a westward trek again and headed straight along the Baltic to the North Sea coast where they appear as the Angles. Odin and his Asa people wore the horns of the bull as their head dress. Moses when blessing the tribe of Joseph in Deuteronomy 33:17 said, ***“His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth; and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.”***

The Angles, Saxons, & Jutes Migrate to the British Isles

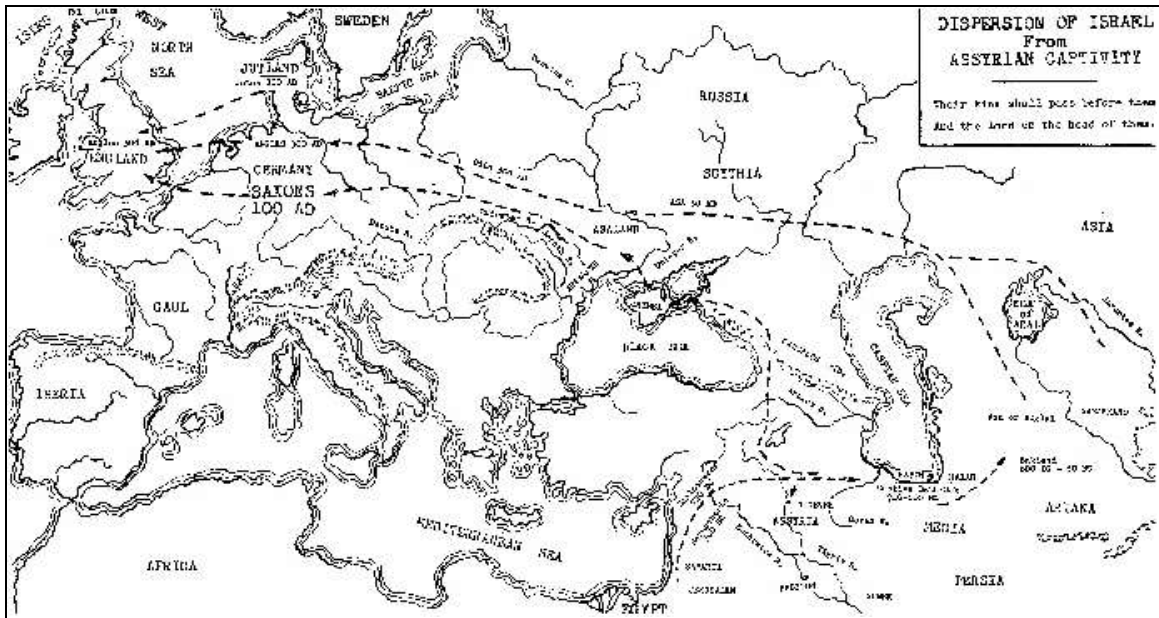
Eventually many of these Angles, Saxons, and Jutes migrated to the British Isles to join hands with their brethren who had arrived in the Isles many centuries earlier by way of the sea routes. It was from this flock, assembled by the hand of God, that the Good Shepherd gathered his sheep to bring them to America where the children of wickedness could not afflict them as before time. God's promise to David in 1042 BC was finally fulfilled. ***“Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before time.”*** (II Samuel 7:10)

I will both Search My Sheep and Seek them out

The prophet Ezekiel declares, ***“For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.”***

(Ezekiel 34:11-16)

What a pity God's people cannot see the hand of the Good Shepherd leading his flock, as history records the fulfilling of the promises made to our fathers.



Migration of the Ten Tribe House of Israel or Anglo-Saxon Peoples

From Samaria, to their Assyrian captivity in Media Persia, to the Caucasus Mountains, to the Crimea and Scythia, to Germany and the North Sea, to the British Isles, to America



Essay Eleven

Go to the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel

In Matthew 10:5 Jesus instructs his disciples, ***“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*** In Romans 11:13 the apostle Paul proclaims that he was an apostle of the Gentiles. ***“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles.”*** It is generally thought that these Gentiles were non-Israel people.

Did the apostle Paul disobey Jesus’ instructions to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Did Christ change his commission to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and instead instruct them to go to the Gentiles? Many believe Christ’s commission in Matthew 28:19 did just that. ***“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”***

Christ did not change his commission in Matthew 10:5, and we shall see that the apostles were unwaveringly faithful to their calling. In Romans 9:2-3 the apostle Paul declares, ***“That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites.”*** How could Paul say he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, and then direct his ministry to a non-Israel people? Paul’s burden for his brethren reminds us of Moses’ intercessory prayer to God on behalf of Israel in Exodus 32:32. ***“Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin -; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.”***

Can you imagine a husband declaring to his wife, “Honey, I love you. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you. But I’ve decided to leave you and the kids and run away with another woman.” What hypocrisy!

*The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel were Gentiles
Before Christ Redeemed them at Calvary*

Let us search the scriptures to get a better understanding of whom Paul was referring to as Gentiles. In Acts 9:15 the Lord told Ananias, ***“Go thy way, for he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”*** The Greek word for Gentile used here, and in Christ’s commission in Matthew 28:19 is ‘Ethnos’, meaning nation, race or tribe.

The ninth chapter of Romans deals with God’s election of the ‘children of promise’ through the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Romans 9:23-26 Paul explains who these Gentiles were. ***“And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy (seed of promise), which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews (house of Judah) only, but also of the Gentiles (house of Israel). As he saith in Hosea, I will call them my people, which are not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.”***

Ye are the Sons of the Living God

In Hosea 1:9-10 the prophet addresses the ten-tribe house of Israel, who were given a bill of divorcement because of their idolatry. ***“Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”***

For a Small Moment I have Forsaken Thee

God divorced Israel because of her adultery, as explained in Jeremiah 3:8. ***“And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.”*** During this estranged period of history, Israel - meaning prince with God, could not be called by her former name, but rather is referred to as forsaken of God. In Isaiah 54:7, God says, ***“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.”***

The ten-tribe house of Israel was dispersed among the heathen about 717 BC. ***“And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.”*** (Ezekiel 36:19) They were looked upon by the house of Judah as outcasts, Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. ***“That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from***

the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:12)

The Jews who had returned from their Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem were well aware of these lost sheep. In John 7:35 they said unto themselves, *“Will he (Jesus) go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?”*

The house of Israel was the prodigal son in the parable of Luke 15:11-24. *“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”* The promise unto backsliding Israel was that, *“In the place where it was said unto them ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”* (Romans 9:26)

The House of Israel was Redeemed by Christ at Calvary

The lost sheep of the house of Israel, dispersed among the nations, were regarded by God as Gentiles (not my people) after he gave them a bill of divorce. Christ had to shed his blood in order to redeem them. *“For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”* (Hebrews 8:8) *“And for this cause he is mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.”* (Hebrews 9:15-16) After Calvary the lost sheep of the house of Israel were no longer known by God as, **not my people**. After Calvary they are known as, **sons of the living God** (Christians).

Peter Preaches the Gospel to the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel

In Acts 15:7 we read, *“Peter rose up, and said unto them, men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.”* If Peter was called to preach to a non-Israel people, why did he address his first epistle to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? In I Peter 1:1 we read, *“to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through sanctification of the Spirit.”* In I Peter 2:9-10 he further identifies these lost sheep, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness*

into his marvelous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

Jesus Saith to Peter - Feed My Sheep

In John 21:16, Jesus Christ commanded Peter to feed his sheep. *“He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my sheep.”* Like Paul, Peter was never confused about Christ’s commission to *“go not but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* Why did Jesus specifically target the lost sheep of the house of Israel to first hear the Gospel? It was because they were chosen as a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people who were called to be ministers of the reconciliation.

The Restoration of the Houses of Israel & Judah

In Acts 15:13-17 we read, *“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called.”* Acts 15:16 is a quote from Amos 9:11 describing the restoration of Israel.

In Amos 9:9 we read, *“For lo, I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”* In Zechariah 8:11-13 we read, *“But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.”*

Christ Came to Confirm the Promises to the Fathers

In Romans 15:8 we read, *“Now I (Paul) say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”* If we read the letters of the apostles with the understanding that they were written to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, we will see the confirmation of the promises made to our fathers and our hearts will be established in faith, rather than in doubt and confusion.



Essay Twelve

The Hope of Israel

As Paul stood before King Agrippa, accused of the Jews, he made a most startling statement. *“And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”* (Acts 26:6-8)

The Hope of Israel is the Resurrection

Imagine the apostle Paul, alleged to be the architect of church doctrine and a missionary to the Gentiles, declaring that **the hope of Israel** is the resurrection. Such a statement is as incredible to our church leaders today as it was in Paul’s day. Surely, we are told, no one has any hope of the resurrection outside of the church. Paul must have been speaking only of those Israelites who had accepted Christ as their Saviour.

Not so! Paul, making the same defense before Felix in Acts 24:14-15, makes it clear that the hope of the resurrection is for every Israelite. *“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”* Paul is simply confirming what Christ taught about the resurrection in John 5:28-29. *“All that are in the graves shall hear his voice.”*

Now we know the order of the resurrection for the just differs from that of the unjust, as explained in Revelation 20:4-6. Nevertheless, Paul declares that his hope, and the hope of Israel, rests as much on the resurrection of the unjust as on the just. Instead of giving hope, the church has turned the resurrection of the unjust into a thing of fear and despair. Let us search the scriptures to build our faith on **the hope of Israel**, that we might pass it on to our children as their rightful heritage.

*Begotten into a Lively Hope
by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*

Peter, addressing the dispersed northern house of Israel, explains to them that their hope of the resurrection has been realized in Christ. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* (I Peter 1:3) This lively hope which had sustained Israel through the ages had been lost during their captivity and dispersion among the Gentiles. Now, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this hope was bringing new life to God’s people.

Hope of Eternal Life Promised Before the World Began

Paul declares in Titus 1:2, *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”* Furthermore, *“the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (II Peter 3:9) What a tragedy that the organized church has abandoned this great promise, and conceded the loss of all but a few of God’s sheep!

Let Israel Hope in the Lord

Where is Israel’s promise of the resurrection to be found in the scriptures? In Acts 13:32-34 we read, *“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.”*

In II Samuel 7:15, God promised David that his mercy would not depart from him. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant, these **sure mercies of David** have been extended to all the children of Israel. *“Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”* (Isaiah 55:3)

What a hopeless people we are without God’s sure mercies. Our lamentation is beautifully expressed in Psalm 89:46-49. *“How long, Lord? Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah. Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?”*

David saw the hopeless plight of Israel under the bondage of the old covenant, and in faith, looked forward to the mercies which would extend to God's people under the new covenant. In Psalm 130:3-8 we read, ***"If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning (the resurrection): I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."*** Paul saw the fulfillment of Israel's hope, in Jesus Christ. ***"For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified"*** (Israel). (Hebrews 10:14)

God is not a God of the Dead - But of the Living

When Christ was confronted with the unbelief of the Sadducees in the resurrection of the dead, he gave them one simple proof, which I think we fail to comprehend. In Matthew 22:31-32 Christ declared, ***"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."*** The resurrection of these patriarchs is assured by the very relationship which God took upon himself to establish with them.

It should be obvious, that what is true for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is equally true for their children. God's promise to Abraham was, ***"to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee."*** (Genesis 17:7) The provision of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:33 was, ***"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."*** Since God is not a God of the dead, he is bound by his word to bring resurrection life to all of the seed of Israel in their appointed time.

For the Joy that was Set before Him

Indeed, the hope of Israel was the joy that was set before our Saviour, causing him to endure the cross, and to despise its shame. ***"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."*** (Hebrews 12:2) Speaking of this joy, Isaiah declared: ***"And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. Thy dead men shall live, together with my***

dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

(Isaiah 65:19, 25:8, and 26:19)

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” (Psalm 133:1-3)



Essay Thirteen

The Church in the Wilderness

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to a faithful understanding of the scriptures is the teaching that God abandoned Israel as his *“chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, and peculiar people; who were to shew forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light,”* and in their place he built an organization called *the church*, whose membership is almost exclusively of non-Israel peoples. Furthermore, we are taught that this revelation of a Gentile church was first revealed to the apostle Paul, and therefore we must take the promises made to the fathers with a grain of salt, as the prophets did not have light on the **New Testament Church**.

If God abandoned Israel because of their sin and rebellion, what is to prevent him from doing the same thing with the church? If this is God’s modus operandi, could he not cast away the church in the kingdom age and appoint a company of angels to take over the ministry of reconciliation?

For I am the Lord - I Change Not

What an indecisive, unpredictable God this unscriptural teaching portrays. In Malachi 3:6 we read, *“For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”* The apostle Paul asked, *“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. God Hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.”* (Romans 11:1-2) *“For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:29-31)

The Church fulfills God's New Covenant Promises to Israel

God did not abandon Israel for the Church, but rather the new covenant church was God's means of fulfilling his promises to Israel. When Peter brought the inaugural address to the new covenant church in Acts 2:14-18, the very first thing he did was to identify the Christian Church as being the fulfillment of God's promises to the Isaac Sons. ***“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy:”***

Time and again in the old scriptures we read of God's promise of the outpouring of his Spirit on Israel's seed. ***“Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.”*** (Isaiah 44:1-4) Similar promises are found in Isaiah 59:21 and Ezekiel 36:26-27. Where then did we get the idea that God first revealed to Paul the mystery of the Church, which is generally portrayed as a **Gentile Church?**

The Mystery Hid in God from the Beginning of the World

The mystery which Paul said in Ephesians 3:5, ***“which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men”***, was not the establishment of a new organization called the Church, for in Ephesians 3:10 we read that this mystery was to be made known by the Church. Nor was this mystery simply the revelation that strangers to the commonwealth of Israel could be ***“fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.”*** (Ephesians 3:6) For the old scriptures plainly teach that the stranger could enter into the congregation of Israel, and have fellowship with God. In Isaiah 56:6-7 we read, ***“Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant: Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”***

That He Might Gather All Things in Christ

What then is this mystery, “*which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, . . . which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God?*” (Ephesians 3:5&9) In Ephesians 3:3 Paul declares, “*How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).*” Let’s look at Ephesians 1:9-10 for what Paul wrote afore in few words to the Ephesians. “*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*” The mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, was the reconciliation of all mankind in Christ.

The reconciliation of all men to Christ was the central theme of Paul’s preaching, “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*” (I Corinthians 15:22). And God’s Church, the Israel of God, were to be the ministers of this reconciliation message. “*But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God.*” (Isaiah 61:6)

The Church or Ekklesia means 'Called Out'

The fact that in the Bible the word **church** (Greek word ekklesia) occurs only in the New Testament has led many to believe that the Church is an entirely new organization founded after Christ’s resurrection, of which nothing was known in Old Testament times. The Greek word, ekklesia, which was translated in the King James Bible as **church** means **called out**. In Isaiah 48:12 we read, “*Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel my called.*”

The word, ekklesia, appears 115 times in the original Greek rendering of the New Testament. It is translated as assembly three times and church 112 times. It is only mentioned three times in the four gospels. It is first mentioned in Matthews 16:16-18, “*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*”

Christ Refers to the Scribes and Pharisees as the Church

In Matthew 18:15&17, Christ instructed his disciples on what to do, *“If thy brother shall trespass against thee . . . And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”* In this instance, Christ makes it clear that the church was already in existence and was well known to his disciples. He was not directing them to some non-existent assembly, but was in fact directing them to the rulers of the Jews, as he says in Matthew 23:2-3. *“The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”*

It is generally acknowledged that Christ spoke in Aramaic, the dialect of Hebrew spoken by the Jews in Palestine at that time. As a consequence, Christ would not have used the Greek word, **ekklesia**, in reference to the church. Since Aramaic embodied Biblical Hebrew terms for most religious ideas and usages, we must ask the question; What Hebrew word did Christ use, which Matthew translated in the Greek as **ekklesia**?

Hebrew Word Qahal = Greek Word Ekklesia = Church

The Hebrew word, **qahal**, most closely approximates the Greek word, **ekklesia**. As the Greek word, **ekklesia**, means **called out**, the Hebrew word, **qahal**, means **called together**. **Qahal** appears 123 times in the Old Testament. It is translated as **assembly** 17 times, **company** 17 times, **congregation** 86 times, and **multitude** 3 times.

Christ was in the Church in the Wilderness

In Acts 7:38, we find the Israel congregation (Qahal) is referred to as the **Church**. *“This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the Church in the Wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.”* In this verse, Stephen unmistakably identifies Israel in the wilderness as the Church. Furthermore, he makes it clear that Christ was with his Church in the wilderness just as he is with the New Testament Church, which Paul identifies in Galatians 6:16 as the Israel (or Church) of God.

Stephen’s declaration, identifying the Israel Congregation as the Church, is by no means an isolated passage which we can attribute to an overzealous Israelite or an ambiguous translation. The apostle Paul makes the same identification in Hebrews 2:12, *“I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee.”* Paul is quoting Psalm 22:22 verbatim, only substituting church (ekklesia) for

congregation (qahal). Either these words are equivalent, or Paul is making a shambles of the scriptures.

Churches of the Saints = Congregation of the Saints

In I Corinthians 14:33 Paul declares, *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”* In Psalm 149:1 we read, *“Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him.”* Now if the **churches of the saints**, and the **congregation of the saints**, are two different organizations, then somebody is certainly trying to confuse us, and we are assured that God is not the author of such confusion.

House of God = Church of God

In I Timothy 3:15, Paul identifies the **house of God** as the **church of God**; *“that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the Living God.”* The Israel congregation (Qahal) is the only organization identified in scriptures as the **house of God**. In Psalm 135:1-4 we read, *“Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord; praise him, O ye servants of the Lord. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.”*

Flock of God = Church of God

In Acts 20:28, Paul identifies the **flock** as the **church of God**. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”* In Ezekiel 34:14-15, God unfolds the beautiful relationship between Christ, the Good Shepherd, and Israel his flock. *“I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock (Church of God) and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.”*

If the apostle Paul is using terms in the old testament which are peculiar to Israel, such as; **congregation of the saints**, **house of God**, **flock**, and is applying them to a new organization called the **Church**, then the Bible is a book which can be interpreted anyway we would like. If we cannot have confidence in the Biblical definition of terms, how could we ever hope to interpret the symbolism and prophesies of the book of Revelation? Only the Bible can be used to interpret the Bible. II Peter 1:20 admonishes us that, *“no*

scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." It must be interpreted in context with all scripture as revealed by the spirit of God.

Christ Loved the Church and gave Himself for it

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul presents a simile which has led many Bible students to believe that the church, rather than Israel, is the wife of Christ. In Ephesians 5:23-25 we read, *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."*

What scriptural basis does Paul have for likening the church to the wife of Christ? Anyone familiar with scripture knows that only Israel could be called the wife of Christ. Isaiah 54:5 declares, *"For thy Maker is thine husband; and the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel."* In Jeremiah 3:14 we read, *"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you."*

Was Christ unfaithful to His Wife Israel?

Is it possible that Paul is unfamiliar with the relationship that God established with his people Israel? Or, knowing this relationship, is it possible that Paul would portray Christ as an unfaithful husband?

In Ephesians 5:26-27 Paul continues, *"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."*

Paul uses the same language to describe the Church that John uses to describe Israel in Revelation 19:7-8, and 21:2. *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints . . . And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*

The Church and Israel Become One

Who then is the wife of Christ, the Church, or Israel? Paul answers this question in Ephesians 5:31. *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be*

joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

In this simile Paul declares he is trying to reveal to us the great mystery of the unity of his body, the Church, and his wife, Israel. When Israel has been cleansed through the provision of the new covenant, then she will be able to function as his perfected body, or his **Ekklesia**.

If the children of Israel form the nucleus of God’s church, then why are they not all professing and practicing Christians? It should be obvious that the members of God’s church are in varying stages of development. The lessons which God teaches us in the flesh are as much a part of our training as was Israel’s trek in the wilderness; ***“that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”*** (Deuteronomy 8:3)

When it Pleaseth God to Reveal his Son to Paul

Many Christians are going to have a difficult time accepting into fellowship those who have vigorously opposed God and his church while they walked after the flesh. Nevertheless, when God gives them a new heart as he has surely promised, he is able to do great and mighty things with the basest of men. Who would have expected Paul to be used of God in such an extraordinary way after persecuting the church so viciously? Furthermore, the church was very apprehensive about taking Paul into their fellowship. Nevertheless, the scriptures teach that Paul was a member of God’s Church (i.e. called out), even while in apparent opposition to that church. In Galatians 1:15 we read, ***“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.”*** When it pleased God, he stopped Paul in his tracks, gave him a new heart, and caused him to walk in his ways. I believe God works in this way so that he might destroy all confidence in our own merit, and cause us to rest solely in his grace. ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*** (Ephesians 2:8)

God’s Gifts and his Call are Irrevocable

We should also keep in mind that the gifts and callings of God are distributed as God pleases. Paul says in Romans 11:28, ***“As concerning the gospel, they (house of Judah) are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father’s sake. For God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”*** It was God who set the Israel people

apart for his service, and it is God who will perfect them for this service, in their appointed time.

Not everyone in the church is called to be an apostle or teacher. Many are called to be artisans, builders, helpers of all kinds, and even door keepers. Just as God filled Bezaleel with his spirit (Exodus 31:3-4) to devise cunning work with his hands for God's glory, so he has done with many members of his church today, who have not yet been washed in the water of his word, or awakened to their high calling in Christ.

In the Lord shall all the Seed of Israel be Justified

The natural man will resist God's election of the seed of promise as his ministers of the reconciliation. The natural man will insist that the election must be based on man's merit, not on God's omnipotent will. *"According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."* (Ephesians 1:4)

Christ's atonement assures that in due time all men will be drawn to him. *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."* (John 12:32) An atonement whose effect is contingent on man's merit is no better than God's conditional covenant with Adam, or the old covenant made with Israel, which covenant they broke. *"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons . . . In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."* (Isaiah 45:11&25)

*God was in Christ
Reconciling the World unto Himself*

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

(II Corinthians 5:18-19)

