

WRITINGS OF JOHN W LAWRENCE

by John W. Lawrence

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by John W. Lawrence, compiled for study and devotional reading.

32 Chapters

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Chapter 1

01.00.1-The Five Warnings of Hebrews

The Five Warnings of Hebrews

by

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01.00.5- BAPTIST BIBLE BELIEVER'S INTRODUCTION

Baptist Bible Believer's Introduction As I dig again into my precious box of treasures, I bring out this very interesting and most important study entitled, "The Five Warnings of Hebrews". It is a little longer than most, but certainly well worth the read. Two of the most abused, misunderstood, and misapplied passages of Scripture pertaining to a Christian's ability to lose his/her salvation is Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-31. Neither of these passages teach as purported - but reader, I am going to ask that you faithfully, prayerfully, and carefully read the study for yourself.

This particular uncopyrighted, out-of-print booklet was written by John W. Lawrence, Th. M., of the Open Door Bible Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

01.00.6- THE PREFACE.

THE PREFACE

Today we are living in a period of time like the days of Noah when there is no fear of GOD before men's eyes (Romans 3:18). The unsaved know the judgment of GOD is upon those who do such things as they do today yet they not only do them but they have pleasure in them that do them (Romans 1:32). They are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgments of GOD (Romans 2:5).

What is even worse than this, if such could be the case, is that the saved have no fear of GOD before their eyes. You do not love someone you do not respect. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10; cf. Proverbs 1:7). "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13). The early church had a correct Godly fear of their GOD, and this is the reason they went out and turned the world right-side-up. Notice this is Acts:

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul" (Acts 2:42-43).

"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things . . . And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:5, Acts 5:11).

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31; cf. Acts 19:17).

May GOD be pleased to use these pages to help stem the tide of fearlessness among believers today. "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29). "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).

01.01- CHAPTER 1 SO GREAT SALVATION

CHAPTER 1

SO GREAT SALVATION CHRIST alone qualifies:

I. In His Person to Attempt Salvation, Hebrews 1:1-4:13. The Son. (Eternal, Hebrews 1:1-3) - CHRIST - Prophet

A. Greater than the Prophets, Hebrews 1:1-3.

B. Greater than the Angels, Hebrews 1:4-14; Hebrews 2:1-18.

C. Greater than Moses, Hebrews 3 D. Greater than Joshua, Hebrews 4:1-13.

II. In His Work to Provide Salvation, Hebrews 4:14-10:18.

The Saviour. (Perfect, Hebrews 7:24-28) - JESUS - Priest

A. The High Priest, Hebrews 4:14-7:28. -- THE SERVICE - "After the order of Melchisedec".

B. The Tabernacle, Hebrews 8:1-13; Hebrews 9:1-11 -- THE SANCTUARY - "Not made with hands".

C. The Sacrifice, Hebrews 9:12-28; Hebrews 10:1-18 -- THE SACRIFICE - "Once for all".

III. In His Position to Effect Salvation, Hebrews 10:19-13:25.

The Shepherd (Great, Hebrews 13:20) - The Lord - King Here is the believer's walk, "by a new and living way" in relation to CHRIST's position:

A. FAITH, Hebrews 10:19-39; Hebrews 11:1-40.

B. HOPE, Hebrews 12.

C. LOVE, Hebrews 13.

Washington D. C. is one of the few cities in the world that was completely designed before any street were made or buildings erected. What once was a marshy wilderness now stands one of the most beautiful capitols in the world.

Pierre Charles L'Enfant, an engineer in the Continental Army, being recommended by President George Washington for the task, designed the entire city. Capitol Hill was selected as the focal point, and broad avenues were laid out which radiate like spokes of a wheel from centers placed within the rectangular pattern of the streets.

For anyone visiting our nation's capital, the first point to visit should be the Washington Monument. From this vantage point of beautiful white marble, forty stories above the city in the tallest masonry structure in the world, may be seen a panoramic view of four of the most picturesque scenes upon

which the human eye may gaze.

Looking east at the end of the Mall on Capitol Hill stands the Capitol Building with its magnificent dome glistening in the sun. At the right and left stand the House and Senate Buildings covering a square city block. Behind the Capitol to the right is the massive Library of Congress, and at the left is the white structure of the Supreme Court of the United States. In the foreground may be seen the National Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian Institute.

A diagonal street may be seen running from the Capitol Building. As we move north we see that this street is the famous Pennsylvania Avenue which connects the Capitol with the White House. Here we view the President's home and the Treasury Building to the right.

The western view gives us a picture of the Reflecting Pool and the Lincoln Memorial. Beyond the Potomac River we view Arlington National Cemetery with its Tombs of the Unknown Soldiers and the Marine Memorial.

Looking south the Tidal Basin lined with cherry trees is seen with the Jefferson Memorial on the far side. And across the Potomac, the massive Pentagon Building is visible. If time permitted many other important landmarks could be pointed out by our guide.

Now we are ready to descend the Washington Monument on to busy Constitution Avenue and see each building individually. Why? Because we know the relation of one building to another; we have viewed the design of a planned city. We have seen what no amount of hours spent on the busy and crowded streets could have given us. We have seen the city -- our Nation's Capitol -- and we draw back in amazement at what we have just viewed.

GOD's Word is identical with this. Each book is a magnificent city designed by the greatest Architect. Avenues of truth run throughout in beautiful symmetry. Monuments are erected by the sterling character of its men. Beautiful scenes catch our vision every direction we look. We see on every hand the grandeur and glory of the Person of our GOD.

We may wander for days along its streets and through its buildings, and yet never see the relationship of one aspect of truth with another. Our need is first to rise far above the whole picturesque scene, as beautiful as any one spot may be, and receive a panoramic view of the entire landscape. We need to see the design that was in the mind of the Designer, the over-all plan and purpose of this city we are about to view and whose laws are to govern all our lives.

No book in Scripture was written without design: each was written with specific purpose and air in mind. This is especially true of the book of Hebrews which we are about to consider.

There is a plan and purpose which can never be seen by traveling on its broad avenues or passing through its magnificent structures. It was written that one fact and one fact alone would be in the mind of the Hebrews as they finished reading this letter. This one fact is: CHRIST alone can qualify to provide perfect salvation. This message is a timeless message. It is just as pertinent today as it was the day this letter was inscribed on parchment and sent by a messenger to its destination.

There are three areas in which CHRIST alone qualifies to provide a perfect salvation.

1. He alone qualifies in His PERSON to attempt salvation, Hebrews 1:1-4:132.
2. He alone qualifies in His WORK to provide salvation, Hebrews 4:14-10:183.
3. He alone qualifies in His POSITION to effect salvation, Hebrews 10:19-13:25.

I. CHRIST ALONE QUALIFIES IN HIS PERSON TO ATTEMPT SALVATION, Hebrews 1:1-4:13.

Fundamental in the mind of the writer of Hebrews is that the person must qualify or else nothing that person does can possibly qualify.

For example, it is the Indianapolis Speedway Classic, and we are seated there on Memorial Day, moments before the five hundred mile race is to begin. As we anxiously wait for the final flag to be waved to begin the race we undoubtedly realize the hours upon hours of preparation which have gone into making this moment possible. Long before any cars were built regulations were issued giving the specification to which the cars would have to conform. Then came the qualifying run to eliminate those cars not able to maintain a specific speed. Many have labored to be sure that both car and driver would qualify. Yet as we watch the cars going by this day at speeds of 170 mph we fail to see many cars, upon which thousands of dollars were spent, simply because they did not meet the qualifying standard set by the officials. These can never win because they cannot participate.

GOD says, "I am the qualifying official and whoever runs as the Saviour of men must pass the qualifying standards which I have set up."

The writer of Hebrews spans the whole realm of creation, and the entire span of time to see if there could be found someone who might qualify as the Saviour of men. His verdict is that none but Deity Himself can possibly qualify for the standard set by Deity for the salvation of lost mankind.

He identifies the only One who can qualify as the Son.

A. Son -- Far Greater Than the Prophets, Hebrews 1:1-3

The prophets represented GOD to man, and spoke His message as it was revealed to them. But this One who was the Son, being from a far greater realm, had by this same degree a much greater message. The prophets spoke the message of GOD; the Son was the message of GOD.

B. Son -- Far Greater Than the Angels, Hebrews 1:4-14; Hebrews 2:1-18

The Son is "so much better than the angels" (Hebrews 1:4). This is proved by quoting seven different Old Testament passages in Hebrews 1, and three more in Hebrews 2.

In summary, the Son is greater in two ways:

1. He is the CREATOR, they are creatures, Hebrews 1.
2. He identified Himself completely with humanity, Hebrews 2.

Angels are always angels so they cannot do what CHRIST did for man. Angels serve man; but the Son became man in order to serve in a far greater capacity.

C. Son -- Far Greater Than General Joshua, Hebrews 4.

In Hebrews 4:8 the word "Jesus" is the Greek word for "Joshua" and so should be understood. Joshua led the nation into the land, but he could not give them rest. Since a rest was promised, there remained One who is greater than Joshua to come and bring them into a place of rest because He had "ceased from His own works."

The exhortation is given to the Hebrews to "enter into that rest" (Hebrews 4:11). The throne of grace is the place of rest (Hebrews 4:16). The rest is provided because a greater than Joshua ceased from His own work as GOD did from His.

The illustration is that of GOD's rest of creation. When He finished creation He pronounced everything "very good" and then He experienced a Sabbath rest. Then something happened. Sin came in, and there was no more rest for GOD. Only after the Lord had a redeemed people, redeemed through blood, did He institute the Sabbath rest for them. Yet saying: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." There had been no rest in the Godhead and could not be until there was a completed work. Only after CHRIST exclaimed: "It is finished!" was there rest.

Today CHRIST sits on high because the work is over. We can enter into His rest of a completed work. Have you done this?

II. CHRIST ALONE QUALIFIES IN HIS WORK TO PROVIDE SALVATION, Hebrews 4:14-Hebrews 10:18

We have seen that the Son alone qualifies to attempt salvation:

- Because He is greater than the prophets: They spoke the word - HE WAS THE WORD!
- Because He is greater than the angels: They were creatures - HE WAS THE CREATOR!
- They were servants - HE IS THE SERVANT OF MAN!
- Because He is greater than Moses: Moses led the nation - CHRIST MADE THE NATION!
- Because He is greater than Joshua: Joshua took them in, but he never gave them rest - CHRIST COULD GIVE THEM REST!

Previously, the writer's entire argument had been on the PERSON of the Son; now he turns to His WORK. He realizes that the worth of the WORK is dependent upon the WORTH of the PERSON. Consequently, he now turns from the Son aspects of the PERSON OF CHRIST, to the Saviour aspects of the WORK OF CHRIST.

In the Jewish economy three basic areas of work are involved in providing salvation for sinful man: the high priest, the tabernacle and the sacrifice. If you like them to begin in the same letter, they would be the service, the sanctuary and the sacrifice. These three areas are now taken up in this order.

A. CHRIST, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, Hebrews 4:14-Hebrews 7:28.

Here CHRIST is contrasted to the best in the Jewish economy: Aaron, and the Aaronic priesthood. But three times it is said of the Son: "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec".

CHRIST is not only a greater PERSON than Aaron, but He had a superior priesthood. Because the Son's priesthood was of a different order, He could be both King and Priest which was never possible for Aaron. Moreover, He could abide a Priest continually because He would not be hindered from continuing by death which affected the Aaronic priesthood. Because of this fact, the Son has an unchangeable priesthood.

The summary conclusion is given in Hebrews 7:25-28 : THE WORK OF CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO THAT IN JUDAISM.

B. CHRIST, THE TRUE TABERNACLE, Hebrews 8:1-13; Hebrews 9:1-11

Four words show that the earthly tabernacle in Israel was only an object lesson of the real tabernacle.

"Example and shadow of heavenly things," Hebrews 8:5 "Pattern" of the true tabernacle," Hebrews 8:5 "A figure for the time then present," Hebrews 9:9

The contrast is between the shadow and the real image that cast the shadow. The earthly tabernacle was then GOD's illustration of the work of salvation which was to be accomplished through the body or tabernacle of the Lord JESUS CHRIST -- the true tabernacle "not made with hands."

- This is the reason for GOD's specific instruction to Moses in Hebrews 8:5.
- This true tabernacle is as superior to the earthly copy as:
 - The image of the shadow, - The Creator is to the creature, and - The Infinite is to the finite.
- CHRIST, as the true tabernacle, is infinitely superior to that in Judaism.

The transition to the third aspect of the Lord's work is given in Hebrews 9:11-12 where CHRIST is specifically stated as the High Priest, the tabernacle and the sacrifice.

C. CHRIST, THE ONE SACRIFICE, Hebrews 9:12-28; Hebrews 10:1-18.

Here three words contrast the old sacrifices with the once for all sacrifice of the body of the Lord JESUS.

"Patterns," Hebrews 9:23 - "Figures," Hebrews 9:24 - "A shadow of good things to come," Hebrews 10:1.

The outstanding point of contrast is given in Hebrews Hebrews 10:11-12 and Hebrews 10:14 (Compare Hebrews 10:4 with Hebrews 10:10).

As the true tabernacle was infinitely better than the earthly pattern, so the sacrifice which is to be offered for its purification must be to the same proportion greater (Hebrews 9:23, Hebrews 9:25-26 b).

This is why John the Baptist cried out: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." This was new, this had never been done in the Old Testament. It was infinitely superior to that in Judaism.

Now only does CHRIST alone qualify in His PERSON to attempt salvation, He alone qualifies in His work to provide salvation.

- Because He is the High Priest "after the order of Melchisedec," and not after the order of Aaron;
- Because He is the true Tabernacle "not made with hands" instead of only a pattern made by men; and - Because He is the Sacrifice "once for all" offered for sin.

Have you ever accepted Him as your sin-bearer and substitute? He died that you might not have to die. He tasted death for every man.

CHRIST died for your sins, but you must personally receive Him as your GOD-appointed Saviour before His sacrifice can be credited to your account. He "willed" to be your Sacrifice; you must now "will" Him to be your Saviour!

III. CHRIST ALONE QUALIFIES IN HIS POSITION TO EFFECT SALVATION, Hebrews 10:19-Hebrews 13:25

Up to this point we have been dealing with doctrinal matters in which all you and I can do is sit on the sideline and watch how GOD provides perfect salvation through His Beloved Son. There was nothing we could do to enter in. Anything we would attempt to do would be only to mar the perfection which characterized all that GOD does.

GOD's law is fixed -- each shall produce after its kind. He has produced a salvation which is entirely His product, and takes after His own nature. It is infinitely perfect. The only way He will allow any of us to enter in is to believe in what He has done. His entire plan for salvation is that "no flesh should glory in His presence." Anything that we do to help provide this perfect salvation would be only to ruin it.

With a perfect salvation provided we now enter into the practical division of the book.

- First is His person -- Then we see what He did -- Now the emphasis is on what He can do for you.
- First it is CHRIST's life -- Then it is His death -- Now it is His new life and position at the Father's right hand.

The writer is pressing home one truth: GOD IS TAKING AWAY THE OLD AND ESTABLISHING THE NEW!

- There is a new object for men's faith -- CHRIST.
- There is a new will or covenant of which CHRIST is the Mediator.
- There is also a new walk for the believer because of the Person, Work and Position of CHRIST.

Now the believer-priest is to enter into the Holy of Holies, i.e., into the very presence of GOD, by a new and living way through the blood of JESUS (Hebrews 10:19). Our new life and walk is to be governed by three new avenues of Christian experience: Faith, Hope, and Love.

A. FAITH, Hebrews 10:19-Hebrews 11

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Here is a great list of those in

- GOD's hall of fame.

- GOD's testimony of them - Hebrews 11:13, Hebrews 11:15, Hebrews 11:39-40.

Now this better thing is given unto us and is ours for the appropriation: an entrance by faith into the very presence of GOD. There is nothing greater.

Only one Israelite -- the high priest -- once a year on the Day of Atonement could enter in, yet we have the Privilege of coming and abiding there as often as we wish and staying as long as we desire.

The only way we can grasp the value of this provision is to measure the price that was paid to obtain it. It was the greatest redemptive price ever made: The death of the Son.

The rending of the Saviour's side made possible that "whosoever will" may enter in by faith into the very presence of GOD. The weakest Christian stands here as boldly as the strongest saint, simply because all stand clothed in the righteousness of the Son. Here is the Shekinah Glory by which we are changed into the same image from one glory visit to another. It is the PLACE OF VICTORY!

B. HOPE, Hebrews 12

We are to run anticipating the approval of the Judge. We are to know that GOD, even through chastisement, is dealing with us as sons, and our lives are to bear fruit unto righteousness because of this experience.

C. LOVE, Hebrews 13

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). This is what is to cause all men to know that we are the Lord's disciples. Love is to permeate and govern every area of our life and our walk with the Lord and with others.

THE CLOSING BENEDICTION: Hebrews 13:20-21.

No one else but the Son can possibly qualify to effect salvation. It takes a living Saviour.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). He is all that we need.

- He is the Eternal Son.

- He is the Perfect Saviour.

- He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

There is no need we have but what JESUS CHRIST is the answer.

My friend, GOD today has provided perfect salvation. This salvation is in His Son Who alone can qualify. He has accomplished our redemption and now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High ever living to save all who will come unto GOD by Him.

Yet though there be a thousand who could qualify to pay the debt for sin, and though they die a thousand deaths to provide salvation, still you would not be saved apart from accepting that salvation provided.

GOD didn't need quantities of saviors, nor quantities of sacrifices. He needed one perfect Person to offer one perfect Sacrifice that would make perfect forever those who "will" to accept GOD's Provision for sin.

"This man... offered one sacrifice for sins for ever . . . for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Where once was a marshy wilderness stands one of the most beautiful capitols in the world.

Where once there stood a creation ruined by the fall, blighted by sin and under the verdict of death, now has been raised a new creation created in the beauty of holiness and clothed with the perfect righteousness of the Son.

All who "will" may enter in, but there is only one way of approach. This is through the Son.

What are you going to do with GOD's Perfect Provision for sin? If you reject GOD's way, there is no other way.

If you accept GOD's Provision, you have Perfect salvation for He is the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. And this is GOD's will, that we "believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ . . ."

~ end of chapter 1 ~

01.02- CHAPTER 2 THE DANGER OF DRIFTING

CHAPTER 2 THE DANGER OF DRIFTING, Hebrews 2:1-4

Incorporated within the very framework and message of the book of Hebrews are five danger signals.

These are like stop signs on the boulevard of backsliding. They are warning posters placed on the freeway of disobedience.

Chapter 2 -- The danger of drifting Chapter 3-4-- The danger of not entering into rest.

Chapter 5-6-- The danger of not going on to maturity.

Chapter 10 -- The danger of willful sin Chapter 12 -- The danger of indifference to the point of denial.

There is a progression in these warnings. It starts with being careless about salvation and indifferent to spiritual things until finally one comes to be perfectly satisfied with being indifferent.

W. H. Griffith Thomas has stated for these five warnings: "Don't drift, disbelieve, degenerate, despise, depart." For our study we will follow the following order.

- Drifting, Hebrews 2:1-4.
- Doubting, Hebrews 3:7-19; Hebrews 4:1-13.
- Deformity, Hebrews 5:11-14; Hebrews 6:1-20.
- Despising, Hebrews 10:26-31.
- Denying, Hebrews 12:15-29.

Each one of these danger signs is part of the truth of this Epistle. The author stops in each case to apply the truth he has already presented to the lives of his hearers. It is not enough to know. There must be a performance of what is known. Knowledge bears responsibility.

Basic to any understanding of these warnings is to first understand that the Hebrews to whom the writer is speaking in this Epistle are saved. The recipients of this letter were Hebrew believers who had trusted JESUS CHRIST for their salvation, but were in danger of going back to the Temple in Jerusalem and to the Temple worship in order to escape the persecution that was being brought upon them at this time by the unsaved Hebrews.

INTRODUCTION, Hebrews 1:1-3.

The theme of the Epistle is that GOD has spoken in His Son. We need to consider who this Son is, what He has done, and what the message is to us today.

Before, GOD spoke at sundry times and in divers manners. Some of these ways GOD used to reveal Himself were:

1. By His creative acts. Psalms 19:1-4,

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) said: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Paul at Athens (Acts 17:24-30) wrote: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and mans device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

Romans 1:18-22, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

Here GOD tells us that heathenism has a revelation of Himself. They were given up by GOD, not passively but actively, because they changed the truth of GOD into a lie. They refused to acknowledge GOD and worship Him.

There was a limitation to the knowledge of GOD in creation. Man could know only GOD's being and His power, but not His person. Thus GOD began to reveal Himself further.

2. By the patriarchs (Noah, Job, Abraham).

3. By the angels (to Abraham and Moses).

4. By the prophets (who gave us Old Testament revelation).

Still the various methods of revelation were inadequate to reveal GOD as a person. In order to do this adequately and fully, it would take a person who was Himself GOD as well as man. Such a person was JESUS CHRIST. The Father sent the Son in order to reveal the Father.

John 1:18, "No man hath seen GOD at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

John 14:8-10, "Phillip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. JESUS saith unto him. Have I been so long time with you, and yet hath thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believe thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

All that we know of the Person of GOD is found alone in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. He came to reveal the Father.

Consider Who the Son is, Hebrews 1:2-3.

1. Heir of All: "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things." He is the focal point of all the universe. Colossians 1:16 tells us: "All things were created . . . for him."

2. Creator of the Ages: "by whom also he made the worlds" i.e., "the ages." He is the beginning point of all the universe. He brought time into being and all things connected with time. Time is His creation and is subject to Him.

3. Co-Essence of Deity. "who being the brightness of his glory." The word "brightness" signifies to "flash forth" and thus "to radiate." The Son is the outshining of Deity to a world in darkness. He is the true Shekinah Glory of GOD.

4. True Personality of Deity. "and the express image of his person." He is the exact reproduction of His essence. All that is in the Father is in the Son. He stands separate from the created universe, and a distinct person of the Godhead.

5. Sustainer and Governor of the Universe. "and upholding all things by the word of his power." He is active today within the universe in order to have all creation accomplish His purpose and program. He is master of ceremonies for all that occurs.

6. Redeemer of Men. "when he had by himself purged our sins." This was not done by speaking nor by being, but by dying. He provides complete and perfect redemption for the universe. He alone provided -- no one else helped or contributed to it.

7. Sovereign of Men. "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." His work is finished. He is seated above the universe as its Sovereign and Judge. It is His right to reign and He shall someday put down all opposing rule and authority. His present position reveals His absolute authority.

This is the One who is the THEME of our study: "Consider Him"!

A. SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS, Hebrews 1:4-14; Hebrews 2:1-18.

1. In His Deity, Hebrews 1:4-14 As Son OF GOD.

By seven quotations, the Son is shown to be superior to the angels who are referred to in the Old Testament as Sons of GOD.

a. Greater in name, Hebrews 1:4-5. - Angels are called sons, but never Son. b. Greater in worship, Hebrews 1:6-7 - The angels worship GOD; He accepts their worship. c. Greater in majesty, Hebrews 1:8-9 - The angels serve at the throne; the Son owns the throne. d. Greater in duration, Hebrews 1:10-12 - The angels serve for a time; the Son owns the time. e. Greater in authority, Hebrews 1:13-14. - He is the Sovereign; they are servants.

Since the Son is superior to angels, His revelation is superior to their revelation. This is important and is the basis of the first warning given in Hebrews 2:1-4. It is the application of the truth of His Person.

Notice the connection, marking or underlining the key words: "God . . . hath . . . spoken . . . by His Son . . . Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard . . . for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . . " (Hebrews 1:1-2; Hebrews 2:1-3) from this One who is so much greater than the angels.

There is a double danger involved. The first is physical and represents judgment in time; the second is spiritual -- the hearing of these great truths of the Gospel and doing nothing about them. It is a danger that is for both saved and unsaved. The revelation of angels to Lot concerning the destruction of Sodom was true, but the same revelation which saved Lot destroyed Lot's wife because of unbelief. Now look at Hebrews 2.

Hebrews 2:1 "Therefore" -- on account of this. That is the greater person who has come to give revelation to us in these last days.

"we ought." It is a logical necessity.

"give the more earnest heed." This is the kind of heed needed by all -- myself, you, everyone who has ears to hear. Thus this exhortation and warning is for all.

"to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" - might drift away from them or let them slip from us.

The truth is represented as being anchored. It will never change because it was given by the Changeless Person who changes not. Since the truth will not change, the whole danger is on OUR SIDE that we change through a careless attitude of indifference, and we drift away from it by the force of an opposing current operative in the world.

The point is this: The greater the REVEALER, the greater the responsibility to that revealed, and the greater the penalty for not giving heed. Revelation through the Son carries with it, by the very intrinsic nature of the revelation, a far more solemn obligation to its recipients than Old Testament revelation.

Hebrews 2:2 -- "For if (as was true) the word spoken by angels was steadfast."

It never was changed, or failed, or slipped from being grounded in fact. How much could be said on this one point alone from the giving of the Law down to the father of John the Baptist, Zacharias to whom Gabriel said: "And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season" (Luke 1:20). It was in every case exactly fulfilled as revealed, of which the revelation by the angel Gabriel to Daniel is another example.

The major revelation in the writer's mind here in Hebrews however is that the Law -- the old covenant -- which was given by angels (Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:53).

"and every transgression and disobedience."

"Transgression" refers to a positive offense: someone doing what they were not supposed to do under the law.

"Disobedience" refers to a negative offense: someone failing to do what they were supposed to do.

"received a just recompence."

A recompence is a payment of wages. The law gave man exactly what he deserved. It was a system of justice. This revelation of angels in the Old Testament, carried with it its own intrinsic authority. It did not have authority because man sanctioned it, but by its very nature. No one could pass judgment upon it, and yet it did pass judgment upon all.

Hebrews 2:3 -- Now the question is given: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

The neglect was actually then taking place. They had the gospel and in the case of the Hebrew Christians, many of them were no longer meeting with the believers because of the persecution they were suffering, and some were even ready to go back to the Temple and its worship. It was a matter of complete indifference. It was the attitude of Lot's wife on a massive scale.

Remember, you cannot neglect something you do not have. The only way you can neglect your child is to have a child. To neglect salvation in the case of the believer is to have it and be completely indifferent concerning Church attendance and fellowship with other believers, personal reading and study of the Word and prayer, and so forth. It is that attitude: "I'm saved, so I don't have to worry. I'm all right." The truth is just the opposite. You are all wrong. This "so great salvation" is not a mere ticket to Heaven in which you can live just anyway down here on earth.

The writer of Hebrews will point out that it is a life where "the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back" from going on and living this kind of a life to which he has been called in salvation "my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38). GOD's wrath is against the unbeliever, but His displeasure is against His sinning child and He personally will discipline and discipline severely. This is why the writer says: "The Lord shall judge his people." He is speaking about judgment of believers who are His people but who are indifferent to the revelation given. And he adds: "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:30-31). This is addressed only to believers.

There is no one of us this day that can escape this warning. It includes me, and it includes you. It includes those who say they are believers and are not here this morning nor are they anywhere even though they are not now sick nor are they in a casket. But they are going to be sick, and if they do not give heed to this sickness, they will be dead.

The question is asked: "How shall we escape?" But the question is not answered, neither in the book of Hebrews nor in all of Scripture. Here is a question no demon in hell, nor even Satan with all of his knowledge, can answer. There is no prophet or wise man, there is no one among us today nor has ever been among us who can answer it. It is unanswerable, and it is this that gives the solemnity to the warning.

The superiority of this new revelation is threefold:

1. In its original announcement, Hebrews 2:3 b. "which at the first began to be spoken by (through) the Lord." This was from the Lord Himself, not from angels. It was from One far superior to the angels.
2. In its convincing proclamation, Hebrews 2:3 c. "and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." The Apostles give authentic testimony of what was truth.
3. In its divine attestation, Hebrews 2:4. "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

Here was the divine confirmation given to the message of the Apostles to confirm the truth of their proclamation.

Now let me ask you who have heard the gospel. You know exactly what it is.

- CHRIST has died for your sins.
- He was buried.
- He rose again the third day just as He said He would.
- And He has been seen.
- He is alive today effecting salvation for all who will come unto GOD by Him.

You know this intellectually, and even perhaps emotionally you have been stirred by it, but you have neglected to respond to it personally yourself.

You are NOT saved because you know the gospel; you are NOT saved because you even have or have had at some time an emotional response to the Gospel. You are ONLY saved when you act upon what you know because you believe it is true.

As an act of your "will" you "call upon the name of the Lord" because you know He can save you. As an act of your "will" you confess with your mouth the Lord JESUS believing in your heart that GOD has raised Him from the dead. You are willing to come out and confess Him openly regardless of what it means, even if it means the firing squad, or death at the stake by burning.

You can put it off; you can neglect the facts and the truth, spurning the invitation, but let me ask you one question which I dare you to think about:

"How shall you escape?"

You can't answer, can you? In fact, you do not even want to think about it. You want to dismiss it as far as possible from your mind. But you can't do it.

Oh, how wonderful it is to be able to announce that the invitation is still open. Today is still "the day of salvation." It is still "the accepted time" when you can be saved. There may never be a tomorrow for you. There may never be a tomorrow for this age of grace whereby you can be saved without dying for your faith in CHRIST or enduring unto the end of the tribulation period in order to be saved.

Come while it is still called "to day" in Scripture. The time will come when the ark of GOD's grace will be closed and judgment is for all who have spurned GOD's grace.

How shall you -- put your name there -- escape if you neglect so great salvation?

~ end of chapter 2 ~

01.03- CHAPTER 3 THE DANGER OF DOUBTING

CHAPTER 3

THE DANGER OF DOUBTING -- Hebrews 3-4 The previous danger was the danger of drifting.

This is just going along with the crowd and with the currents and pressures of this world's system which will move you away from the truth. It is possible to wake up someday and find that you are not with GOD's people nor with the truth at all. You have drifted from the truth because of an indifference to it. While you came to the truth, it never became something to which you anchored yourself. The truth will never change, but we can change, and this is the danger.

It is possible to come to Calvary and be redeemed by the precious blood of CHRIST and then drift away from this position because of indifference to the things of the Lord. It is the first danger in the Christian life.

Having stated this danger, the writer of Hebrews resumes the truth that JESUS CHRIST is greater than the angels. Having previously shown the Son to be superior to angels in His Deity as the Son of GOD (Hebrews 1:4-14), he now shows that He is superior to angels in His humanity as the Son of Man, Hebrews 2:5-8.

GOD's purpose for man is given in Hebrews 2:5-8. It is to subject the world to men, not angels. This is why the Garden of Eden was given to man to rule. This was GOD's will.

Proof that this is still GOD's will and program and that this will yet be accomplished, in JESUS' place today, Hebrews 2:9. "JESUS" is the Lord's human name. He is the Lord's "man" to rule the world to come, i.e., the millennium.

Provision was made by CHRIST in His humanity that this might be accomplished, Hebrews 2:10-18. He has defeated Satan already at the cross.

OUTLINE:

A. Superiority of the Son to Angels, Hebrews 1:4-14; Hebrews 2:1-18

1. In His Deity as the Son of GOD, Hebrews 1:4-14.
2. In His Humanity as the Son of Man, Hebrews 2:5-18.

B. Superiority of the Son to Moses, Hebrews 3:1-6.

This is the new truth, and from it the writer will draw a new warning. CHRIST is shown to be superior to Moses in at least four ways.

- CHRIST was the builder or creator of the House of Israel; Moses was a part of the house or a creature, Hebrews 3:3.

- CHRIST was over it, Hebrews 3:6; Moses was in it, Hebrews 3:5 - CHRIST was a Son, Hebrews 3:6; Moses was a servant, Hebrews 3:6 - CHRIST was the revealer; Moses testified to a revelation, Hebrews 3:5 b

Not only had One spoken who was greater than angels, but One had spoken who was greater than Moses. Just as GOD spoke through angels and every word was true; so GOD spoke through Moses and every word was true. This brings us to the second danger, and the writer of Hebrews stops to give the warning to the Hebrew Christians that they do not fail as their fathers failed.

SECOND WARNING: Danger of Unbelief, Hebrews 3:7-19; Hebrews 4:1-13.

First warning was not to drift from His salvation, and the second warning is not to miss His rest.

This warning goes back to the time of Moses.

1. The Illustration, Hebrews 3:7-19

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

Israel was redeemed out of Egypt from bondage and slavery. They were redeemed by blood of the passover lamb, and by the power of GOD. GOD brought them out; they did not liberate themselves. This redemption was His work, and He received the glory. It was glorious that Israel was redeemed out of Egypt; the tragedy is that they perished in the wilderness.

a. Explanation: How Israel Failed, Hebrews 3:7-11.

Hebrews 3:1-6 give the faithfulness of Moses and the Messiah. Now we are shown the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel at the time of Moses, and the danger of unfaithfulness for the church at this present time.

The provocation (Hebrews 3:8) was the rebellion at Meribah given in Numbers 20:13. It was at the end of the wilderness experience. The temptation (Hebrews 3:8) was the rebellion at Massah recorded in Exodus 17:7, and was their experience at the beginning. From the beginning to the end, Israel provoked the Lord.

The result was not entering into rest, Hebrews 3:10-11. They never entered into the Promised Land. Now we must realize that the promised land was NEVER a picture of Heaven. It was a

picture of rest, and this generation that was saved out of Egypt by GOD's grace and power never entered into this life of rest.

The point is this: A redeemed people may lose blessings which depend on continuing faith to enjoy. It is not enough to be saved by faith as an end in itself. "The just shall live by faith." If GOD's people cease to live by faith, they cease to live a life of blessing in time.

Being "saved" gives us rest of conscience, and we have peace with GOD. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

But then we can go on and enter into the rest of heart and have the peace from GOD. "In nothing be anxious, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts, and minds through Christ Jesus" (Php 4:6).

The difference is the difference in rest between Matthew 11:28 and Matthew 11:29. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

The first is positional; the second is experiential.

b. Application, Hebrews 3:12-15.

The experience of Israel was not written down for them, for their mistakes being written down never helped them one bit. It is written for us.

We are to take heed lest this same thing be in us in departing from the living GOD. "Departing" signifies a standing off from a former belief. Formerly it was what GOD said through Moses.

Now it is what GOD says through the Son: we come to Him and we are saved by Him, but then we can "depart" from Him in time.

Hebrews 3:13 tells us what we are to do when we discover this in the assembly.

We are not to condemn nor condone. We are to exhort one another by love and good works (Cf. Hebrews 10:24).

The word "hardened" is calloused. It comes through the result of repeated irritations. There is callous for the hands and feet, but there is also a callous for the heart. We are never the same when we fail to respond to the SPIRIT's wooing. Failing to respond always produces hardening.

This is a terrible thing. It is the end product of an evil heart (Cf. Hebrews 3:12). The end result is no longer any sensitivity to the wooing of the Spirit.

c. The Interpretation, Hebrews 3:16-19.

Here is the route sin takes. The very people GOD rescued, provoked Him.

There are three questions (Hebrews 3:16 -Hebrews 18), and these give us the three stages of their sinful attitude.

UNBELIEF >>>>> HARDNESS >>>>> JUDGMENT

And attitude of unbelief issued into a manifestation of complaining and this issued into divine discipline upon them from GOD. The road is always the same. It begins with an attitude, manifests itself in action and culminates in GOD having to judge.

Then the danger is that we will also defect from the life of faith. Basically we are no different from Israel. The same thing that happened to her can happen to us.

First, the children of Israel who were redeemed, at Sinai drifted from the truth and made a golden calf -- 3,000 died. Then 38 wasted years were experienced in the wilderness while one generation who accepted His salvation, perished in the wilderness because they refused to continue a life of faith and enter into the promised land. There were 603,550 men of war -- of these, 603, 548 died in the wilderness.

These graves are a warning to the Christians. It can happen to us too. It can happen anywhere that hearts are left to grow cold.

2. The Encouragement, Hebrews 4:1-10.

The promise of entering into rest was "left behind to another generation," (Hebrews 4:1).

This entering into rest was not the experience of crossing the Red Sea, which experience was salvation by blood and power. This promise was that of crossing the Jordan River. The danger was to perish in the wilderness, rather than that we would not leave Egypt. It was a danger only for those who were saved.

It was 38 years after Israel was redeemed that Moses pleads with the new generation. The record of that plea is the book of Deuteronomy. It is now 38 years after Pentecost for the church. It is a second generation of believers. They are facing a momentous decision. The Lord Himself is pleading with them not to fail. The record of that pleading is the book of Hebrews.

There was the Word of the report given to the nation in the Old Testament by 12 men. The same situation exists today. What are we going to do with the Word of the report (Hebrews 4:2)?

Hebrews 4:3 -- The rest of creation is a quality of life enjoyed by GOD.

Hebrews 4:8 -- The rest Joshua gave them was only the type. The antitype or fulfillment still remains.

Hebrews 4:9 -- That life rest

(1) Is provided by GOD.

(2) Is available today.

(3) May be entered into by faith.

3. The Exhortation, Hebrews 4:11-13.

It is not enough to merely know these things. There must be positive action. Disobedience and unbelief will rob us of rest, Hebrews 4:11.

GOD gives us something to search out our hearts.

(1) The Word of GOD, Hebrews 4:12-13. Living, active, sharp, critic.

(2) GOD Himself, Hebrews 4:13. Cf. Job 34:21, "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all His goings."

For all of us who are saved, there is a Jordan River for us to cross. It is an issue between us and the Lord. Will we do His will completely by faith, or will we not? We do one of two things when we come to this point in our lives: We rebel or we surrender.

What will it be for you?

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11).

That fall was physical death.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

01.04- CHAPTER 4 THE DANGER OF DEFORMITY

CHAPTER 4

THE DANGER OF DEFORMITY, Hebrews 5-6 The writer of Hebrews is concerned about the Christians of his day. He is gravely concerned because of the actions they are committing and the consequences to them for these actions they are committing and the consequences to them for their actions. If they continue on their present course these indifferent Christians will die.

The first danger is the danger of drifting away from the truth spoken by the Son. Those in the nation of Israel that were redeemed by the blood of the passover lamb and redeemed by the power of GOD, when they drifted away from the law given by angels, died. Three thousand died at the golden calf incident.

How much greater is the Word spoken to us, and the responsibility to live in light of its truth. We who are believers cannot be indifferent to its message and proper.

The second danger is the danger of not entering into His rest because of unbelief. It is not enough to be saved by faith as an end to itself. The believer must continue to live by faith. If he lives in unbelief he will receive, not blessings, but discipline from the Lord.

A whole generation perished in the wilderness because of this failure. They were saved out of Egypt and from bondage by the power and to the glory of GOD, but they perished in the wilderness.

There is more to the Christian life than just being saved. There is a rest for the people of GOD. There is a crossing of the Jordan River as well as a crossing of the Red Sea. Many believers today die in the wilderness never having entered in by faith into the blessings GOD has for them.

The graves in the wilderness stand as a warning to us that we do not fall after the same manner of unbelief caused by a bitterness against GOD for His dealings with us. The exhortation is to every believer to let the Word of GOD do its work in our lives and not to be hardened or calloused to its operation.

With this the first section of the books of Hebrews is concluded, and leaving the person of the Son, the writer speaks about the work of the Son for us, seeing He is who He is.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE WORK OF THE SON, Hebrews 4:14-Hebrews 10:18

A. As the Great High Priest, Hebrews 4:14-Hebrews 7:28 B. As the True Tabernacle, Hebrews 8:1-13; Hebrews 9:1-11 C. As the Perfect Sacrifice, Hebrews 9:12-28; Hebrews 10:1-18

Under Hebrews 4:14-7:28 we have:

1. Introduction: Our Great High Priest, Hebrews 4:14-16

a. Where He is - His Position. "passed into the heavens." b. Who He is - His Person. "Jesus the Son of God". c. What He is. His Character. "without sin." d. What He does. His Work. "touched with the feelings of our infirmities"

He gives mercy and grace to believer-priests.

2. The Son is a True Priest, Hebrews 5:1-10

a. The nature of a priest, Hebrews 5:1-4

(1) He must be a man, Hebrews 5:1-2 (2) He must offer sacrifices, Hebrews 5:3 (3) He must be GOD-called, Hebrews 5:4

b. The Son fulfills these, Hebrews 5:5-10

Because the Son fulfills these, no other mediator is needed. No other priest officiates. We have one high priest and only one. It is not an earthly man serving in an earthly tabernacle; it is the eternal, perfect Son serving in Heaven.

As we begin to consider the first misused Bible passage regarding whether Christians can lose their salvation or not, Hebrews 6:4-6, I intend to take bite size portions of this next chapter to give my readers an opportunity to digest the truths contained therein. I doubt that, after a proper consideration of what these verses are actually teaching, readers will have an easier time "trusting" the GOD of their Salvation, rather than worrying about what they might do to lose their home in Heaven, they might rather reflect on what the Saviour has done and does to keep us saved. Friend, until you can trust CHRIST for you whole salvation, I have to ask whether you have truly trusted him for even PART of your salvation. Salvation is, and always has been, total trust and dependence upon the finished Work of JESUS CHRIST upon the cross of Calvary.

Much more is to be said on this subject of the Son being an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek and not after the order of Aaron, but the writer stops because of their immaturity. The trouble is with his hearers, not with his subject. They are unable to take this truth in, and there was a reason for this condition.

Before we look into this warning, we need to realize that Hebrews 5:11-14; Hebrews 6:1-20 is one unit of thought. It is one complete paragraph. The chapter break is unfortunate at this place because any interpretation of Hebrews 6 must begin at Hebrews 5:11.

Time will not permit us to take an exhaustive study of this, but let us briefly trace the argument.

1. The Spiritual Problem, Hebrews 5:11-14

a. Their present state: deformity due to immaturity, Hebrews 5:11-13 b. The ideal state: normality due to maturity, Hebrews 5:14

Hebrews 5:11 - The problem in his hearers is that they have become "dull of hearing." They didn't used to be that way.

Hebrews 5:12 - They had been believers for a long period of time, and when for the time that they had been saved, should have been teaching at the Jerusalem Bible Institute, they still needed the teaching of the beginner course.

Hebrews 5:13 - This explains why they were still in babyhood. They had failed to use the knowledge they had in practical Christian living. The great principle of the Christian life is "use it or lose it!"

These people knew that CHRIST was the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices and that the temple sacrifices are all fulfilled in His once for all sacrifice; yet they cannot understand why it would be wrong for them to go back to the Temple and to the sacrifices. Their problem is not a matter of knowledge, but it is a matter of the "use" or "exercise" of that knowledge in life situations to discern right and wrong.

Hebrews 5:14 - The mature ones are able to do more than know facts. They can relate doctrine to experience. Thus maturity in the Christian life is not knowledge as such, but the ability to use that knowledge to solve situations and problems in relation to daily living.

2. The Spiritual Truth, Hebrews 6:1-8

a. The need to go on, Hebrews 6:1-3

Notice that this follows in light of what was said in Hebrews 5:11-14. The chapter begins with "Therefore". Now whenever you see a "wherefore" or "therefore" you need to stop and see what it's "there for". It follows something else. In light of certain facts something else is true or some action is to be done. Here it is action to be done.

Hebrews 6:1 - You immature believers need to leave the ABC's of certain basic doctrines and go on unto maturity. There is nothing wrong with the ABC's for the early school child, but there is something very wrong if the high schooler still has to go over them because he has not yet learned how to use the dictionary.

"Perfection" here is the word used for maturity. There is nothing wrong with babyhood for babies, but there is something wrong if you continue there year after year requiring others to feed you.

Hebrews 6:1-2 - There are six basic ABC's that they were to leave. Nothing wrong with these foundational truths, for these were things that figured prominently in the first teachings of the Apostles after the day of Pentecost. The foundation is fine, but you don't just continue to build the foundation -- you go on --- that is, you build upon it.

These are, the "foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

a. repentance from dead works - You have been weighed in the balance of GOD's judgment scale and been found wanting. Nothing can change that - you were lost and undone, condemned, without CHRIST, without HOPE, without GOD. You repented. This is a one time occurrence - never to be repeated. You can only be condemned ONCE.

b. faith toward God - You were reborn into GOD's family, delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son the instant you placed your faith in trust in the finished work of CHRIST. The angels have all rejoiced, it's over. You were passed from death unto life, and your life is not hid with CHRIST in GOD. It's a done deal - finished.

You had nothing to do with getting salvation, and you certainly will have nothing to do with keeping it. So forget it! Move on! It is the fear of losing salvation that keeps people in this condition of immaturity. The rest of this study will make that quite clear.

c. baptisms (it is plural here). Ephesians 4:5 says that there is only one baptism. There is! There is only one baptism that saves. Like b. above, this baptism occurs the instant you believe. This spiritual baptism is, or certainly should be, followed soon after by a water, "believer's baptism" done as a testimony of what happened when you believed - you died to the law, were buried to the law, and were raised in newness in life with the same power that GOD used to raise up His own Son from the grave. It's finished. Done! Forget it! Move on!

d. laying on of hands is a Jewish symbolism. Christianity is identification with CHRIST (Romans 6:3-4). The Israelite placed his hands upon the burnt offerings (Leviticus 1:4); and Aaron laid his hands upon the sin offering (Leviticus 8:14).

This is in line with baptism and Church membership - we identify with CHRIST. Now go on! Forgetting those things which are behind! Move on!

e. resurrection of the dead - so many Christians spend their whole life discussing the coming of CHRIST. He is coming again! It will be a time of His own choosing! Forget it! Live a mature life and as some have said, "It will all pan out".

f. eternal judgment - Heaven is our home! It's a done deal! Forget it! Now live a mature life as a believer and win others so that you won't show up empty-handed in Heaven.

It is all very logical, really.

Hebrews 6:3 - "And this going on to maturity we will do if GOD wills it." This is very important! You cannot compel maturity. The Father wants the child to mature, and so this third class condition shows that the fault IS WITH US, not GOD, if we do not go on to maturity. However, we do not know how much time we have left.

b. The impossibility of going back, Hebrews 6:4-6

Now we come to the passage that is without exception the most MISUNDERSTOOD passage in Scripture.

The issue to settle first and foremost is the question -- are the people the writer is addressing saved or not saved? They are either one or the other. There is no third category. (Undecided is still lost and condemned). You can only say "yes" or "no" to GOD when He woos you to the cross. "Wait" is only another form of "NO" to the Father.

These people are believers and are saved for the following reasons:

(1) Because of the message of the whole book of Hebrews.

The whole book is addressed to Hebrew Christians. The exhortation "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into that rest . . ." (Hebrews 4:1), "Let us labor to enter into that rest . . ." (Hebrews 4:11), "Let us hold fast our profession" (Hebrews 4:14), "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace . . ." (Hebrews 4:16), etc.

(2) Because of the immediate context in Hebrews 5:11-14; Hebrews 6:1-3.

These are babes, and therefore they have life (Hebrews 5:13).

- They did not need knowledge, but use of the knowledge they already had (Hebrews 5:13).

- Their lapse into dullness was because of disuse (Hebrews 5:14).

- They were saved else they could not have been expected to be teachers (Hebrews 5:13).

- They are exhorted to go on unto "perfection," or "maturity" (Hebrews 6:1). This does not mean to come to salvation, but to come to maturity in CHRIST.

The writer includes himself along with them in needing to go on (Hebrews 6:1, "us," Hebrews 6:3 "we").

(3) Lastly, they already knew and accepted the basic doctrines (Hebrews 6:1-2).

(4) Because of the passage of Hebrews 6:4-6 itself.

There are five spiritual privileges listed here. Let us look at them carefully. Whenever Scripture uses important terms, the very same book in which they are used will define their meaning and show their significance. This is true here with these statements.

- 1 - "Those who were once enlightened."

Notice Hebrews 10:32, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated (enlightened), ye endured a great fight of afflictions."

This word refers to the moment when the light of the gospel was apprehended by us for the first time.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 4:4-6)

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:" (Ephesians 3:9)

"But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:" (2 Timothy 1:10)

Moreover, the word "once" when used in Hebrews marks something that is NEVER REPEATED (cf. Hebrews 9:7, Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 10:2; Hebrews 12:26).

- 2 - "and have tasted of the heavenly gift."

Notice Hebrews 2:9, "But we see Jesus . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Tasting in the Greek signifies holding something in common with someone else. It does not signify, as in our culture, tasting it and then refusing to partake of it. CHRIST partook of death for us completely so that we might partake of the gift of eternal life. GOD's gifts and calling are without repentance so that we have eternal life as our possession. We hold this in common with JESUS CHRIST. His life became our life because He died our death for us.

- 3 - "and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost."

The word "partakers" is used in Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 3:1 and Hebrews 3:14. It signifies in these verses more than just participation but rather the personal character that has been gained because of vital relationship. The personal character of the human race was flesh and blood. To be partakers of the HOLY SPIRIT is to have the personal character of the person governed by Him, i.e., to be regenerated.

- 4 - "and have tasted of the good word of God."

This again goes back to the word "taste" and in this case they have experienced a special utterance in which they realized that it was from GOD.

- 5 - "and the powers of the world to come."

This was the powers of the millennial age. They had not partaken of the age, but of the powers of the age, and they experienced this rebirth in their own life.

Now the parallel uses and references show that these five things are stated about believers.

- Only the believer is once enlightened.

- Only the believer has the gift of eternal life.

- Only the believer has the HOLY SPIRIT.

- Only the believer partakes of the New Testament revelation and so governs his life accordingly.

- Only the believer has experienced the power of the new birth.

Moreover, every one of these statements is aorist tense signifying that these things are never repeated acts of GOD's working. This too shows the writer is speaking to believers in which GOD Himself has performed operations which will never be repeated. If they had not been saved then they could have experienced these things; but since they were saved these acts could never be repeated.

Furthermore, just what more could someone say about believers than what is stated here. There isn't anything more that could be said.

Having established without any question that the writer is addressing believers the question still remains what is he saying to them?

Let us consider what this passage CANNOT teach.

It cannot teach that you can be saved, lost and saved over again. The passage says such is an impossibility. Anyone who teaches such a thing is not out in left field; he is out of the ball park.

This passage cannot teach that you can come up to a point of enlightenment, etc., and yet not be saved, and reject this enlightenment and experience and never be able to be saved again. This makes an unpardonable sin which Scripture knows nothing about.

What this passage DOES teach (and it is just so simple).

Something is impossible.

It is impossible for those who are saved to fall away and then be saved all over again and so remove all the wasted years of failure and babyhood since this would require CHRIST to die again and put him to open shame because His first death was not sufficient. Since all of this is impossible, and we cannot remove the record of wasted years as a believer, there is only one thing for us to do -- let us go on to maturity.

The record of my past stands. I cannot change it. Therefore I must be concerned about today and tomorrow for I cannot do anything about yesterday.

This is impossible:

all past erased >> at the cross >>>all past erased >>> at the cross Therefore this must be done:
all past erased >>>>>at the cross >>>>> so >>>>> go on!

How can we know this is what the writer is speaking about?

- 1 - Hebrews 6:4 begins with "for" and gives an explanation of why we must go on.

- 2 - This fits the context.

The context before is speaking about babyhood and wasted years. The only thing they can do is go on.

The context following gives an illustration of wasted years of the land bringing forth thorns and briars (Hebrews 6:7-8). We cannot go back and do anything about these crops. The only thing that can be done is go on and bring forth a good crop this year.

- 3 - The word used here for "repentance" is metanois and signifies "repentance" to salvation.

This is always in the New Testament used of initial repentance to salvation. (metamelomai is "repentance" which is restoration to fellowship in the New Testament).

- 4 - The use of the word "again" is significant.

It is impossible to renew a saved person "again to initial repentance" unto salvation, simply because he is already saved. The "again" shows a prior experience - in this case a prior experience of salvation.

To paraphrase this we could say:

"leaving babyhood, let us go on to maturity for it is impossible by means of a falling away to renew -- that is make the whole record new -- by means of an initial repentance to salvation seeing this would necessitate CHRIST dying again and make His first death of no avail, and therefore a mockery to those looking on."

For this to happen Godwardly, it would call for another crucifixion of CHRIST. Manwardly -- to those who watch -- they would say that His salvation was not worthwhile as the first crucifixion was not sufficient, and how could we know that even a second crucifixion would be sufficient also.

c. The illustration of the principle, Hebrews 6:7-8

The land is not burned, but the fruit of the land is as if it is thorns and briers. So all will be brought out at the judgment seat of CHRIST.

"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 mans work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every mans work of what sort it is. If any mans work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any mans work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

It is not the BELIEVER who is burned, but his Works that are rejected.

We cannot erase the record of last years thorns. Therefore let us go on and by the grace of GOD this year produce a good crop that will glorify the Lord.

3. The Spiritual Action, Hebrews 6:19-20

a. Your part: things that accompany salvation, Hebrews 6:9-12 b. GOD's part: immutable, stedfast promises, Hebrews 6:13-20

The exhortation is to us.

Php 3:13-14, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: 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."

The prospects are as bright as the promises of GOD.

Not one word has ever failed.

Therefore, let us go on.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

01.05- CHAPTER 5 THE DANGER OF DESPISING

CHAPTER 5

THE DANGER OF DESPISING, Hebrews 10:26-31

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Each warning in Hebrews is progressively worse.

- There is the danger of drifting away from the truth, Hebrews 2:1-4.
- There is the danger of not entering into His rest, Hebrews 3-4 - There is the danger of not going on to maturity, Hebrews 5-6.

All these dangers are ONLY for the child of GOD, not for the child of the world. The danger of the unsaved is not to be saved and thus go to the lake of fire. The writer of Hebrews is not writing to his people, Israel, who are unbelievers. Matthew has done that. He is writing to those who are believers, who have accepted the Lord JESUS CHRIST and His sacrifice for their sins. They made a good confession and, even in the midst of suffering, were faithful to the Lord. But persecution has continued and intensified. They had suffered the loss of all their material wealth.

What was their problem? They needed to patiently endure. They needed to hold fast and not give up thinking that it is not worth while. One of the key words of the book in Hebrews, therefore, is "patience" or "patient endurance."

So the author, after reprimanding his hearers for NOT being teachers of the Word, even though they had been saved long enough to be teaching, and still needing to be taught the milk, urges them along with himself "to go on to maturity."

The reason "for" doing this is because it is impossible for "anyone" who is saved if they should defect from the faith to renew them again to an initial repentance. No one can be saved but once. No one can have his past forgiven but once.

After coming to CHRIST, everything we do will come before the judgment seat of CHRIST and it will be rewarded if it is good, or burnt if it is good-for-nothing.

This is why there is the need to GO ON and a warning against going back. You can NEVER regain wasted years. Thus the illustration of Hebrews 6:7-8 fits perfectly. All we produce is either for

blessing or burning. It is not the believer that will be burned, but what he has produced.

Often we take the blessings of the rain and sunshine and yet only produce thorns and briers.

Hebrews 6:9 -- The writer stands persuaded of better things from these Hebrew believers than "thorns and briers" and things to be rejected, even though he has been forced to speak in such strong language to them.

Hebrews 6:10 -- Moreover, they have produced "good works" and are continuing to do so now. It is not that these things are not appreciated.

Hebrews 6:11 -- But there must be the Continuing and Perseverance. Now he is not saying that they are saved by perseverance, but this is the only way to receive a "full reward" for each years' harvest. It is not enough to be satisfied with one year, or even a partial crop.

Hebrews 6:12 -- "Slothful" goes back to Hebrews 5:11 (Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing) and means "dull of hearing" showing this whole section is one unit of truth. Their need was for continued "faith" as believers and "patience" realizing that the promises are for another day.

Hebrews 6:13 -- Then he begins to talk about GOD's promises.

Hebrews 6:14 -- The whole nation of Israel came from this one promise.

Hebrews 6:15 -- Abraham had to go through patient endurance in order to obtain the promise. He is an example of the faithful. GOD's promises are never immediately rewarded, but this in no way signifies that they are not sure.

Hebrews 6:16 -- This is the kind of an affirmation men make, and GOD also made the same to us. Nothing is higher than GOD. He is the highest authority and His Word settles and confirms all. There can be no argument against it.

Hebrews 6:17 -- GOD gave His immutable Word and promise, and, as if that were not enough, He gave an oath besides.

Hebrews 6:18 -- What is true of Abraham is true for us. The things we have believed are true. Our need is for patient endurance. We have fled for refuge to the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

A "hope" is set before us. Now remember that hope in Scripture never contain ANY element of doubt as with our English word. Rather it is an anticipated expectation which requires "waiting" for it's fulfillment. The waiting for the Lord's return is "the blessed hope" of the believer. Our waiting for the promises GOD has made to be reality is not faith, but hope. Faith believed them; hope clings to them; love is to characterize our life while we wait.

Hebrews 6:19 -- Our hope goes right on into the very presence of GOD because JESUS CHRIST is there.

Hebrews 6:20 -- And He is the guarantee that we will ultimately be there bodily ourselves. Thus He is our forerunner.

With the mention of Melchisedec, the writer resumes his teaching which he interrupted to give this warning and exhortation.

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE WORK OF THE SON, Hebrews 4:14-10:18.

A. As the Great High Priest, Hebrews 4:14 - Hebrews 7:28. "after the order of Melchisedec."

B. As the True Tabernacle, Hebrews 8:1 - Hebrews 9:11. "Not made with hands."

C. As the Perfect Sacrifice, Hebrews 9:12 - Hebrews 10:18. "once for all."

It is not enough to know. Knowledge brings responsibility. Because of the superiority of the Son and of His work, we have a superior walk and far superior privileges in this age. But never, never forget that hand-in-hand with superior privileges comes superior responsibilities.

A. Exhortation, Hebrews 10:19-39.

1. In light of superior privileges, Hebrews 10:19-25.

2. In light of greater discipline, Hebrews 10:26-31.

3. In light of former endurance, Hebrews 10:32-39.

Listen to our superior privileges in this dispensation.

Hebrews 10:19 -- We can enter into the Holy of Holies. No one in Israel could do this but the high priest alone, and he could only do this once in the year and then only according to strict, specific instructions. He entered in "with fear." Something of that fear is given in the fact that a rope was tied around his ankle. If anything went wrong, he was pulled out. No one else dared go in.

Hebrews 10:20 -- The high priest went around the veil; we go THROUGH the veil -- the sacrifice of His body and by means of His shed blood. Anyone that does not like the blood of JESUS CHRIST has NO access to GOD.

Hebrews 10:21 -- GOD's house today is so superior to His house of Israel. They came in by natural birth; we by spiritual birth. They have a high priest that is subject to death; we have one who will never die. Theirs was imperfect and sinful; our High Priest is sinless. And on and on we could go.

Hebrews 10:22 -- The exhortation is to come. When a person in Israel was consecrated into the office of the priesthood, the blood of the sacrificial offering was sprinkled upon him, and he was totally bathed in water. Both acts are spiritual works of GOD's operations today in which the believer becomes a believer-priest who ministers under the Great High Priest, the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Not everyone in the Old Testament could be a priest, but only those related by birth to Aaron.

However, every child of GOD today can be a believer-priest and consecrated to offer spiritual sacrifices to GOD because he is related by the new birth to the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Hebrews 10:23 -- We are to stand erect and firm in our profession of the Lord JESUS CHRIST and not be tottering between two opinions or positions. He is faithful that promised. He has never failed

to keep His word. Why do you think He will now?

Hebrews 10:24 -- Here is the relation of one who is strong in clinging to the promises, in relation to one who is weak in faith. The fleshly reaction of the sin nature is to criticise them and push them ever further down. The Spirit's operation is just the reverse.

Hebrews 10:25 -- Here is an explanation of good works in this crisis period. Negatively it is not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as some are doing. Did you realize that missing Church attendance is a lack of a good work?

Positively it is exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

The day was the day of judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70 which was a prefigure of the final judgment upon Israel before the Second Coming of CHRIST.

THE FOURTH WARNING.

This brings us to the FOURTH WARNING, Hebrews 10:26-31.

It seems to me babyish to have to stop at this point and teach you that the writer of Hebrews is talking to SAVED people. However, I have learned not to take anything for granted.

(1) The writer of Hebrews nowhere in any passage ever says any word about unbelievers except as illustration. It is a book from beginning to end whose every word is written to Christian believers.

Concerning these believers the author says the JESUS CHRIST is "the author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9).

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost" i.e., to the very end, "that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

Thus he is writing to believers who are not only SAVED, but ETERNALLY SAVED.

(2) The preceding context is dealing only with believers who have access to GOD through the blood of CHRIST.

Moreover, Hebrews 10:26 continues with a "for," a word that gives an explanation of why we are encouraged to exhort one another and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

The three exhortations to steadfastness (Hebrews 10:22-25) can ONLY be for the born again believers, not for unsaved or even professors. The need of the unsaved is to ACCEPT CHRIST!

(3) The context following reveals the same truth (Hebrews 10:32-39). Here we find encouragement to persevere in patience. Unbelievers do not need patient endurance; THEY NEED CHRIST.

(a) "We" (Hebrews 10:26). He includes himself along with them.

(b) "Receive full knowledge of the truth" (Hebrews 10:26). Only a believer can come to full knowledge of the truth for the natural man cannot even know the spiritual things of the Word. "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" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

(c) "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26) shows that they were saved or else the sacrifices of CHRIST could avail for them.

(d) The illustration of Hebrews 10:28 shows they were saved, for those with Moses were blood redeemed people and under the blood of the covenant of the law.

(e) "The blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified" shows they are believers (Hebrews 10:29). The blood is applied to believers when they are saved. This is the sprinkling mentioned previously. The application of the blood of GOD's Son is that which saves us and sets us apart as believers. We are then under the blood of the covenant, and out from under wrath. No unbeliever is under the blood, nor set apart (sanctified) by the blood. The blood on the houses of Israel set them apart from unbelievers, so the same is true here.

(f) "The Spirit of Grace" (Hebrews 10:29) shows they are believers. The HOLY SPIRIT is longsuffering with unbelievers but grace is received through the HOLY SPIRIT only with believers. We are saved by grace through faith. Grace is available to unbelievers, but we who are believers have been recipients of it. Only a believer can, then, "insult" the grace of the Spirit of Grace which is the thing involved here. The word has the idea in it of arrogance and willful injury, and it would involve the refusal by the believer to heed the Spirit's gracious wooings not to commit this specific sin. To go ahead and sin after the gracious operation of the Spirit would be a slap to Him, and He would be grieved.

(g) Finally, the use of the quotation in Hebrews 10:30, "The Lord shall judge his people," shows that this is a reference to believers. Judgment here is not on the world, or unbelievers, but on GOD's own people who are His children.

The second problem is the nature of the sin. What sin is this that the cross of CHRIST does not cover in time.

(1) The nature of the sin (Hebrews 10:26).

It is a voluntary sin which the believers wills to commit after he has been saved and come to full knowledge of the truth. Now every time a believer sins it is because he "willed" to sin. He did not have to sin. This is the doctrine of Romans 6, 7, and 8.

This act here, however, is something different. It is present tense and may be paraphrased "if we keep on sinning willfully after that we have received full knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." This sin is, then, a deliberate, premeditated sinning with full knowledge that it is wrong.

(2) The action involved.

It is such an act that involves a repudiation of former actions that were good, spiritual, joyful, and for which they were fully aware of future rewards (Hebrews 10:32-35).

(3) The consequences of the act.

It would involve a repudiation of their previous confession of JESUS CHRIST as their Saviour (Hebrews 10:23; cf. Hebrews 3:1 ; Hebrews 4:14).

(4) The sin itself.

By comparing Hebrews 10:32-37 with Hebrews 10:23-25 we may correctly say the sin is:

(a) A separation of the believer from other believers permanently, and

(b) A return of the separated believer to the Temple and all it entails in order to escape the present persecution that was upon them.

(5) The sin involved a DENUNCIATION of:

(a) The Person of CHRIST (Hebrews 1:1 - Hebrews 4:13), (b) The Work of CHRIST (Hebrews 4:14 - Hebrews 10:18), and (c) The Ministry of the HOLY SPIRIT and GOD in the life of the believer (Hebrews 10:19 - Hebrews 13:25).

This is why Hebrews 10:29 states all three categories.

The final question is what is the nature of the judgment?

It just comes down to this. Desiring to escape man's judgment, they will fall into the judgment of GOD.

(1) The judgment cannot be loss of eternal salvation or of eternal life (Hebrews 10:39). If it is possible to lose eternal salvation, then it is not an eternal salvation.

(2) The judgment DOES involve loss of spiritual rewards (Hebrews 10:35-36).

(3) The judgment DOES involve physical death for this is certain to come if they continue and persist in sinning (Hebrews 10:28-29).

(4) The judgment may be that the believer who returns to the Temple and to the City of Jerusalem will be involved in the judgment our Lord prophesied would come upon the city and the Temple (Hebrews 10:25-27).

This is why we find in Hebrews 13:13-14 the exhortation to go outside the city bearing His reproach.

Is it possible for a believer today to be guilty of the same sin? It most certainly is.

We are saved by the blood of CHRIST and the eternal guilt of sin is removed forever, but it is possible to neglect this so great salvation and to carelessly drift from it through indifference. It is possible to stop short of a life of rest and peace which the Lord has planned for us as His child, simply because we never go on living a life of faith and therefore never come to experience the best that GOD has for us. It is possible to never mature in the Lord and never grow up, but to be infants in spiritual things all of our lives. Such a person has years of wasted service where all that is produced is "good-for-nothing" but for burning. It is also possible to sin willfully or deliberately with full understanding of the sin and the consequences of our action, and have the hand of GOD discipline us in time in life even to the point of physical death.

We are saved by grace, but grace does not mean that we can do anything we want.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

01.06- CHAPTER 6 THE DANGER OF DENYING

CHAPTER 6

THE DANGER OF DENYING, Hebrews 10:22-25

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:22-25).

Today we are considering the fifth and final warning in the book of Hebrews. These warnings are an integral part of the message of the Epistle. They take the truth expounded and relate it to life and action.

The book of Hebrews may be looked upon as in three parts -- all concerning the Son and His superior salvation.

I. His Person, Hebrews 1:1 - Hebrews 4:13.

II. His Work, Hebrews 4:14 - Hebrews 10:18.

III. His Outwork, Hebrews 10:19 - Hebrews 13:25.

The first concerns His LIFE -- what He was from all eternity past. The second concerns His DEATH -- what He did once for all in a definite point of time. The third concerns His RESURRECTION LIFE -- what He will be for all eternity to come.

- Who He is.

- What He did.

- What He can do for you.

- The Son -- eternal.

- The Saviour -- perfect.

- The Shepherd -- great.

- He is Prophet -- the REVEALER. "As such He represents GOD to man."

- He is Priest -- the SACRIFICER. "As such He represents man to GOD."

- He is King -- the Sovereign. "As such He represents man to man."

- As Prophet, He was crowned with thorns (John 19:2).

- As Priest, He is crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:9).
- As King, He will be crowned with many crowns (Revelation 19:12).

Beginning at Hebrews 10:19 we commence the last section of the book. This is the application of the doctrine. It is our work in light of His work.

We have superior privileges (Hebrews 10:19-21), but with these come also greater responsibilities (Hebrews 10:22-25).

We are exhorted to enter into these greater privileges (Hebrews 10:22) to hold fast to our profession of CHRIST as Saviour because GOD's promises will come to pass (Hebrews 10:23), and we are exhorted to encourage one another, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The reason we must do these things is because if we willfully sin having full knowledge of the sin and its consequences, GOD is forced to chasten us (Hebrews 10:26-29) because of His very nature (Hebrews 10:30-31). He cannot and will not let His children get by with this any more than we would let our own children get by with this.

The Hebrews are thus encouraged to persevere in patience (Hebrews 10:32-39). They have previously endured (Hebrews 10:32-34) so they should continue to patiently persevere (Hebrews 10:35-36) because the Word of the Lord stands sure (Hebrews 10:37) and all who please GOD must patiently endure, living by faith (Hebrews 10:38-39).

In fact, real faith produces patient endurance (Hebrews 11:1-3), and this is seen in every era of the Old Testament (Hebrews 11:4-40).

The implication is, to go back to the Temple of Jerusalem is not to be joined to the faithful company of the Old Testament at all, but is to depart from them.

All of the Old Testament saints listed in Hebrews 11 are a witness to us that the race CAN be run (Hebrews 12:1), and the only way to have rest is through patient endurance even as was true of the Lord JESUS CHRIST (Hebrews 12:2).

When we consider CHRIST and His sufferings, our sufferings and struggles are mild (Hebrews 12:3-4).

But GOD has a purpose in the believer receiving discipline with patient endurance, and that is the maturity of the child (Hebrews 12:5-11).

So the believer has an obligation to weaker ones in the assembly (Hebrews 12:12-13) and to himself (Hebrews 12:14). He must know the three dangers that are before him (Hebrews 12:15-16) which may be illustrated by Esau's decision which was irrevocable even though he regretted it later. Esau had neither faith nor patient endurance, and he was cut off by ONE ACT from the place of blessing (Hebrews 12:17).

By application, if the Hebrews return to the old system of the Temple, they go to that of utter "terror" (Hebrews 12:18-22), and they leave in contrast the place of privilege and grace, and the heavenly city which is the reward of those who faithfully endure (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Therefore, there must be a final warning. Abel's blood spoke continually on earth; CHRIST's blood is greater and speaks continually from Heaven that He shall come, judge, bring in the new age with its new covenant (Hebrews 12:25-27). So patiently endure, offering spiritual worship as a believer-priest, knowing GOD purifies dress (Hebrews 12:28-29).

This carries us through the fifth warning.

Now let us look at the context to this final warning in detail.

Our responsibility in light of all these facts presented, Hebrews 12:12-29.

1. The Exhortation, Hebrews 12:12-17

Hebrews 12:12 -- "Wherefore," in light of all of these facts presented, this conclusion goes back all the way to the willful sin in Hebrews 10:26. In light of it and the truth presented from Hebrews 10:26 to Hebrews 12:11 the exhortation is given.

"Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees."

Here is our relationship to others in the body.

(1) Hands -- we are to lift them up in prayer even as Moses did (Exodus 17:11-12) in order to win the victory for others. We are not to be defeated and discouraged. We are not to criticize someone else; we are to pray for them.

(2) Knees -- feeble knees will not hold you up in the day of battle (Ezekiel 7:17). We are to be strong in battle and not terrified by the adversary.

Hebrews 12:13 -- "And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

(3) Feet -- The children of Israel wandered around in circles for 38 years without ever going anywhere. We are to make straight paths for our feet. We are to go on. We are to look unto JESUS, and setting our eyes on Him, not wander from the course set before us

"Lame" here is "to be put out of joint" and it speaks of the shuffle of the paralytic. Some in the body were paralyzed, and they were traveling along with the greatest of difficulty. The figure of the body is used to represent the church and its spiritual condition and it shows that the lame person is spiritually lame. This person is to be spiritually healed so that the whole body may move out and move on together, without some being left behind.

Hebrews 12:14 -- "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Here is the injunction to each person individually rather than collectively as in the preceding verses.

"Peace" indicates there is to be no quarrel, no animosity between ourselves and anyone else.

"Holiness" signifies we are to be set apart for the Lord.

The one is our personal relationship with others; and the second is our personal relationship with the Lord Himself.

Hebrews 12:15 -- "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of GOD."

This word "looking diligently" signifies searching out carefully or minutely just like the Israelites searched their homes before the Passover to rid them of all leaven. It is constant spiritual oversight by each one of us of our own lives. The reason is three-fold, brought out by the three occurrences of the word "lest." There are three dangers that every believer may face and for which he must be constantly on guard.

These three dangers are:

(1) "Lest any man fail of the grace of GOD."

This is failure on the part of the child of GOD to appropriate grace. Whenever I fail to appropriate grace for the needs of the day, I will fail when testing and temptation come. GOD has provided grace to meet it, but I have failed to appropriate it. I will then react according to my flesh.

If GOD brings something into our lives, He will also give us grace to overcome it and gain the victory (2 Corinthians 12:9), rather than to be overcome by it. "As our days, so shall our strength be." These Hebrew Christians were going through trials and testings, but they had failed to appropriate GOD's grace so as to stand up under the testing. Thus they were living defeated lives. They had failed of the grace of GOD.

(2) "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

This is open infidelity.

Bitterness in the heart leads to murmuring with the tongue. And murmuring is one of the most dangerous sins because it always affects others and leavens the whole camp. It starts with one, but it ends defiling many. This is what happened in Israel over and over again.

So it is always, when I fail to appropriate grace, there will be a root of bitterness in my heart against GOD who has allowed this "trouble" to come, and it will ultimately come out in my speech.

(3) "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

This final step and condition is open contempt of what is our responsibility or our privilege. The entire passage hinges on this one illustration. It is very significant.

There are two obstacles to holiness that are presented here: fornication and profaneness. Esau represents the latter, and this is also the danger of the Hebrews. "A little bit of material food" emphasizes for how little Esau sold his birthright.

Now the birthright and its significance to Esau can only be understood as one understands that this was not merely being heir of flocks and herds, and Esau rejected this. This is not it. GOD had made a covenant with Abraham, and that covenant promise was going to be fulfilled through Isaac's heirs. Esau was the one in the direct line, and being the elder son of Isaac would have received the elder son portion, i.e., two-thirds. But he surrendered for himself and his descendants

the covenant promises of GOD for one meal. That is what he thought of GOD's promises, and that is how much he wanted to wait, or patiently endure for them.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

01.07- CHAPTER 7 THE DANGER OF DENYING (PART 2)

CHAPTER 7

THE DANGER OF DENYING (PART 2) How long has it been since you heard a message on hell? It has been quite a while hasn't it?

Perhaps many of you have never heard a message on the Lake of Fire. While I have read sermons on the subject, I have never heard one myself. This is not a very popular subject, and is neglected by default of those who do believe in it. But, beloved, if there is not a hell to be saved from, then there is absolutely no need for a Saviour to rescue us from it. A Saviour is meaningless without a certain death. While I am not going to speak on hell in this lesson, I do want to relate its truth to unbelievers.

We who are believers have experienced the Lord's so great salvation. We have come to know that He saved us from an eternal death. We are saved and that salvation is eternal (Hebrews 5:8-9). This eternal salvation is eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:2). This is why it is so great salvation because He bore our eternal judgment in a point of time.

The believer's problem, then, can never be eternal salvation or eternal judgment. That issue stands settled. "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:39).

Our problem as believers is not a matter with sin that would cause us to lose our eternal salvation, but it is with sin that would cause us to lose the Lord's blessing in our lives, and may even cause us to lose our lives in a premature physical death.

- Our problem is with time, not with eternity.
- Our problem is with our physical life, not our eternal soul.
- Our problem is with physical death, not eternal death.

This is the issue before the Hebrew Christians, and it is the issue with us also.

Some sins are small, but others are not. Some things we do are relatively unimportant, while other things are very important. This is why 1 John 5 speaks about sin not unto death, and about sin unto death. We are to stop and take heed to ourselves and our actions "for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).

This verse closes our study today but I want you to notice that this is NEVER spoken in reference to unbelievers. GOD is not, and never will be, a consuming fire in reference to unbelievers. For unbelievers He will be an eternal fire that will consume nothing. However, in reference to the believer He is a consuming fire that will consume all that is wood, hay, and stubble, and all that is thorns and briars. He will even take away our lives if we are completely displeasing to Him.

Never say, "It couldn't happen here; it couldn't ever happen to me." This is the attitude at the time of CHRIST when they said: "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves; that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets" (Matthew 23:30-31).

There is not any sin that we as believers are not capable of committing. This is why we are to take heed to ourselves lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:11-12; 1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 4:11).

We saw last lesson that the route of any failure is a progression involving three stages.

(1) It begins with failing to appropriate grace. "Lest any man fail of the grace of God" (Hebrews 12:15 a).

(2) The next step is having bitterness in the heart. "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15 b). (Bitterness in the heart leads to murmuring with the mouth, and this leads others to sin also).

(3) The final step is open contempt of what is our responsibility of our privilege. "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." (Either one of these two sins permanently disqualifies one from service and from blessings therein).

Concerning these three things we are to search out ourselves and our hearts carefully, to give inspection, to oversee continually lest these things come into our lives unexpectedly and undetected.

No one sins any other route. We fail to appropriate GOD's grace for the situation or trial. This leads us to have bitterness in our hearts to GOD for allowing this hardship or difficulty to come upon us. What is in our hearts ultimately comes out and it defiles us and others. All this in turn causes a final state in which we settle for the temporal rather than the eternal; for the here and now rather than the hereafter; and for the material rather than the spiritual. We fail to patiently endure.

This is what Esau did, and his decision was irrevocable. We are capable of doing the same thing.

Here is a young man or a young woman. The Lord has called them to the mission field. The way to Bolivia, or India, or Morocco is long and hard. They fail to appropriate the grace necessary for the way and for the testings along the journey. Then everything caves in. "GOD is not really concerned about me. He really does not love me. If He loved me He would have provided for me and given me a life partner." Then the person falls in love with someone not called to the field and they are married. They made a decision that is irrevocable. They have missed the perfect will of GOD and must now settle for the remainder of their lives for that which is His second best, His 20th best, or His 200th best.

Having given the exhortation not to fail (Hebrews 12:12-17), we come to a second section.

2. The Believer's Privileges and Position, Hebrews 12:18-24.

The believer must understand his privilege and his position today or he cannot understand why the Lord will judge him so severely for disobedience. The author of this book states this truth both negatively and positively.

a. Negatively, Hebrews 12:18-21.

To go back to the law and the Temple is to go back to a system of terror. The law was a system of terror. "Do you not hear the law," the writer is saying.

The contrast here is between the Old Testament revelation and its responsibilities with the New Testament and its responsibilities and privileges.

b. Positively, Hebrews 12:22-24.

The one was "terror"; the other is "grace" and far superior privileges. The emphasis is not on the city, but on the One living in the city. Look at the occupants of the city.

(1) JESUS, the Mediator of the New Covenant.

(2) Church of the Lord JESUS CHRIST (which began at Pentecost and will end at the rapture).

(3) GOD, the Judge of all.

(4) Spirits of just men made perfect (the Old Testament saints who are not a part of the church nor ever will be).

(5) Angels, i.e., the holy angels (the two-thirds that did not follow Satan in his rebellion).

(6) Blood of Sprinkling, i.e., the mercy seat, or the throne of grace as it is called in Hebrews.

This is the city we are looking for, not some earthly city.

Abel was the very first person to offer blood sacrifices. It was a testimony from then on, even though he was dead, that this is GOD's only method of acceptance and only way of approach (cf. Hebrews 11:4). But now there is a greater witness than that of Abel, because there is greater blood in a greater place that is continually speaking to men. The blood of JESUS CHRIST is GOD's only means of acceptance and only way of approach.

3. The Final Warning, Hebrews 12:25-29.

In light of the better blood in a better place, and all the superior privileges we possess, there is a far greater obligation and responsibility that is ours.

Hebrews 12:25 -- "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." Literally it is "He who is right now speaking" (present tense).

This ties the Epistle of Hebrews and its message into one unit.

"God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His son" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

"Therefore . . . how shall we escape" (Hebrews 2:1; Hebrews 2:3).

These Hebrew believers in grace who reject the present voice of the Lord are guilty of a far greater sin than their fathers. Their fathers did not escape; so much more will they not escape. Compare Hebrews 10:29, "how much more sorer punishment." with Hebrews 10:30, "The Lord will judge His people."

It is not salvation, but temporal punishment that is in view here (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:31-32).

Hebrews 12:26 -- The One who spoke on Sinai is now the One who speaks from Heaven in grace and bids us come. He is yet to speak one more time, and the last time He comes and speaks it will be in judgment. You had better be right with Him. It is one thing to be out of step with an earthly monarch. It is something else to be out of step with the Sovereign of the universe.

The prophecy quoted here is from Haggai 2:6 and refers to the second coming of CHRIST. It pictures judgment which precedes the coming of a new age. The shaking of the earth will be the purifying judgment and the removal of all things in conformity to the holiness of the Lord and not subject to the King. GOD will yet do this for Israel. You had better be found on the right side in that day. The judgment in A.D. 70 was just a pre-picture of that final judgment that will occur.

Hebrews 12:27 -- Those things that can be shaken show they are temporary. What is unshakable manifests what is eternal.

The Temple and the old covenant as prophesied are shakable and therefore temporary. The New Jerusalem and the new covenant are unshakable and eternal. The Temple will be completely destroyed. The old covenant will pass away but both the New Jerusalem of the new covenant with the house of Israel will last forever. The shaking is viewed as already in process.

Hebrews 12:28 -- The final appeal is given to "believers."

Believers are looked upon as in a process of receiving a kingdom. At the present time the Mediator is still in Heaven. The establishment of this kingdom on earth with the New Jerusalem over the earth is definite and sure, yet it is still unseen. We must abide faithful, and obtain grace so as to patiently endure for our reward until He comes or until He calls. In the meantime we are to serve the Lord acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

You do not love someone you do not respect. You cannot love the Lord unless you respect Him.

The Lord will judge His children. You had better take heed and reverence Him. No child will deliberately sin without paying the full price in discipline from the Lord.

Acceptable service to GOD is in the called out assembly, not in returning back to the Temple and offering sacrifices.

Hebrews 12:29 -- The exhortation closes and the warnings are over. But the discipline awaits all who will not heed.

Hebrews begins with the Son speaking, and it ends with the blood of the Son continuing to speak from Heaven as an eternal witness.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

01.08- CHAPTER 8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have considered the five warnings of Hebrews. Here are five flashing red lights on the road of disobedience. They are five stop signs on the freeway of backsliding. Each one of these warnings may be illustrated by the nation of Israel in covenant relationship with the Lord.

Just as these things happened to the nation of Israel under the blood of the first covenant, so these things may happen in the church under the blood of the new covenant.

1. The Danger of Drifting (Hebrews 2).

The children of Israel who were redeemed by blood and by power, drifted from the truth at Mount Sinai, and they made a golden calf. It cost the physical life of 3,000 saved Israelites. So the question is asked us: "How shall we escape . . . if we drift from so great salvation?"

2. The Danger of Not Entering Into Rest (Hebrews 3-4).

After leaving Mount Sinai, the nation of Israel wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. The nation and generation that accepted His salvation perished in the wilderness because they refused to continue a life of faith. Over a million perished.

We are not only saved "by faith," but "the just shall live by faith." Here is the danger for us of doubting, of not walking by faith as a believer, and of missing His rest and His best.

3. The Danger of Not Going on to Maturity (Hebrews 5-6).

This was the state of the nation after entering into Canaan under the judges, the kings and the prophets. They never grew up as a nation. They were never able to use the Word of GOD in their lives. They never applied it to life situations. The result was that thousands upon thousands perished in the sieges and conflicts of the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities.

4. The Danger of the Willful Sin (Hebrews 10).

Here is a picture of the nation at the time of the first coming of CHRIST. They kept on sinning willfully. CHRIST even spoke a parable against those of His generation.

"Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the

husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them." (Luke 20:9-19).

"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43)

Consequently the Lord Himself said: "The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world (shall) be required of THIS generation" (Luke 11:50). Josephus tells us that it was in the millions of Jews that perished in A.D. 70 under the Rome General Titus. The nation had committed the willful sin.

5. The Danger of Indifference (Hebrews 12).

This will yet be the sin of the nation of Israel during the coming tribulation. The Lord speaks in Matthew 25:1-13 of the five wise and five foolish virgins, and shows the indifference on part of even those who profess. Many will not patiently endure.

The Old Testament prophets have prophecied that two-thirds of the nation of Israel will perish in the tribulation period because they are indifferent to spiritual realities.

You may have noticed that each of these warnings is greater than the previous one, and that failure to heed them brought in each case more severe discipline.

This same progression of sinning that is possible in the life experience of these second generation believers, and that may be illustrated in the history of the children of Israel, may also be illustrated in the history of the church as seen in the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3.

1. The Danger of Drifting.

While this is a danger to any generation of believers, it was an actuality in the time of the church of Pergamos, which is a picture of the exalted church from the time of Constantine to Gregory the Great. They drifted from the truth, and had those in the church with different doctrine - - doctrines of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.

The message was "repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." They did not repent and the Lord Himself destroyed those in the church with the sword of His mouth even as the Levites had destroyed 3000 at the time of the Golden Calf incident.

2. The Danger of Not Entering Into Rest.

The church at Thyatira went into open rebellion against the Lord even as Israel openly rebelled against the Lord and against Moses. For Israel it was a very dark period of her history where a

generation perished in the wilderness. For the church it is the dark ages where a millennium of souls perished without light.

3. The Danger of Not Going on to Maturity.

The church at Sardis had the truth, but not the life. They had a name that they lived, but they were dead. They failed to use the Word in daily practice, and so failed to go on to maturity even though they had come to salvation. Their works were not perfect before GOD, for they produced only things destined for the bonfire.

4. The Danger of the Willful Sin.

The church at Philadelphia faced a crisis in which they had to decide whether they would keep true to the Lord's Word and not deny His name, or whether they would give up both. This church did not fail this crisis. But the implication is that there were others who did. It was only a very small church, a remnant, that remained true to the Lord.

This is a picture of the Modernism-Fundamentalism controversy that took place in the last half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. At this time most of the church committed the willful sin, denying the person of CHRIST, the blood work of CHRIST and did despite unto the Spirit of Grace.

5. The Danger of Indifference.

Here is the Laodicean period of the church, or the modern ecumenical church. The Lord is seen standing outside the door of His own church, and the church itself is totally indifferent to His knock and His voice. Therefore His call is to any individual who will hear and let Him come into them. GOD will spew their works out of His mouth.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

As a believer I cannot live just any way I want to and expect to get away with it. I am not going to get by; I am going to get it.

But "if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). But when we will not judge ourselves then "God will judge His people."

Write this on your heart, and live accordingly. You cannot love one that you do not respect.

Disobedience brings discipline; obedience brings blessing: it is just as we will it.

THE END

~ end of book ~

02.00.1 - The Six Trials of Christ

THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

By John W. Lawrence

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02.00.4 - Introduction to the BBB Online Version

Introduction to the BBB Online Version written by Virgil Butts www.baptistbiblebelievers.com

We are about to embark on a journey through the final day of CHRIST's life on earth. It is an out-of-print, uncopyrighted study originally written by John W. Lawrence, Th. M. There is no date given, but it would appear to have been written in the late 60's or early 70's.

I am thankful to GOD, and to a dear old saint of GOD who had only recently lost her pastor, her husband before she gave me a large portion of his library consisting of these Bible studies, a huge reel-to-reel tape library (pray that I can get a tape player that will allow me to transcribe these studies and sermons for our 3BSB family).

So many of these fine materials have already been a blessing to many as they have read them and as the Lord prospers my health we will be presenting many more over the coming months and years.

Now let us come together for the purpose of breaking the bread of life as we examine the final day of our Lord's earthly life and consider the total unfairness and illegality of the travesty that human sin wrought upon our SAVIOUR. But greatest of all, let us rejoice as we find Him faithful, and obedient, and fit to go to the old rugged cross and purchase for each one of us -- our salvation and eternal life.

02.00.5 - Preface to the Original Manuscript

Preface by John W. Lawrence

You are about to take a journey that is entirely different from any that you have ever taken before. Few have ever experienced what you are about to experience as you walk with CHRIST through a day of His life. Keep reading until you are standing there beside Him this particular night of human history.

There has never been another twenty-four hour period like this before in all of time, and there shall never be another. Everything in Scripture moves either toward this day, or everything moves away from it. It stands as the one plus ultra of time.

Something of the importance of this day can be seen by taking a moment to examine the extent to which Scripture covers it at length. For instance, in the four Gospels we have 4 chapters devoted to the first thirty years of CHRIST's life, while we have 85 chapters devoted to the last three and a half years He was on this earth. The emphasis is clearly on the last week.

Of the 85 chapters devoted to the three and a half year ministry of CHRIST, 56 chapters are given to the entire period up to the last week, while 29 chapters concern the last week alone. The emphasis is clearly upon the last day.

But let us carry this one step further. The events of the last day are given in a total of 584 verses in the four Gospels. Of these, 219 are devoted to the betrayal, arrest and the six trials with the remaining 365 given to all the other events of the day which include the passover supper and teaching ministry of CHRIST in the upper room, the Lord's supper, the high priestly prayer of John 17, the prayers in Gethsemane, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion together with all the events of the cross, and finally the tomb and burial. Something of the emphasis on the arrest and trials can be observed also by considering the time involved. The betrayal had to take place between 2 and 2:30 A.M., and we shall discover that the trials were concluded by approximately 6:30 in the morning. This makes less than a five hour period, leaving 19 hours for all the events of the day. If the entire day was covered as extensively as this period, twice as such would have been written in Scripture.

Anyway one looks at it, these trials are the emphasis of the HOLY SPIRIT's writing of Scripture in reference to the life of CHRIST. Yet, even though this is true, very few have made an effort to write upon them, and even less to thoroughly study them. An effort is made in these following studies to correct this. Take time with an open Bible to read all the Scriptures. It is not the comments about the Scripture that is important, but the Scriptures themselves. Take time to meditate upon these things. Re-live them in your life. Become familiar with everything that happened and you will be richly rewarded. Having concluded the study of these trials we will endeavor to discover why so much space is devoted to them. The message is vital, and, furthermore, it is practical

02.01 - On The Road to Gethsemane

Chapter 1 ON THE ROAD TO GETHSEMANE

The nearer our Lord comes to the last week of His life, the more He reveals to His disciples of what will transpire as He goes to Jerusalem for the last time. One of the reasons that this was done was because every prophet had to speak predictions that would be fulfilled in the immediate life of the people. This was the arrangement whereby Israel could know a true prophet from a false one. If these things prophesied come to pass, then the people could definitely know that this was a true prophet, and they were to give heed to all his predictions:

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:19-22).

But if the words did not come to pass the people were to stone him as a false prophet. CHRIST, being a prophet, is no exception to the law of the prophets.

Let us trace through Matthew arranging the Scripture to reveal each time a new predictive element is added:

Matthew 16:21, "From that time forth began JESUS to shew unto His disciples how that he must go . . .

- (1) unto Jerusalem
- (2) and suffer
- (3) many things
- (4) of the elders
- (5) and chief priests
- (6) and scribes
- (7) and be killed
- (8) and raised again
- (9) the third day."

"But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them . . . And while they abode

in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry" (Matthew 17:12; Matthew 17:22-23).

Matthew 20:18, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man . . .

(10) shall be betrayed

(11) unto the chief priests

(12) and unto the scribes

(13) and they shall condemn him to death

(14) and they shall deliver him to the Gentiles

(15) to mock

(16) and to scourge

(17) and to crucify him

. . . and the third day he shall rise again."

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Matthew 26:2, "Ye know that after . . .

(18) two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

There are only two days to go. But they said that this was the one day that they would not take him: "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matthew 26:3-5). He is calling the plays, not them.

As we approach the cross we find a strange agreement of Heaven and hell. Both light and darkness are going in the same direction -- His death. Both GOD and Satan are aiming at the crucifixion of CHRIST. Righteousness and sin are going to meet each other on the cross. He has told the very day.

"Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve" (Matthew 26:20). The two days were up. The Jewish day begins at sundown. But the next sundown, CHRIST must be dead, or He is a false prophet.

Matthew 26:21, "Verily I say unto you, that (19) one of you shall betray me."

He will be betrayed by one of His own disciples.

Matthew 26:29, "But I say unto you,

(20) I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

He will drink nothing from the grape from this moment on until the kingdom arrives.

Matthew 26:31, "Then said Jesus unto them,

(21) All ye shall be offended because of me this night."

There will be universal departure among His disciples.

Matthew 26:32, "But after I am risen again,

(22) I will go before you into Galilee."

Galilee will be the disciples rallying place after his resurrection.

Matthew 26:34, "Jesus said unto him [Peter], Verily I say unto thee,

(23) that this night

(24) before the cock crow thou shalt deny me

(25) thrice."

It will be this night before it even begins to get light, and it will not be once nor twice but three times you will deny me.

Thus now the time has come for the grain to die:

"And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit" (Matthew 12:23-33).

Christ begins to reveal Himself to "His own disciples" (John 13-16).

- John 13 is preparation for CHRIST to speak to His disciples.

- In John 14 He speaks in the Upper Room.

- John 15 and 16 are spoken as CHRIST and His disciples move out through the streets of Jerusalem.

- Then in John 17, just before they all cross over the brook Cedron, the Lord prays.

- With the prayer being ended, the Lord and the disciples cross over the brook Cedron in John 18:1

- And they go up into the Olive groves on the Mount of Olives.

We need to notice that John in his Gospel does not record many of the things found in the three synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Such things as the last supper, the prophecy of the denial of Peter, the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter's use of the sword, to give an example, are omitted in John. All of these things are given only in the other Gospels.

But the very fact that John's Gospel omits certain events in our Lord's life is, in itself, the key to the significance and meaning of these events. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

For instance, Matthew and Luke both refer in detail to the temptation of CHRIST. Matthew presents the temptation because CHRIST is the KING of Kings. The greatest opposing King -- the prince of the world -- comes to contest CHRIST's Kingship.

The one who is greatest will come out victorious. We might as well settle it right at the beginning -- so it appears early on in the Lord's ministry.

Thus Matthew does settle it before He presents this KING to the nation of Israel. He is tested by the greatest opposing king and kingdom and was victorious, revealing once and for all He is sovereign.

Luke, on the other hand, presents the temptation of CHRIST because he is writing about the Son of man.

If He is perfect and sinless man, the Second Adam, the Seed of the woman, He will have to be victorious over the enemy and not succumb to him.

Luke's purpose in the temptation is much different from Matthew's although the events are similar.

CHRIST is found to be victorious as Perfect Man, and so may be our SAVIOUR to bruise the head of the Serpent.

Mark, however, only mentions that the temptation took place and then goes right into the work of CHRIST following: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:12-13).

The reason is that Mark presents CHRIST as the servant and you are interested in what the servant can do.

A servant's temptations are insignificant as long as he is victorious -- that is all that matters -- not what is involved. As long as he hasn't broken the law and is free to serve, this is all that is necessary to know. What He does -- His performance -- this is what counts, so Mark says, Let us get right into His work.

John does not refer to the temptation at all. Why?

Didn't John know about it? He most certainly did.

The reason is that John is writing about the Lord as GOD. He is Deity incarnate. Even though He was a perfect man, He was still absolute GOD.

God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). Therefore, to have a temptation in John would destroy John's whole purpose.

JOHN DOES NOT MENTION GETHSEMANE

Let us consider one more episode before we consider Gethsemane.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all refer to the transfiguration. John does not.

The reason: In John's Gospel the Lord is always in glory as the Son of GOD, and John wants you to see that glory shining through even in His humiliation.

For this reason John does not mention his own name once in the Gospel that CHRIST might receive all the glory. GOD doesn't transfigure Himself, for this would reveal He was something less than glory.

A KING, a SERVANT, a man; Yes, he may be glorified. But may GOD be glorified more than He is? No.

Thus Matthew, Mark and Luke have a Gethsemane experience, but John does not. This, I say, opens the key to our understanding of Gethsemane.

It is related (1) to CHRIST's humanity and not His deity.

It is related (2) to temptation over which the Lord is victorious.

Luke 4:13 stated "and when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."

It seems that He is doing battle against all the forces of darkness in the Garden.

Both of these areas are outside the scope of John.

John will record the High Priestly prayer, but not the Gethsemane prayer.

Certainly there is a striking difference between the two:

- The one is related to His deity; the other to His humanity.
- The one sees His glory; the other, His humiliation in suffering and agony of a cross-death.
- The one stands on the other side of Calvary on resurrection ground.
- The other stands on this side of Calvary in full view of the Sacrifice being made sin for us who knew no sin, and bearing in His own body the fires of GOD's wrath, with the Father forsaking the SON.

GETHSEMANE: THE OIL PRESS

There is no portion of Scripture that I feel we know less about than the Garden of Gethsemane. This is not only my own personal feeling, but the attitude of everyone who has dealt with the

subject.

The more you study it, the less you feel you full understand. We indeed stand on very sacred ground and need to spiritually take off our shoes as we approach the Garden.

Dr. F. W. Krummacher said he felt as if "at this garden gate there stood a cherub, who, if not with flaming sword, yet with repelling gesture, refused admittance, and emphatically repeated our Lord's injunction to remain outside."

Yet we know that "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

The Lord has revealed this for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matthew 26:36-46)

"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand" (Mark 14:32-42)

"And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but

thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:39-46)

This place was called "Gethsemane" = "the oil press.

Originally among the olive trees there must have been an oil press to press out the oil from the olive berries. The name remained even though the press may have no longer been there. The name remained because under the providence of GOD it is going to have spiritual significance.

Here in this garden the Lord will labor in prayer and spiritually press out the oil from the olive which will become for many a wounded lamb and sheep.

Still today on Mount Olivet there remain eight ancient olive trees, unquestionably descendants of this original grove.

Our Lord had not spent a night in Jerusalem since He arrived in what is called the Triumphant Entry to keep the feast of the Passover, and to die as our Passover LAMB.

Each night He had gone outside the city, but each day He was in the city teaching, as the LAMB to be sacrificed must be observed to be without spot before it was killed.

Luke tells us he went to the mount of Olives "as He was wont" or "as was His habit." Oftentimes the disciples had resorted here to spend the night.

JESUS chose this garden this night first so that Judas would know exactly where to come and find Him. John tells us (John 18:2) that "Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples."

But I feel there is even deeper significance than this:

Adam was placed in a Garden and he learned about disobedience and its consequences.

The Second ADAM voluntarily went to a Garden and He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. The victory was won in the Garden for CHRIST departs victorious. The actual defeat of Satan was not accomplished, of course, until Calvary.

Adam hid himself from GOD in the Garden; CHRIST agonized before the Lord in another Garden.

It was in the Garden when man lost his right to live, and it is in a garden when CHRIST gained His right to resurrection: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7). THE WORDS OF GETHSEMANE

The revelation of CHRIST's sufferings in Gethsemane is given to us in words. Let us examine these words, then, to find out something of the character of His sufferings.

Matthew 26:37-38, "and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

1. "to make sorrowful; to affect with sadness, cause grief; to throw in sorrow."
2. "to be troubled, distressed, deeply depressed."
3. "very sad, deeply grieved; exceedingly sorrowful."

And then is added "even unto death" which can only signify that the sorrow and agony were so tremendous that He was at the point of collapsing under its weight.

Mark 14:33, "And began to be sore amazed."

4. "to be struck with amazement, or terror; to be thoroughly amazed, astounded."

It is used only by Mark: "And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him" (Mark 9:15) and "And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy" (Mark 14:33) and "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted" (Mark 16:5).

Luke 22:44, "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

5. "agony, anguish."

Because of such agony he prayed the more earnestly. What a lesson! Do not be weary in well-doing. The more cast down we are, the more earnestly we should pray. Thus the word "agony" is akin to a struggle, trial, or contest. In this sense the word is used only once in the entire Word, and applied to our Lord in the garden. It is never once used to describe the sufferings of a mere man.

6. His sweat was as it were great drops of blood.

Dr. Luke would certainly be the one to bring such a thing out, as it would be of primary importance to him. It would have been a cool night in the spring of the year A.D. 32, and this is substantiated by the fact of Peter warming himself by the fire: "And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire" (Mark 14:54), but with such intense mental and spiritual strain, the blood was forced out through the pores and falls in great drops on the ground.

Very few have ever experienced such agony; no one this severe.

Our Lord had a solitary experience never required of any other creature, and never to be repeated again.

Truly He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Here was the agony and suffering CHRIST was going through. It was a suffering of soul, even as later He will leave the garden and suffer in body. He is going through spiritual torment in the trials and crucifixion.

Are we able to probe the whole cause of these soul sufferings? No. We can only but touch the hem of His garment.

Christ suffers in anticipation of bearing the sins of the world.

He had previously said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50).

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:17).

We need to keep in mind that the doctrine of the kenosis is that the Lord JESUS, in becoming man, never ceased to be GOD. But He voluntarily surrendered the use of His divine attributes as GOD to the Father in order to become the true and faithful servant of the Lord.

All of the Lord's miracles were done by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT as GOD, not by the power of the Lord JESUS CHRIST as GOD. The Devil's temptation was "Since you be the Son of God command these stones to be made bread." If He had done so the Lord would have exercised His own Deity apart from the will of the Father.

The mockers said, Come down from the cross and we will believe. Had He come down He could not have been man's SAVIOUR because it would have been an expression and use of His own Deity. He would not have been a perfect SAVIOUR without sin.

But not only was the Lord limited as to His expression of His Deity through the incarnation, He was also in subjection to the Father in everything, including the Son's knowledge of what was future.

As the Son of GOD, CHRIST knew everything -- being omniscient.

As the Son of man, CHRIST knew only those things which the Father had revealed to Him.

Notice these Scriptures:

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32)

"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:26-28)

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50)

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me . . . I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:8; John 17:14).

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29).

So our Lord was in complete servitude to the Father.

He exercised no attribute of Deity except as the Father willed. This again does not say that He did not possess all the attributes, but He used none of them apart from the will of the Father.

He has known why He came into the world from the beginning. It was to suffer and die. The cross was ever before Him.

But now as CHRIST stands before the cross in full view of it's cup that He must drink and the baptism with which He must be baptized: "But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able" (Matthew 20:22), the Lord is experiencing the full anticipation of Calvary.

The cup He must drink is that of being made sin -- He, the Sinless One who knew no sin. He comes within full consciousness of its awfulness and He is tormented in soul.

Only true holiness can possibly feel the full effects of iniquity and sin. It is abominable to Him. He feels Himself as a culprit before GOD. He experiences something of the distress of the damned and the abandonment of GOD and man.

He prays, but experiences no relief of soul. God is not answering Him, immediately. His disciples give Him no satisfaction. He seeks in desperation for some help from His disciples, but all in vain. He is going this road alone -- all alone.

Not only did the Lord have a cup, He had a baptism. The cup is one thing; the baptism is another.

He was to be identified with our sins, and drink the cup of GOD's wrath against sin without mercy in order that we might drink the cup of mercy without any wrath whatever. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1) To bear sins is one thing; to bear the wrath of GOD for sins is another.

Someone might well ask, how can the disciples enter into this same cup and baptism? "And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" (Matthew 20:23)?

They can only enter into it the same as Paul desired to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Php 3:10).

They did experience the sufferings from man and were identified with death for the Lord's sake, but what they suffered was not efficacious.

In this experience CHRIST is experiencing what it is to be accursed. As the accursed One, CHRIST will have the Father to forsake Him. Never has the Son experienced this before. This seems to be more than He can possibly stand.

It seems His heart would break and His grief is even to the point of death -- a grief so intense that it produces a blood-letting through the pores of His skin. Physical suffering is bearable. Soul suffering is bearable. But His SPIRIT suffering is nigh unbearable.

Remember that the Lord JESUS was perfect body, soul and spirit in His humanity. In spirit there is a perfect GOD-consciousness, so that experiencing what it is to be made sin and to be accursed from GOD is something He feels to the point of infinity. Because of His suffering in spirit, CHRIST suffers in soul and in body. The reason is because man is one being, and these categories are interrelated.

Since there was no other way for man to be saved than for CHRIST to bear man's sin and punishment, CHRIST surrenders to the Father and His will completely, gains the victory in prayer, and rises to go about the Father's will to Calvary confident in the Lord.

The very intensity of the Lord's suffering proves the completeness of His obedience.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted with me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalms 43:5).

When CHRIST comes to His disciples the third time, the agony and struggle is over. He no longer needs them. He has the victory of the Lord's grace being sufficient. The Lord has answered Him and He knows what the Lord's will is, and goes about to do it. Not once from the garden to the cross is the Lord tempted to despair. His spiritual torment is over -- for now. His physical torment is about to begin.

But with all that we have said, we seem not to have exhausted the entire truth of the Gethsemane experience.

BBB: To read a more in-depth study concerning our Lord's travail in Gethsemane - Please read this study: Gethsemane <<http://www.xsorbit6.com/users/baptistbiblebelieverswebsite/index%20.cgi?board=BBB2&action=display&num=1083081472>> by a missionary to India, Robert W. Cumming.

We have previously seen that the Garden is related to CHRIST's humanity, not His Deity and to temptation in His humanity over which the Lord is victorious. For these reasons it is not included in John's Gospel.

Dr. Luke has stated following the temptation of CHRIST, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season" (Luke 4:13). There is no other experience in the Gospels that corresponds to a temptation if Gethsemane is not such an experience. I believe we have to say that it was, for several passages of Scripture seem to indicate this.

Luke 22:53, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Darkness was ruling under the plan and program of GOD. "The prince of this world cometh . . ." (John 14:30).

Satan before had brought before CHRIST the glories of the kingdom of this world to tempt the Lord. Could it not be that GOD was permitting him to bring before the Lord the horrors and agonies of being a lost soul?

Remember that the demons knew all about this suffering and asked the Lord if He had come to torment them before their time.

These horrors may have been so great that CHRIST in His humanity suffered unto death, or was tempted by Satan to take His own life and thus escape the agony He was going through. Remember, however, the doctrine of the impeccability of CHRIST. As the GOD-man it was impossible for CHRIST to sin, but the temptation was real.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

02.02 - The Betrayal

Chapter 2 THE BETRAYAL

It is somewhere about 2 or 2:30 A.M. when CHRIST returns to His disciples from the agony of Gethsemane. Between this hour and 9 A.M. in the morning, CHRIST will be arrested and experience 6 trials. Some of these trials will be informal, some of them formal.

At 9 A.M. CHRIST will be on a little hill overlooking the city of Jerusalem. It will be a place called Golgotha where He is crucified. He will hang on this cross for 6 hours, the last three hours being in total darkness.

The total time from His arrest, to trial, to conviction, to sentence, to execution of that sentence will be at the most seven hours, and maybe closer to five. There has never been in the history of mankind on earth a greater miscarriage of justice than what is about to take place.

Everything that is about to happen is illegal.

From the arrest to the crucifixion, every principle of justice was violated and the provisions of both criminal and ecclesiastical law flouted. So much is this the case that the Jewish historian, Host, plainly calls it murder, for he does not believe that there was an actual trial.

Edersheim agrees with him, but I believe the facts show otherwise.

There was a trial if that is what it may be called, and it was even done twice in order to give it some semblance of legality. There is no other reason for trying the case twice by the Sanhedrin except they considered it to be a legal trial. THE PROCESS OF BETRAYAL BEGINS

But the illegal proceedings of the Sanhedrin did not begin this night. They began two days earlier.

"Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matthew 26:3-5).

It is now the evening of Wednesday: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matthew 26:1-2), and CHRIST tells His disciples that it will be on Friday when He will be killed.

(Actually, the Jewish leaders met following the resurrection of Lazarus and decided the fact of His death: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And

this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples" (John 11:47-54). The only undecided factors were the time and the means).

The Sanhedrin meet in secret session in the evening at the home of the high priest. Everything that goes on is illegal because:

1. They were to meet in the Temple. Instead they were meeting in the courtyard of Caiaphas' house.
2. It was a secret meeting. The Sanhedrin were to meet openly and not in secret.
3. It was summoned in the evening. The Sanhedrin's code of jurisprudence said the Sanhedrin had to meet between sunup and sundown.

This meeting was called that the high priest might give his sanction officially to the death of CHRIST JESUS. It was all illegal since they have judged the case before there is any trial, accusation or defense.

They have taken counsel that they might put him to death, but they want to do this quietly and to wait until after the Passover period is over and the great number of the masses that are in Jerusalem for the occasion have returned home. This will be done lest the people should not agree to His death and there be trouble in the city.

JUDAS IS POSSESSED BY SATAN

Then another event occurs: "Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude" (Luke 22:3-6) See further: "Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:25).

Satan enters Judas and he covenants with them to betray the Lord. This is Satanic possession, not demonic possession.

It was experienced in the Garden of Eden when Satan possessed the Serpent and spoke through him. It will be experienced by Judas, and it will happen one more time when the future Antichrist is entered by Satan.

Now two days have elapsed. It is the night of the Paschal Supper. See John 13.

The Lord says to His twelve disciples in the upper room "one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21).

The disciples did not know who it was: "Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake" (John 13:22). They were utterly bewildered. They continually looked around on one another.

"And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22). This verse reveals each disciple around the table one at a time was asking if he might be the one.

No one suspected Judas Iscariot because:

1. He was a clever hypocrite. He had not slipped up.
2. He was treasurer. This was an elevated, trusted position of privilege. (Jews were money minded and material riches were considered a sign of approval).
3. JESUS had not been cool toward Judas even though He knew he was the betrayer: "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve" (John 6:70-71). (If CHRIST had been, this would have surely given it away).
4. Judas was in the number one seat at the table. According to Edersheim, the Left hand side at the table was the highest place. Every place at the table had more or less honor to it. "But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee" (Luke 14:10) and "And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matthew 20:21). John was lying on JESUS' breast. That was CHRIST's right hand (#2 spot), as they were reclining on their left hands. Judas was on CHRIST's left hand (#1 spot), or immediately behind CHRIST.
5. Final reason: The giving of the sop was to Judas first. The master of the dinner gave the sop first to the honored guest.

It was the custom to give the sop with an invitation for one to put their trust in the MESSIAH and the Messianic kingdom. This was grace on the part of JESUS. The Lord treats Judas as the honored guest even though he has covenanted to betray Him.

But instead of receiving the Son, Judas receives Satan.

So important were these events to Satan that he was not going to allow anything to go wrong by having Judas repent of what he had covenanted to do. We must remind ourselves that the same is true of Satanic possession as demon possession. The person himself is responsible for allowing or permitting this to take place. This occurred because Judas wanted it to occur. A CHANGE OF PLANS

But what is behind the movement of Judas to leave the feast and go to the Sanhedrin, "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night" (John 13:27-30).

Simon Peter had asked John to ask CHRIST who it was going to be who betrays him: "Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake" (John 13:24). John asked CHRIST this question for both Peter and also for himself as he too wanted to know: "He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" (John 13:25). Both John and Judas could hear the answer because of their positions: "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon" (John 13:26). CHRIST then prepared the sop.

The sop was similar to the Spanish tortilla. In it was placed pieces of lamb, bitter herbs, and a piece of unleavened bread all wrapped up.

He hands this to Judas. Judas now knows that CHRIST knows who it is that will betray Him, but he knows that John also knows and he will soon tell Peter and eventually everyone will know.

Thus the gag is up; Judas knows he was discovered.

Matthew 26:25 reveals that Judas then asked CHRIST (probably in a whisper), "Rabbi, Is it I?" (Judas never called JESUS, "Lord"). CHRIST replied: "Thou hast said," which is an idiom for "Yes it is."

This forced Judas to act.

He rushes out into the night and tells the Sanhedrin he has been discovered. If they want him to betray CHRIST, it will have to be at once, or never. This forces the Sanhedrin to act even though they had previously said: "Not on the feast day . . . ". The Lord is the master of ceremonies, and He is controlling everything.

Through the entire time period of the Upper Room discourse, of the walk and instruction through the streets of Jerusalem, of the high priestly prayer at the brook Cedron and of the agony in the garden, Judas was waiting while elaborate preparation were made to capture this One.

Because it was the Passover it was a full moon.

JUDAS' COMPANY

Here came a great company, being led by Judas, coming out of the city crossing the Cedron and ascending into the Garden. "Judas then, having received a band (of men) or officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons" (John 18:3)

"A band" is actually "the speiran." It refers, in military language, to a cohort of soldiers which is a tenth part of a legion. Each legion of 6000 men plus auxiliaries was divided in 10 cohorts. A cohort of soldiers would be a minimum of 600 and as many as 1000.

These were the Romans who were controlling Judea along with Syria and administered by a Roman official who resided in Caesarea, fifty miles away from Jerusalem, but had a palace in Jerusalem. Pilate, at this particular time, was governor and on this particular night was in Jerusalem. Along with him were a number of troops to preserve order at this time when so many additional people from all over Palestine had come to Jerusalem.

These soldiers had already been used to put down an insurrection: "And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection." (Mark 15:7) They were ready for anything.

The high priest summons their assistance in capturing a dangerous rebel and conspirator. The fact is that this cohort of Roman soldiers was probably already under his control: "Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can" (Matthew 27:65).

Beside these Roman soldiers, there were the "officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" (John 18:3) or "the Temple Guard." They were the sergeants of the Temple and had the actual task of arresting JESUS. The Roman cohort was there to give them assistance if needed.

They all came with lanterns and torches and weapons. If He hides Himself they need light to find Him. If He defends Himself they need weapons to capture Him.

But why such a great company -- at least 1000 men?

(1) This served as a mask to the Romans that they were capturing a dangerous conspirator and rebel. After all they knew why they were taking Him and it was to put Him to death. For this they needed Roman cooperation.

(2) They did not know either whether He and His disciples would fight but if they did they had them outnumbered 100 to 1.

(3) But remember also that the Sanhedrin had not wanted to apprehend Him on the feast day lest there be an uproar of the people. They were forced to act this night because Judas had been found out.

If they had to act they were glad they could do their work under the cover of darkness. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd" (John 3:20) -- spoken to a member of the Sanhedrin.

Very definitely we may be assured that these soldiers were ordered to be as quiet as possible, for the one thing that they did not want was an awakened populace until they had completed their work.

(4) But having said all this, we have probably not touched one of the main reasons which would never have been breathed by anyone that night, but of which all the Jews would have been aware. The Sanhedrin were well aware of the miracles of CHRIST: "we know . . . for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).

Furthermore, they know of the events that transpired when soldiers were sent to capture Elijah in the Old Testament.

"Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from Heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from Heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. And

Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from Heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from Heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. Behold, there came fire down from Heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight" (2 Kings 1:9-14)

Twice fire came down from Heaven and consumed the captain of fifty with his fifty.

Here this night was the power of darkness in operation and there was unquestionably a secret fear of meeting opposition. Never before in the conflict of the ages had there ever been a time when Satan's works were not opposed by the Lord's forces and the Lord's forces opposed by Satan's. Satan never expected that this would be any different. But here was a play in which the opposition was allowed to capture the ball and run for a touchdown without ever being opposed once. Nothing like this had ever occurred before.

Judas was in the lead because (1) he knew the place where JESUS could be found and (2) he was the one who had covenanted to betray Him with a kiss.

TREACHERY OF JUDAS PROPHESED

The Lord JESUS CHRIST in His humanity could not be distinguished from any other man or even from His own disciples. There was no halo around his head. There was nothing about His appearance that made Him stand out from other men.

Therefore, it was necessary for one to identify Him with a kiss.

Here were the disciples being awakened from a deep sleep. Here was the Lord JESUS standing in complete composure. Here was Judas coming ahead of the others with a task to perform.

Though Scripture does not say, it is very likely that Satan still possessed him, for the point of all the conspiring was to accomplish the actual betrayal. The Lord had said, "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22).

Judas had made "a covenant with death, and with hell was he in agreement" (Isaiah 28:15). In this he is a picture of the nation itself, both then and in the tribulation.

CHRIST had known from the very first who would betray him: "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve" (John 6:70-71).

Furthermore, the Old Testament Scriptures had said concerning this one:

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalms 41:9)

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance" (Psalms 55:12-14)

"Let his days be few; and let another take his office" (Psalms 109:8). Quoted again in Acts: "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take" (Acts 1:20), of Judas.

"Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents" (Psalms 69:25). Also quoted in Acts 1:20.

In the near view of prophecy it does refer to him, but in the far view it refers to the nation of Judas and Jerusalem whom he represents.

"And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zechariah 11:13).

What made Judas act as he did?

The possessing of his body by Satan was only the end result of a long process. To summarize it in a single word: "Pride." It is the very same sin that caused Satan to fall in Heaven.

Judas had formed a grandiose picture of the kingdom, and visualized himself in an exalted position in it. When this did not materialize, and just the reverse was announced by the SAVIOUR, that is, that they would suffer and be persecuted and cast into prison, he seizes not only the money of the disciples of which he was the treasurer and hated that the costly ointment was not sold so he could have that money too: "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:4-6), but adds to it 30 more pieces of silver.

This he felt would compensate him in a small way for his disappointment for not being great in a glorious kingdom.

Trials test men, for good or worse.

Many an individual has turned against a church or a SPIRIT directed movement to which he belonged when it did not materialize into that vision of grandeur that he had expected, or when he did not become a kingpin in it.

Here then are the events in sequence:

Judas is with the entire company when something unexpected happens.

Instead of waiting for them to find him, JESUS comes forward to meet them: "Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them" (John 18:3-5)

Judas had not expected this. They were to surprise Him, but He instead surprised them. He was and will be in all complete MASTER of the situation.

But notice what happens: Jesus asked: "Whom seek ye?" They answered Him: "Jesus of Nazareth." JESUS said unto them: "I am." (Cross out the "he" which is in italics and not in the Greek). The whole significance is found in CHRIST being the great "I am" of the burning bush.

"As soon then as he had said unto them, I am, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (John 18:6).

It is interesting to see what men want to do to this verse. One commented that the soldiers were falling over one another because JESUS surprised them. Some soldiers, if this be the case. But this is how ridiculous men become in trying to diminish the supernatural.

When CHRIST said: "I am," these soldiers were struck to the ground with this one word, and they could not move.

This merely shows the power of His word when He will exercise to the full when he comes the second time and smites the nations: "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15).

Had CHRIST desired, it being in the will of GOD, these soldiers would have remained on the ground until they rotted! This whole band lie prostrate at His feet by a single word from His lips.

Again He asked them: "Whom seek ye?" And they said: "Jesus of Nazareth." CHRIST replied the same but added, "if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (John 18:7-9).

This gave permission for the Lord's disciples to move away, for this is His will. He has not requested their release, but commanded it. This was the Lord's signal to them to leave, but they didn't obey their commander-in-chief, and got into trouble.

It is only now that Judas comes forth to betray CHRIST with a kiss since this was the signal, and they were not taking anyone without the signal being given. Up to this time Judas has been pinned to the ground with the rest.

As Judas approaches CHRIST to kiss him, the Lord says: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). Judas went ahead anyway: "Master, master; and kissed him" (Mark 14:45).

Judas never called JESUS, "Lord." THE KISS OF BETRAYAL

The word "kiss," here signifies that intense warm kiss that a young man would give his bride-to-be. This same word is used of the woman who was a sinner when she kissed the foot of the SAVIOUR.

The signal had been, "Whomsoever I shall kiss that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely."

Why this signal?

The kiss was a sign of discipleship in the East. Students used this as an expression that they are followers of a teacher, and it is very likely that this custom prevailed among CHRIST and His disciples.

Furthermore, when we become the Lord's disciples, we may be said to kiss Him. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Psalms 2:12).

Here is an act that is sacred, being profaned. This has been Satan's tactic -- to pollute things "holy" and true.

Here is hypocrisy to its fullest -- to say one thing, to perform another. He confesses with his mouth, but his conduct belies him.

CHRIST said to Judas: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Matthew 26:50). "Companion, why did you come and do this thing?"

Here is the eternal farewell to the Son of perdition. Think of what eternity will be with these words continually ringing in his ears.

WHY STUDY JUDAS?

If we feel that this doesn't apply to us, look out, we are already in a fleshly state. Let none of us say, I am thankful I am not like this man.

There is a Judas living in every one of us in the person of the old sin nature, our flesh.

All that Judas was and did is what we have in germ in our breasts.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

GOD has no program of removing, nor of improving the old nature until we see the Lord face to face. Until that time it is destined for perdition but still lives on seeking "opportunity" to betray CHRIST and our faith.

Until this time we are to "give diligence to make" our "calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

Only if we do these things shall we not stumble and fall. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:10).

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

~ end of chapter 2 ~

02.03 - The Arrest

Chapter 3 THE ARREST

After the kiss of Judas, everything occurs in rapid succession. With the kiss being accomplished, the One they were to capture has been identified and so the soldiers move in to take their prey.

As CHRIST is speaking for the last time to Judas, the disciples began to see the soldiers move in and apprehend CHRIST. "Therefore they said to Him, 'Lord, shall we smite with the sword?'" (Luke 22:49).

Before waiting for an answer, Simon Peter, having one of the two swords among the disciples: "And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough" (Luke 22:38) drew his sword "and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus" (John 18:10).

While the others were still talking, Peter was acting.

Here was an historical fact that could be verified, thus John mentioned his name.

In fact, John is the only Gospel writer who mentions Peter's name in connection with this incident. He mentions both of the men by name. Some have felt there is a specific reason why the synoptics do not record who it was that smote the servant of the High Priest.

The Sanhedrin were still in power in Jerusalem, and Peter was living there as the Apostle to the circumcision. At the time of the writing of John's Gospel, Jerusalem is in ruin, and Peter has been martyred.

But this does not seem to be the full answer, for at the time of the writing of the Synoptics Peter could not then have been charged with this crime. No charge could be brought because the man was healed.

The Gospel of John brings out that John knew the High Priest: "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest" (John 18:15) and John was responsible for bringing Peter into the courtyard: "But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter" (John 18:16).

Malchus may have been a personal servant of the High Priest, and therefore, personally known by name by John. John further knew the kinsman of the servant of the high priest who recognized Peter and succeeded in causing him to deny CHRIST "One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew" (John 18:26-27). The fact that it was one of the High Priest's servants shows too who was doing the actual arresting.

John identifies the Lord's disciple as "Simon Peter" indicating it was the old man of Peter that was here acting.

Why had Peter done this? He had meant to kill this soldier, but Peter was better at casting nets than he was at wielding a sword. CHRIST had already told the disciples indirectly to go away: "Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (John 18:8). This was the Lord's will for them. Now Simon was about to get them all into trouble.

When Peter drew his sword, there were over 1000 swords drawn; and every one was ready for expert use. The garden of Gethsemane was in that instant prepared to become a battlefield.

Peter's sword was a large knife (machaira), or a small ceremonial sword, in contrast to the large swords (romphaia) of the soldiers. Peter with his little ceremonial sword tucked away in his clothing, sets up and uses it as if it were one of the big Roman swords.

The Roman soldiers had been trained to take their sword and with precision accuracy, split the helmet of their opponent at the exact, precise place of the weld so that one blow would not only divide the helmet, but the skull as well. Evidently Peter had seen it done, but fishermen make poor swordsmen.

Being off target about 3 inches, he lopped off the man's right ear.

Peter had not only involved himself in an act of rebellion, but he had endangered the other 10 disciples as well as the Lord Himself (speaking on the human plane). How truthfully Paul wrote later, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7).

Why had Peter acted this way?

First, he hadn't prayed as CHRIST had suggested he should have done in the garden. Had he been in fellowship with the Lord, he would have known the perfect will of the Lord, and would have done it. But from the human standpoint, Peter had bragged too much this very night: "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matthew 26:33-35). Peter's honor was at stake. In the oriental expression, he was now forced to "save face" to avoid humiliation.

Peter by his actions was giving the Lord's enemies justification for coming out with swords and staves as against a dangerous person.

Oh, how great can be the damage of one careless act or word not in the will of GOD. It can undo the good of 10,000 words and acts done in the SPIRIT's power and in the Lord's will.

This is always the fate of those who do not watch and pray. We are here prayerfully reading and studying these Bible studies because we have to be in order to live for the Lord. Bible study is not optional; it is essential. This is the reason why the verses are given in full - and not just the references. It is one thing to study "about" the Bible -- and a totally different thing to study "the" Bible.

The spirit is willing to live for the Lord, but the flesh is weak. As the old saying goes, "Seven days without prayer and Bible study makes one weak."

Simon, by this act, had almost removed the possibility of the Lord saying to Pilate, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . ." (John 18:36).

CHRIST IS MASTER OF THE SITUATION

Instantly CHRIST understands the danger of the situation for the air has been electrified with tension. He steps in between His disciple who was about to have a premature death and the charging soldiers and commanded: "Suffer ye thus far" (Luke 22:51).

It is impossible from our vantage point to know exactly to whom this is addressed, for it could be (1) the soldiers who were ready to cut Peter up, that He stopped;

(2) it could be the soldiers that had apprehended Him to permit Him to do this one thing; and

(3) it could be His words to His disciples that this is far enough.

Here are ways in which all three fit well into the context.

It is not without possibility that this spoke to everyone in this moment of crisis.

"And he touched his ear, and healed him" (Luke 22:51). Luke is the only writer that mentions this healing, though all four mention the event of the high priest's servant's ear being cut off by one of the disciples. It is the only incident recorded in the Gospels where CHRIST heals a fresh wound, and it is significant that the doctor records it.

It is the only time that a miracle was performed on an enemy where there was no faith or gratitude. It is a revelation of the hardness of these men. No effect was produced by it upon this crowd.

Had CHRIST not performed this miracle, there could have been a true charge brought against the Lord and His disciples. **THE MIRACLE ITSELF**

But there seems to be more involved in this miracle than just what has been said. Since the miracle is only given in Luke, Luke's Gospel alone should be considered to understand it (remembering that each Gospel writer was writing for a different purpose and one event may be used by different men to teach different things).

(1) Luke informs us that CHRIST had specifically wanted the disciples to have swords: "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough" (Luke 22:35-38)

(2) Luke alone records that all the disciples including Peter asked, "Shall we smite with the sword?" Thus they were seeking His will as revealed in Luke's Gospel.

(3) Luke records no prohibition to this. CHRIST never answered "No," and then one of the Lord's disciples did it anyway.

(4) Luke, who certainly knew this was Peter who did this, does not record his name lest we would certainly get our eyes on this particular disciple rather than upon CHRIST and what He is doing through this incident. It was the Lord in Luke's account (as is true in the other three Gospels) who was directing the entire series of events and was in complete control of the situation. His control included His disciples having swords, and it included one of the disciples using his sword so that CHRIST could perform His last miracle before His resurrection before this crowd that had come to apprehend Him.

(5) Luke alone records CHRIST's words: "Suffer ye thus far," which may be best taken as addressed to both Peter and the swordsmen of the opposition: "This is as far as you can go."

(6) Luke alone records the miracle as we have said.

(7) Luke does not include in his gospel any rebuke to the disciple that did this thing. The reason is because this would have been entirely out of keeping with the purpose of Luke's account. It records the action as necessary -- this much being the Lord's will. After all, swords are to be used, not looked at; and it was necessary for the disciples to have swords that night.

We can thus conclude that Luke presents this incident and subsequent miracle as a part of the Lord's program, while Matthew and John reveal that this was the permissive will of the Lord which He allowed and used, but not His directive will.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be." (Matthew 26:52-54)

"Put up again thy sword into his place" Notice that the sword has a lawful place: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing" (Romans 13:1-6)

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Governmental authority and self defense is one thing; rebellion is another.

1. Using the sword as the Lord's servant is inconsistent with reason. If you fight this way, you will die this way ultimately.

2. Using the sword is inconsistent with spiritual truth. The battle is spiritual.

If it is going to be won, it must be won on a spiritual basis: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:10-18)

JESUS told Peter that if He asked the Father, he would instantly have 12 legions of angels. The Romans against them were only a cohort, or 1/10th part of a legion. Furthermore, there would be one legion of spiritual forces for each one of the disciples.

Peter, if you fight the battle the Lord's way, you will always be able to say: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16).

But you must fight the spiritual battle on a spiritual basis if you want to win spiritually.

So, as the soldiers and warriors of CHRIST, we do not resort to the physical - but the spiritual. Our swords are not made of steel, but is the Word of GOD.

Here was the One who with only the words, "I am" caused the entire cohort of soldiers to fall backwards. In fact, here was the Son of GOD who with a word could have had legions of angels minister to His every need, but He did not; and good angels cannot operate on their own. They are servants sent forth by the Father to do His will at His command. All the angels could do at this scene was "look on" as spectators - though no doubt their hands were on the hilt of their mighty swords - itching to do battle with these that would arrest their MASTER.

Notice also that never once did CHRIST in His incarnation command angels Himself because of the kenosis. He had power to do so as GOD, but He relinquished His rights in order to be the perfect, submissive and obedient servant of JEHOVAH.

Here in place of doing something evil to His enemies by praying the Father to send angels, He bends down and does something good. He returns good for evil and so has become our example.

That which gains the victory for the Lord's people is patience in the midst of trial and testing.

"And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day" (1 Corinthians 4:12-13).

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4).

3. Using the sword is inconsistent with Scripture.

Scripture must be fulfilled that He go willingly to the cross. Example: Isaac at mount Moriah when Abraham was to slay him at GOD's command.

"Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

4. Using the sword is inconsistent with Gethsemane's answer and the Father's will.

Peter, you have been talking too much and praying too little, and this is why your actions are getting you into trouble. This is only the beginning of Peter's mistakes and the Lord's rebuke to him.

JESUS REPROVES HIS CAPTORS

Having corrected His disciple, He now reproves His captors.

"In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes. Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matthew 26:55-56 a).

Mark 14:48-49 records the same thing.

"Then Jesus said unto the chief priests and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Luke 22:52-53)

The Lord addresses the rulers of Israel because they were responsible. They were doing their work under cover of darkness because their deeds were evil.

"This is your hour." Whatever they want to do, they are going to be permitted to do it unhindered. The holy angels will only be spectators.

"and the power of darkness." Behind the actions of men will be the controlling influence of the whole underworld of fallen angels and demons.

This is their hour -- this is their inning, His will come later. CHRIST's hour is not as vindictiveness because of what has happened personally to Him, but as RIGHTEOUSNESS against iniquity, and JUSTICE against all injustice.

With this, His disciples "all forsook him and fled" (Mark 14:50).

"Then the band" = of Romans.

"and the captains" = The officer in charge of the Romans.

"and the officers of the Jews" = The temple guard.

"took Jesus, and bound him" (John 18:12).

The synoptic Gospels show that the multitude laid hands upon the Lord before Peter struck the servant of the High Priest. In fact, this was the cause of Peter's action. Afterward, the Romans bound Him and led Him away. THE ARREST WAS ILLEGAL

The arrest was actually performed by both the Romans and the Jews that all mankind might be guilty of this crime before GOD. It was not ONLY the Jews that killed CHRIST.

The arrest was illegal because:

1. It was at night and according to the laws of the Sanhedrin, the taking of any steps in criminal proceedings after sunset was expressly prohibited.
2. It was accomplished on the charge of an accomplice or informer, and taking or giving a bribe was contrary to the Law.

"And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous" (Exodus 23:8)

"A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment" (Proverbs 17:23).

3. The court that was to try JESUS hired the betrayer, and some of the judges themselves participated in the arrest in their eagerness to see that nothing went wrong.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

02.04 - The Trial Before Annas

Chapter 4 THE TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS

We are beginning a section of Scripture which staggers the imagination. In all the history of mankind on the earth, there has never been the equal of the miscarriage of justice that is about to take place concerning the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

It is a mockery at mercy and this in spite of what the Law had said: "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Deuteronomy 16:18-20)

In order to carry out the letter of the Law, every place where there were 120 men as head of families had a Sanhedrin, that would govern all matters, consisting of 23 elders. If the town was smaller, it was governed by 3 or 7 members, or elders. This was the governing body of a synagogue community. One of them was designated the "chief ruler." The Sanhedrin served thus as a court.

In Jerusalem was the Great Sanhedrin, "The Council," consisting of 70 members plus the High Priest. This was the final Court of Appeal and the highest ruling body of the nation of Israel.

The smaller Sanhedrins are referred to in passages such as: "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee" (Matthew 5:22-23) and "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues" (Matthew 10:17) and "But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them" (Mark 13:9) and others.

JEWISH LAWS OF JURISPRUDENCE

Based on the Law, one of the finest codes of jurisprudence had been specifically laid out for the operation of the Sanhedrin in criminal procedure.

In legal terms the Law demanded three things: publicity of the trial, entire liberty of defense allowed to the accused, and a guaranty against the dangers of testimony.

Accordingly, one witness is no witness for there must be at least two who knew the fact: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death" (Deuteronomy 17:6) and "One witness shall

not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). The witness, who testifies against a man, must affirm that he speaks the truth; the judges then proceed to take exact information of the matter.

If it is found that the witness has sworn falsely, they compel him to undergo the punishment to which he would have exposed his neighbor: "If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you" (Deuteronomy 19:16-19).

The discussion between the accuser and the accused is conducted before the whole assembly of the people. In the case where a man is condemned to death, those witnesses whose evidence decided the sentence, inflict the first blows, in order to add the last degree of certainty to their evidence: "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you" (Deuteronomy 17:7).

Thus CHRIST speaking to men in their culture exclaimed, "Let him among you who is without sin, cast the first stone," (John 8:7) and in context of the statement referred to the crime at hand - the sin of adultery.

HOW A TRIAL WAS TO PROCEED

Thus according to Joseph Salvador, quoted by Simon Greenleaf in "The Testimony of the Evangelists," a trial would proceed in the following manner.

On the day of the trial, the executive officers of justice caused the accused person to make his appearance. At the feet of the Elders were placed men who, under the name of auditors, or candidates, followed regularly the sittings of Council. The papers in the case were read; and the witnesses were called in succession. The president addressed this exhortation to each of them: 'It is not conjectures, or whatever public rumour has brought to thee, that we ask of thee; consider that a great responsibility rests upon thee: that we are not occupied by an affair, like a case of pecuniary interest, in which the injury may be repaired. If thou causest the condemnation of a person unjustly accused, his blood, and the blood of all the posterity of him, of whom thou wilt have deprived the earth, will fall upon thee; GOD will demand of thee an account, as he demanded of Cain an account of the blood of Abel. Speak.'

A woman could not be a witness, because she would not have the courage to give the first blow to the condemned person; nor could a child, that is irresponsible, nor a slave, nor a man of bad character, nor one whose infirmities prevent the full enjoyment of his physical and moral faculties. The simple confession of an individual against himself, or the declaration, however renowned, would not decide a condemnation. The Doctors say -- 'We hold it as fundamental, that no one shall prejudice himself. If a man accuses himself before a tribunal, we must not believe him, unless the fact is attested by two other witnesses; and it is proper to remark, that the punishment of death inflicted upon Achan, in the time of Joshua was an exception, occasioned by the nature of the circumstances; for our Law does not condemn upon the simple confession of the accused, nor

upon the declaration of one prophet alone.'

The witnesses were to attest to the identity of the party, and to depose to the month, day, hour, and circumstances of the crime. After an examination of the proofs, those judges who believed the party innocent stated their reasons; those who believed him guilty spoke afterwards, and with the greatest moderation. If one of the auditors or candidates, was entrusted by the accused with his defense, or if he wished in his own name to present any elucidations in favor of innocence, he was admitted to the seat, from which he addressed the judges and the people. But this liberty was not granted to him, if his opinion was in favour of condemning. Lastly; when the accused person himself wished to speak, they gave the most profound attention. When the discussion was finished, one of the judges recapitulated the case; they removed all the spectators; two scribes took down the votes of the judges; one of them noted those which were in favor of the accused; and the other, those which condemned him. Eleven votes, out of twenty-three, were sufficient to acquit; but it required thirteen to convict. If any of the judges stated that they were not sufficiently informed, there were added two more Elders, and then two others in succession, till they formed a council of sixty-two, which was the number of the Grand Council. If a majority of votes acquitted, the accused was discharged instantly; if he was to be punished, the judges postponed pronouncing sentence till the third day; during the intermediate day they could not be occupied with anything but the cause, and they abstained from eating freely, and from wine, liquors, and everything which might render their minds less capable of reflection.

On the morning of the third day they returned to the judgment seat. Each judge, who had not changed his opinion, said, I continue of the same opinion and condemn; any one, who at first condemned, might at this sitting acquit; but he who at once acquitted was not allowed to condemn. If a majority condemned, two magistrates immediately accompanied the condemned person to the place of punishment. The Elders did not descend from their seats; They placed at the entrance of the judgment hall an officer of justice with a small flag in his hand; a second officer, on horseback, followed the prisoner, and constantly kept looking back to the place of departure. During this interval, if any person came to announce to the elders any new evidence favourable to the prisoner, the first officer waved his flag, and the second one, as soon as he perceived it, brought back the prisoner. If the prisoner declared to the magistrates, that he recollected some reasons which had escaped him, they brought him before the judges no less than five times. If no incident occurred, the procession advanced slowly, preceded by a herald who, in a loud voice, addressed the people thus: 'This man (stating his name and surname) is led to punishment for such a crime; the witnesses who have sworn against him are such and such persons; if any one has evidence to give in his favour, let him come forth quickly.'

PAUL WAS A MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN

At some distance from the place of punishment, they urged the prisoner to confess his crime, and they made him drink a stupefying beverage, in order to render the approach of death less terrible.

With this code for the local Sanhedrins, the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was in no way less lax in its administration of justice.

The appointment to the Great Sanhedrin was made by that tribunal itself. They would either promote to their ranks a member of one of the many lesser Sanhedrin of the various towns, or one

from the foremost of the three rows of disciples or students who sat facing the judges.

Paul himself was a member of this last body -- a disciple or student of Gamaliel: "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the Fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day" (Acts 22:3).

In fact, Paul tells us in Galatians that he had forged ahead of many his own age: "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my Fathers" (Galatians 1:13-14).

"Profited" "advanced" is a word used of wood-cutters of cutting their way through a forest, to make progress, to forge ahead. Paul made greater progress in Judaism beyond many of equal age. He was so outstanding that he had forged ahead of those who were his same age. He had been brought to a place of prominence which normally would have been reserved to a man of older age.

Paul was certainly in line for becoming appointed a member of the Great Sanhedrin. THE LAW OF THE SANHEDRIN

Membership consisted of 24 Chief priests, 24 elders, 24 scribes, and 1 High Priest for a Total of 71 members.

It's grand function was the specialized interpretation and application of both written and oral law. Moreover the Law gave to them this supreme authority: "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose; And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment: And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously" (Deuteronomy 17:8-13).

CHRIST both recognized this authority, and also commanded that they be obeyed, but not to be imitated: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the 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" (Matthew 23:1-3).

Thus the decisions of the Great Sanhedrin were binding upon all Jews everywhere. Just think of their person and responsibility.

The axiom of this body was "The Sanhedrin is to save, not destroy life."

The President of the Sanhedrin at the very outset of the trial was to solemnly admonish the witnesses concerning the preciousness of human life, and to carefully and calmly reflect whether they had not overlooked some circumstance which might favor the innocence of the accused.

For capital offenses the verdict of acquittal could be given on the same day, but the verdict of guilty had to be reserved for the following day. Therefore, such trials could not commence on the Sabbath or a feast day, nor on the day preceding them.

No criminal trial could be carried through the night, nor could one begin in the night, not even in the afternoon.

The Judges who condemned a criminal had to fast all day. The condemned was not executed the same day on which the sentence was passed. The property of the accused was not confiscated, but passed over to his heirs. Voting was from junior members to senior so that the lower members might not be influenced by the highest.

If the Sanhedrin voted unanimously for a verdict of guilty, the accused was supposed to be set free since the necessary element of mercy was lacking.

The Sanhedrin's code of jurisprudence was the finest ever developed anywhere in the world. THE DARKEST NIGHT OF HISTORY

With this background we approach the darkest night in history.

"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was Father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it,

and said, I am not" (John 18:12-24) WHO IS ANNAS?

What does he have to do with this whole situation?

He is one of the most notorious figures in Jewish history. He had the office of High Priest for only five or six years -- twenty years before this time, and must have been now at least in his eighties. He had no fewer than five of his own sons fill the office after him besides his son-in-law, Caiaphas and one grandson.

He had come originally from Alexandria in Egypt on the invitation of Herod the Great. He and his family became ambitious, arrogant and powerful. As their members multiplied, they promoted themselves into all the important offices.

Annas and his family had become intensely unpopular as far as the populace was concerned, but they were feared as greatly as they were despised.

The Temple-booths were known as Annas' Bazaars. He and his sons controlled everything that went on in the Temple, and, because of their greed, had developed a nice little system that worked to their personal benefit.

According to the Law, when the people came before the Lord, they could not come empty-handed, but must give a free will offering to the Lord. Of course, heathen money could not be given, but had to be changed into Temple coins. Thus there were the moneychangers who made this transaction. But they soon began to make an exorbitant profit from their transaction, not giving a just return in Temple currency.

The profit came also another way. It was possible for an Israelite to bring his own animal to sacrifice to the Lord -- the best of his flock. But the priests were required to examine each animal to be sure no blemishes or other irregularities disqualified the animal: "Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 17:1).

Certain priests were set aside for this work, but the service was not free, and it just might be that they would pronounce the animal unfit for sacrifice. However, all this trouble could be avoided by going to the regular market within the Temple-enclosure, where sacrificial animals of each type could be purchased. These had already been duly inspected and passed and all fees paid before being offered for sale.

The entire setup was such that the market couldn't lose, or better, Annas couldn't lose for he received his cut of all that was taken in.

This is why we have CHRIST's hatred of this operation, and His work at the first of His ministry, and at the close, to cast them out (Matthew 21:12-14; Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17). For this reason, Mark writes: "And the scribes and the chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him . . ." (Mark 11:18).

What were they fearing?

They were fearing that the status quo would be upset, and their lucrative business would be toppled.

The real problem was that Annas was upset. He was the political boss of Jerusalem. Everything had to be cleared through Annas.

This is why the next day after CHRIST overthrew the money changers, "there came to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and say unto him, by what authority doest thou these things? [that is, move into the Temple and overthrow the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of them that sold doves] and who gave thee authority to do these things?" (Mark 11:28).

Annas was the boss of Jerusalem and he actually controlled the operation of the Sanhedrin, and the Sanhedrin controlled Israel; therefore, just who are You, and what is Your authority? SO WE UNDERSTAND NOW WHY JESUS WAS BROUGHT TO ANNAS FIRST

He was the one who had given the orders to have Him brought in this night.

The Roman soldiers were now dismissed for their work was done. They are not mentioned again. Annas wouldn't want them around, for he wants Pilate to know only what he wants to tell him.

The proceedings before Annas were entirely informal. It allowed time, however, to gather the Great Sanhedrin together.

With this background, we are now able to look in detail at the first trial of CHRIST.

CHRIST is going to experience six trials. There will be three that may be called religious or ecclesiastical, and there will be three that may be called political or civil. The total time for all the trials is less than 5 hours. Some have wanted to say that there were only two trials -- one religious and one civil -- with both trials having three different parts. This, however, doesn't answer to all the facts. Each one was a trial in itself.

The trial before Annas was the first one, but it is the only religious trial as such that John gives in his Gospel. The reason is because the case was actually decided by Annas and the other two ecclesiastical trials were only carrying out what Annas had already decided should be done.

At the first reading of John one would not realize that the trial mentioned here was the one before Annas. This is because John uses the term "high priest" for both Annas and Caiaphas. This is proper, however, because Annas was once the "high priest" and the title was conveyed upon him for that reason.

Annas was the first of a long line of high priests with 5 sons, 1 son-in-law and 1 grandson filling the office after him. Now the Law made the office of high priest a lifetime position. But the Romans had forced Annas to give up the position -- at least theoretically -- for they felt it invested too much authority in one man for too long a time.

This made the situation where there were, in fact, two high priests. Annas was still looked upon by Judaism as the true high priest as far as the Law was concerned. Caiaphas "was the high priest that same year" as far as the Romans were concerned.

Who is the high priest that John mentions: Annas or Caiaphas? From a very careful reading it is Annas, and the place is his home. The events that take place in this private home are, first of all, getting Peter inside. In the process he gives a denial that he was one of CHRIST's disciples to the maid, or servant girl, who guarded the entrance to the courtyard (John 18:17). This never

happened when Peter enters the courtyard of Caiaphas.

Peter warmed himself at both places: "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself . . . Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not" (John 18:18; John 18:25), but it was only at the latter fire that he denied CHRIST before the men. Here at this fire Peter only stands; at the fire in the court of Caiaphas Peter sat.

Finally, there is no record of Caiaphas ever examining CHRIST in the manner stated here in John, nor of the servant smiting CHRIST with the palm of his hand with the resultant statement of CHRIST. After this private interview of CHRIST before Annas, He was taken bound to the home of Caiaphas. Now with this comprehension we are able to look at the events of this trial with a deeper understanding of what is going on. THE TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS BEGINS

The Law required that trials be conducted before judges: "Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days" (Deuteronomy 19:17) and "And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried" (Deuteronomy 21:5). For anyone to judge by himself, sitting alone, was strictly against the Mosaic law.

"The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine" (John 18:19).

Annas begins to question CHRIST to try to form an accusation to charge against Him. Annas is taking the place of what a grand jury does today. This then is a preliminary trial.

There were two points that Annas specifically wanted to know about:

- (1) His disciples.
- (2) His doctrine.

Annas wanted to know "How many disciples do you have?" "How widespread is your movement" and, therefore, the dangers involved to us in doing away with you. He also wanted to know what CHRIST's teaching was in reference to the law and the prophets.

In place of interrogating JESUS respecting positive acts done, with their circumstances, and respecting facts personal to Himself, Annas interrogates Him respecting general facts respecting His disciples (who should have been called as witnesses had he desired information) and His doctrine, which has no bearing on the case as long as no external acts contrary to established law issued from it.

What Annas was trying to get CHRIST to do was to testify against Himself.

CHRIST recognizes this and doesn't reply, for neither Jews nor Romans required a man to testify against himself or stand as a witness against himself. The Lord's reply characterizes Him who is truth. He gives what we would say today is the lawful use of the 5th Amendment.

"I spake openly in the world."

The whole operation of the Lord was the everything He did was done openly. Since He had nothing to hide he had no reason for operating any other way.

"I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort."

This was the Lord's operation and no one had ever been able to prove He had taught anything contrary to the Old Testament law or to established authority even though men had many times been present to trick Him and trap Him in His speech.

"in secret have I said nothing."

How different had been the actions of CHRIST in comparison to the man who was sitting before Him. Everything this man did was in secret.

"Why askest thou me?"

CHRIST had a lawful right to ask this question because this was a preliminary trial in which He was asked to convict Himself.

"ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."

In any trial it is necessary to produce witnesses.

CHRIST says, Call your witnesses whether they be friend or foe, and let them testify because they know exactly what I taught. The point is why had they arrested Him if they did not know what He had said and done, and had witnesses.

His words have again been truth; but truth before error makes the error appear all the more wrong, and there is only one thing to do. Make the truth look as if it is the wrong.

And when he had thus spoke, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?"

Here is the first maltreatment of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and it gives the pattern and procedure for all that follows.

The servant well knew that the high priest was embarrassed by the direct and forceful truth that CHRIST had stated. The cruel blow was the only way that presented itself to the servant to rescue the high priest from the corner that he had been backed into by the reply of CHRIST.

All logic pointed to the fact that it was totally unjust, but as so often is the case, when the argument is weak, the actions and voices must be the loudest to make up for the other lack. Whatever they want to do to Him, they are able to do. In the rebellion of Korah, who rebelled against Moses, the earth opened up and swallowed them alive; but not here.

King Jeroboam had his hand withered: "And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him" (1 Kings 13:4), but not this man.

Why? Because this was their hour.

"Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"

CHRIST spoke to the servant concerning the misdemeanor that he had committed. After all, this was a trial. No judge is to allow violence in a trial.

But the judge never censured this servant. Why? Because he approved of it being done and he became an accomplice to it, especially when this violence was committed under the pretense of avenging the alleged affront to his dignity.

How different was JESUS' treatment of the High Priest's servant in the garden that Peter smote as this servant of the High Priest that now smotes Him.

CHRIST addresses the servant: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil."

The man had no right to commit this act. He had only one right -- bear witness, if he could, of evil that CHRIST had spoken.

He still had that right. Why didn't he exercise it? Because CHRIST had not spoken evil to Annas, but rather the truth.

CHRIST had previously said: "As they have done to me they will do to you also" (John 15:20).

Paul experienced almost the same thing: "And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth" (Acts 23:2).

This is all Annas can take. He is being shown wrong before his own servants, and he has absolutely no defense.

There is only one thing to do. Send this case on to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin for trial.

They will have to find witnesses to witness against Him, and this, we will see in the next trial, is the very first thing they seek to do. Understand, however, JESUS has already been found guilty by Annas. The other trials will just try to clean up loose ends.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THIS FIRST TRIAL

But let us remind ourselves that the only reason you need witnesses is because you are conducting a trial. If this were murder -- as Edersheim says -- kill Him and get it over with. But not so if you are conducting a trial. They are going to give the Lord a trial -- a trial where every point of their own code of jurisprudence is broken.

The first trial is over, and we may examine the case and ask ourselves, "How did JESUS fare?"

He stands perfect in innocence Himself, and He has condemned His accuser.

"Then Annas sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest" (John 18:24).

It was customary to loose a prisoner when he was on trial, but to bind him again once again when he was to be escorted to another place.

CHRIST had been bound at the arrest, but was released as He stood before Annas. He was now bound again and led away.

F. W. Krummacher makes the statement: "JESUS bound! Can we trust our eyes? Omnipotence in fetters, the CREATOR bound by the creature; the Lord of the world, the capture of His mortal subjects! How much easier would it have been for Him to have burst those bonds than Manoah's son of old!"

We might add: But this He did to fulfill all righteousness; or better, to fulfill all unrighteousness; for this was the hour of darkness, and it is still night as they lead Him through the streets of Jerusalem to the house of Caiaphas to be tried by the highest court in Israel.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

02.05 - The Trial Before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin

Chapter 5 THE TRIAL BEFORE CAIAPHAS AND THE SANHEDRIN

In the four Gospels we have 4 chapters devoted to the first 30 years of CHRIST's life, while we have 85 chapters devoted to the last 3 1/2 years He was on this earth. The emphasis is clearly placed by GOD on the last 3 1/2 years.

Of the 85 chapters devoted to the 3 1/2 year ministry of CHRIST, 56 chapters are given to the entire period up to the last week, while 29 chapters concern the last week alone. The emphasis is clearly on the last week.

Of the 29 chapters that speak of the last week, 13 are devoted to the events of the last day which began at sundown and ended at sundown. Clearly GOD has placed the emphasis where He has wanted it placed. It will do us good to spend the time even in our private devotions on this final day of our Lord on earth.

Matthew has 8 chapters concerning the Last week and 2 chapters concerning the Last day.

Mark has 6 chapters concerning the Last week and 2 chapters concerning the Last day.

Luke has 6 chapters concerning the Last week and 2 chapters concerning the Last day.

John has 9 chapters concerning the Last week and 7 chapters concerning the Last day.

So the Gospels have a total of 29 chapters dealing with the last week and 13 of them concern the last day. THE FIRST TRIAL SOUGHT SELF-INCRIMINATION

The first trial of CHRIST is over. Annas met with CHRIST in order to find an accusation with which to try Him. However, the Lord would not testify against Himself, but demanded witnesses. Annas sent the Lord bound to Caiaphas who was the high priest that year and who took over as the president of the Sanhedrin.

This trial is given to us in Matthew 26:57-66 and Mark 14:53-65.

Luke mentions only Peter's denials and the maltreatment of CHRIST (Luke 22:54-65).

John mentions only the denials of Peter at this trial (John 18:24-27).

Both Matthew and Mark are writing to bring out the illegality of the trial: Matthew to the Jews as an indictment to the nation of Israel; Mark to the Romans who prided themselves in their code of judicial justice. But in Mark, CHRIST goes to Pilate after this trial and he does no better than the Sanhedrin. This trial before the Sanhedrin is the main ecclesiastic trial. A mock rehearsal of the same events is held after the sun is up in order to conform to the Law.

We will follow the trial in Matthew's Gospel, and make comment of Mark when there is something additional that is given.

Matthew 26:57 : "And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

By this time the entire Sanhedrin had had time to assemble themselves together and were waiting as JESUS was brought in. The case was so urgent that it could not await the daybreak. Everything had to be over when the populace awakened in the morning.

It was still night, probably about 3:30 or 4:00 A.M.

Luke tells us specifically that He was brought "into the high priest's house" (Luke 22:54). This was where the Sanhedrin had assembled, but it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to meet anywhere but their own hall, known as the hall of judgment, which was a part of the Temple complex.

They will go to this Hall of Judgment at daybreak in order to give a repeat performance of the trial that is about to take place.

Mark tells us: "And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and elders and scribes" (Mark 14:53). Thus the entire Sanhedrin was present, which is important. This thing was not railroaded through by just a few.

Matthew 26:58 : "But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end."

Peter follows the procession afar off as they move from the home of Annas to the home of Caiaphas. He is going along with the servants and feels he will not be noticed this way.

In the Oriental house of this magnitude there would be the large room on one side of an open court or patio. In the case of Annas, JESUS was only taken into the court: "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest" (John 18:15). In the case of the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, CHRIST is tried in the large room, while Peter is out in the court where the fire was burning: "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee" (Matthew 26:69). The inside room would have been lighted so everyone in the court could see beyond the large pillars into the area and watch the entire proceedings.

Matthew 26:59 : "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death."

The word 'council,' is "Sanhedrin."

Think of it! Here was the greatest assembly in the world. These men sat in Moses' seat with divine authority over the entire nation of Israel.

These were the interpreters of the Law of Moses, and it was their task to administer justice.

It was their task to guard the nation against heresy and false prophets even as the Law itself said.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 - Open enticement

"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee."

Deuteronomy 13:6-11 - Secret enticement

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy Fathers; Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you"

It is in this first category that the Sanhedrin feel they are justified in assembling and trying this case. Though He has done miracles, these miracles are attributed to being performed by the power of Satan. Their verdict is that He is turning the people to "another GOD" in claiming to be the Son of GOD Himself.

This is the issue.

Dr. Edersheim, in "Life and Times of Jesus," states: "The Sanhedrin did not and could not originate charges. It only investigated those brought before it." Yet the entire procedure of this court, in its relationship to the Lord, reveals that it originated the charges as well as proceeded to try the case. The Court thus becomes both the prosecution and the judge.

Matthew 26:59 b ". . . sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death."

Here they were seeking false witnesses when as yet they have not stated His crime. Any trial is to begin with a clear statement of the crime alleged and with the production of witnesses already secured to support the charge and to testify against the person.

In this case there is no charge and they have to seek for witnesses, or as Matthew says, "False witness."

Why do they have to seek?

Because unsought, nothing presented itself, but Annas has said, "Get witnesses and get rid of Him!" They are seeking to be obedient.

Think of the judges trying a case seeking witnesses. This is not the work of the judges who are to be impartial and administer justice.

The Judges had already reached the verdict before they tried the case. The verdict was "death." All they needed now were the witnesses to substantiate this decision.

Matthew 26:60 a "But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none . . ."

Before we stand to condemn them, let us be careful we are not guilty of the same act in another area. I have seen many people with the verdict rendered already -- with their minds already made up -- seeking for passages of Scripture to support their preconceived position.

The act is the same; the difference is only in the area involved and in the magnitude of the case.

There were many who wanted to testify against CHRIST, each one for their own reasons.

"A man's life is known by his enemies."

He that has no enemies has sought to be a manpleaser -- he has done no lasting good.

In the ministration of truth, CHRIST had offended many. They welcomed the opportunity to get back at Him.

But each witness destroyed the witness of someone else. Thus Mark 14:56 tells us: "For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together." The Law required two witnesses to agree. One witness was no witness.

At last two witnesses gave a semblance of agreement to something they heard Him say. This was enough. They were rushed into the meeting room to testify.

"At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." (Matthew 26:60-61)

Mark goes into fuller detail as to what they testified: "And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another without hands" (Mark 14:57-58).

Matthew's witness said He had the power to both destroy the Temple of GOD and to build it up in three days.

If they are going to use this against Him, they have to prove that He doesn't have this power.

Mark's witness testified that CHRIST said "I will destroy this handmade temple and I will build another (of the same kind) not handmade in three days time." (Mark 14:58)

In order to use this against Him they have to prove that He will not do this.

The fact is that CHRIST said neither. "You destroy this sanctuary (inner sanctuary, i.e., Holy of Holies -- the dwelling place of GOD) and in three days I will raise it up."

CHRIST here referred to His body.

This was the sign of His authority for casting out the money changers, etc., from the temple. In other words, "You men destroy my body and in three days I will raise it up."

With the witnesses not agreeing as to His statement, they were destroying themselves and were becoming no witnesses at all. Furthermore, even if they had agreed, no legal accusation could have been formed against CHRIST by their testimony. The case is falling apart, but this will never do, for the case has already been decided. Something must be done and done in a hurry.

Matthew 26:62 : "And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"

This is the first time that Caiaphas has addressed CHRIST in the Scripture.

There is something as far as criminal code is concerned that is very important in reference to this man.

John brings this to our attention in John 18:14 : "Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."

This refers to a previous statement given in John 11:47-53: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."

This is the decision of the Sanhedrin.

The Council met and knew they had to do something, but what? "If we do nothing the gullible people will be taken in by Him, and this will cause the Romans to come and take away our authority and nation from us."

Caiaphas addresses the Sanhedrin clearly not acting as President but only as "one of them." Many authorities state that it was illegal for the High Priest to be President of the Sanhedrin as occurs in the trial of CHRIST.

"Ye, who dwell on these scruples and these fears, do not even know the simplest rule of statesmanship, that one must be sacrificed to many," according to B.W. Westcott.

Then John adds a footnote in John 11:51-52 that whereas Caiaphas made the statement in one way, GOD would use it as truth in another. John 11:53 shows us the counsel of Caiaphas was accepted and their action was decided. Their indecision was now only in reference to time and means.

But the point of criminal prosecution and justice is that no judge qualifies to render justice in a case which he himself has already formed a preconceived decision as to the outcome.

Here we have the Judge who has previously given his verdict of what must be done in the case now taking over in the trial of the case in his own home -- all of which was contrary to their own code, let alone to every code of criminal prosecution.

It is in this situation with the witnesses breaking down that the high priest arises from his seat and says to CHRIST: "Answerest thou nothing?"

Why should He? If He has done wrong produce the witnesses, but this they could not do. Had not CHRIST previously challenged His adversaries: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46).

Here was the LAMB of GOD without spot.

Why should He? Were not these witnesses destroying themselves and testifying of nothing that could possibly bring an indictment against Him.

"What is it which these witness against thee?" You answer that Caiaphas. They witnessed nothing against CHRIST but only witnessed to the vile, corrupt, depraved heart of their sin nature.

Matthew 26:63 a: "But Jesus held his peace."

He was absolutely silent. It was not His place to testify against Himself; it was their place to bear witness if He had done any wrong.

The trial before Annas had gone from bad to worse, and the same thing was occurring here before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

Their witness had failed.

The two that were used did not agree among themselves.

The high priest tried to have CHRIST speak, but this failed. His silence was golden as He stood in absolute innocence. There was only one final way that the high priest knew in order to achieve the decision that they had already reached.

Matthew 26:63 : "And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

Stalker says, "He put Him on oath to tell what He claimed to be; for among Jews the oath was pronounced by the Judge, not by the prisoner."

This is the climax of the life of CHRIST on earth.

The person sworn answered without repeating the form itself with a simple "Yes" or "No."

If he deviated from the truth he could know that the living GOD would punish him who had been invoked as a witness to the statement.

Before we consider CHRIST's answer let us consider two things.

1. The high priest knew first of all that to claim to be the MESSIAH would be to claim to be the Son of GOD, and thus Deity.

This was clear to him as a student of the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus whoever would be the MESSIAH would be the Son of GOD which in the mouth of an Israelite was Deity incarnate: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18) and "The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33).

2. Secondly, the high priest knew precisely what JESUS CHRIST claimed to be. They all knew that He claimed to be the MESSIAH. They knew all of the works He had performed including His last main one of raising Lazarus from the dead.

If He answers "No," they will forget the trial and drop the case. He has discredited Himself -- His word will stand.

If He answers "Yes," He will not be making any new statement nor new claim, but they will charge Him with blasphemy and execute Him as they have planned.

In either case they feel they will win and CHRIST will lose. Fools!

Matthew 26:64 The reply of CHRIST is in two parts.

"Thou has said." This is an idiom for "Yes, that is right. You said it as you asked the question." "I am" (Mark 14:62).

He then added: "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven" (Matthew 26:64).

The answer the Lord gave means suffering and death for Him, but it means "life" for us. The Lord cannot but speak the truth.

Let the scoffers have their hour; His will come when they shall see He was right and they were wrong.

Again let us remind ourselves that the high priest and all the members of the Sanhedrin were completely cognizant of what the Old Testament Scriptures taught, and that when the MESSIAH came He would be the SON of GOD, and He would be exalted to the highest seat of authority.

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand; until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalms 110:1). CHRIST quoted this in Matthew 22:44.

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of Heaven . . ." (Daniel 7:13)

CHRIST makes the same claims He has made from the very beginning, which were made even by His forerunner -- John the Baptist.

He is the CHRIST.

To be the CHRIST He must fulfill all the Scriptures prophesied about the MESSIAH. This He claims He will do. They may take away His earthly life because the Father wills, but they can never touch His eternal life, nor His stated destiny. He shall sit and He shall come again. THE INDICTORS ARE THEMSELVES INDICTED

It was this same group, this same Sanhedrin, that later sat and tried Stephen: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:8-15)

Stephen gave his address before this body (Acts 7:1-53), but was never allowed to complete it before they became so enraged that they were willing to kill Stephen to stamp out the light.

"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56).

The witness had been borne. They saw this in the face of Stephen, and then snuffed out his life.

With JESUS bearing testimony for the very last time of whom He was, He places His accusers and judges on trial. They must now prove that what He has said is not true. But they have already decided this, first when they committed the unpardonable sin, and later in secret meeting. They had already considered the evidence and rendered the verdict. They have judged the case in private session and given the sentence of death. The procedure that has been followed is only their means of carrying out that sentence.

Now they sit as His judges; but then He will sit as their JUDGE -- and He has the greater judgment both in extent and duration. It is not a matter that they do not believe; they will not believe. It is a willful rejection.

Matthew 26:65 a: "Then the high priest rent his clothes."

The rending of the garments is designed to be a sign of intense sorrow or anguish, in this case because the high priest heard blasphemy. By tearing his garments he was saying to the other judges, "I mourn because my ears have had to listen to the greatest possible blasphemy they could hear."

But you who sit in Moses' seat and judge according to the Law, Do you hear the Law?

"And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes."

(Leviticus 21:10)

Here is the high priest condemning One who was guiltless before the Law, for no witnesses could be produced to prove otherwise, and no witnesses were allowed to prove His Messiahship; yet here he is breaking the Law himself in his eagerness to condemn CHRIST to death.

Who ever heard of the chief justice acting in such a manner? But all protocol is set aside to achieve the desired decision. Yet this act was to be employed by GOD as symbolic of the rending of the Aaronic priesthood in order to establish a new priest and priesthood after the order of Melchisedec: "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Hebrews 7:11-12).

At this time the high priest addresses the other members of the Sanhedrin: "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?" (Matthew 26:65-66)

The high priest renders his decision: "He hath spoken blasphemy." But the decision that there is not further need of witnesses, and this in spite of the fact that the law demanded them.

But Caiaphas and members of the Sanhedrin: You have had the Man to testify against Himself, and accepted that testimony as convicting evidence contrary to your own code, but you have not proved Him to be wrong. You must FIRST prove His claim is false before you render your decision. Furthermore, does this claim that JESUS is the CHRIST remain without testimony? Why have you not allowed witnesses on His behalf to substantiate His claim?

Matthew tells us why. You committed the unpardonable sin when the signs of His Messiahship were first presented to the nation, and now there was no sign but the sign of the prophet Jonah: "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matthew 12:39-41) and "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed" (Matthew 16:4). That sign is death, burial and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST and the Gospel going to the Gentiles. The resurrection of JESUS CHRIST is the sign to Israel that His claim of Messiahship was correct: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4) and "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:32-36). This is why so many priests came to believe later: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great

company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

The high priest continues: "Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy."

You will remember that a man's words before the Sanhedrin could not be used against him apart from other witnesses and being proven wrong. Here they again break their own code of justice.

WHAT THINK YE?

"What think ye?" (Matthew 26:66) -- Render your decision.

The whole Sanhedrin rendered the predetermined verdict: "He is guilty of death." Thus they voted simultaneously in contradiction to their own law.

The trial itself is over, or shall we call it better, "The mockery of Justice."

The verdict has been rendered.

The charge for which He was condemned: "Blasphemy."

The verdict: "Guilty."

The sentence: "Death."

We have just seen religion at work with words; now we will behold its deeds. There is nothing as bad as religion. Religion always has and always will be the greatest enemy of truth and righteousness until the Lord destroys religion in the tribulation.

It was religion that put JESUS CHRIST on the cross. It has been religion that has slain the martyrs of JESUS: "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration" (Revelation 17:6). Politically, Satan controls the kingdom of this world as the Prince of the kosmos. Religiously, Satan controls the world as the prince and power of the air. The whole world lies in the power of the wicked one (1 John 5:19) on two counts. THE MOCKERY OF THE TRIAL ON TWO COUNTS

What is taking place is something that startles the imagination. These men have just sentenced a man to die: that was their verdict. Any court that has the power of life and death ought to be a place of solemnity and dignity. The judges are responsible before the very law and authority given them to try a case, to protect the criminal against all injustice and maltreatment when he is found guilty.

These outrages would have been inexcusable even toward a man irrevocably condemned to punishment, but were all the more criminal toward JESUS who had never been proven guilty of anything.

The very fact that these things were done in Caiaphas' house too, makes him culpable just as a citizen, let alone as presiding officer of the Sanhedrin. But those displays of feelings which occurred were just the aftermath of Caiaphas' own rage which he himself displayed upon the bench. Behind it all is more than the wickedness of the human heart, even though that heart is exceedingly sinful and incurably wicked. What is displayed against CHRIST is an infernal wickedness of the forces of the underworld. This is their hour.

Here is the record of the proceedings.

(1) "Then did they spit in his face," (Matthew 26:67)

This fulfills Isaiah 50:6, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

For someone to spit in another's face was to show the greatest contempt possible for that one.

"They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face" (Job 30:10)

"And the Lord said unto Moses, If her Father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again" (Numbers 12:14).

(2) "and buffeted him," (Matthew 26:67)

This word is "to strike with the fist," or "the knuckles."

Paul used the same word in 1 Corinthians 9:27 of "keeping under" his body by giving blows with the fists. When they get tired of doing this, someone suggested they play a little game.

(3) They covered his face (Mark 14:65) and someone then "smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that struck thee?" (Matthew 26:67-68).

Here is the first mockery. He claimed to be MESSIAH. If He were MESSIAH He could give the name of the person who struck Him even though He were blindfolded. These servants ridicule the Lord's claim at being the MESSIAH and PROPHET who was to come. Secondly, The Roman soldiers later ridicule His claim at being a KING.

When He answered nothing, they laughed and jested and mocked. He had given His word, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah," (Matthew 12:39) and this must stand.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

One word would have felled them all, yet He opened not His mouth. One word and He would have been vindicated, but this was not the Father's will nor way. The SON was to be vindicated by His resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). The Father's will for Him now was to be "dumb" though He be the Lord of all.

~ end of chapter 5

02.06 - The Denial of Peter

Chapter 6 THE DENIAL OF PETER

All Bible study begins with first determining what Scripture says about an event or a subject, and then and only then to interpret and apply what has been written. There is first of all the piecing together of facts so as to discover what happened, and then there is the significance of those facts.

The first part is tedious and time consuming, but it alone produces the true significance and a correct interpretation and application.

Never forget that nothing Scripture gives is without significance, and it is up to the Bible student to discover the reason and purpose behind what is recorded.

The denial of Peter is inseparable from the trials of CHRIST. It is a part of the whole story, for it occurs simultaneously with the trials and was not a separate picture. In order for us to treat it properly, it is necessary for us to look, however, at the denials of Peter as a unit by itself. THE GOSPEL RECORD

All four Gospels speak first of Peter's self-confidence in not denying CHRIST, and then of CHRIST's prediction of Peter's denial.

"Peter answered and said unto him, Though all (men) shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matthew 26:33-35).

"But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all" (Mark 14:29-31).

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (Luke 22:31-34).

"Peter said unto him, Lord why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:37-38).

The summary of what CHRIST said concerning Peter's denial is this: CHRIST first made the statement that Peter would deny Him "this day" i.e., a 24-hour period (Mark 14:30).

Then CHRIST took it one step further. Peter would three times deny the Lord before the cock even crowed once. It was this last statement that was recorded by Matthew, Luke and John.

But Luke records also that CHRIST tells Peter that this is because Satan wants you and desires to sift you as wheat. Yet CHRIST will allow Satan to go only so far and He Himself personally prayed for Peter and for his restoration.

LET US LOOK AT THE FIRST THREE DENIALS

Each of the four Gospels is content to record just three denials out of the many that took place. It only takes the three to fulfill the prediction of CHRIST and the recording of more than this would only add insult to an already pathetic situation.

When CHRIST was before Annas:

There was one denial that Peter made when CHRIST was before Annas.

1. Peter's denial to the servant girl that kept the door: "Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not" (John 18:17).

No other denial took place in Annas' court. Peter only "stands" with the servants and officers.

When CHRIST was before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin

All the rest of the denials take place before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin in the second trial. The third trial takes place after daybreak occurred and is beyond the scope of the early morning with its first rays of light and cock crowing. Peter never attended the third trial because following the second, he went out and wept bitterly.

2. Peter's denial "standing" and warming himself before the servants and officers: "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not" (John 18:25).

3. Peter's denial to the servant of the high priest who was a kinsman to the man whose ear Peter cut off: "One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew" (John 18:26-27)

"And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew" (Luke 22:59-60) must be the same incident as John records, signifying that much conversation was involved, and it was an hour after the second denial that Luke records. Furthermore, the cock crew even as Peter was speaking, and evidently it never registered in the consciousness.

So the cock crew -- the first time. There must have been quite a time period between these last two denials recorded in John, even as the other Gospels indicate. THE OTHER DENIALS

But these were not the only denials before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. In between the second and third denials recorded by John are several others that occurred.

1. Peter's denial to one of the maids of the high priest who spotted him as he "sat" in the light of the fire.

"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not" (Luke 22:55-57)

"Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest" (Matthew 26:69-70)

"And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew" (Mark 14:66-68)

Mark tells us at this denial Peter got up and went out into the fore court or the entrance way from the street to the court proper.

2. Peter's denial to the very same maid who saw him again: "And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again" (Mark 14:69-70 a).

This is not another maid but the same one from earlier, else how could she see "him again?"

3. Peter's denial to another maid who saw him and said to them that were there, "This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene." This time Peter denied it with an oath, i.e., he called GOD to record that he never knew the man: "And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man" (Matthew 26:71-72).

4. Peter's denial to a male servant who said, "Thou also art one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not," (Luke 22:58).

This male servant was different than the male servant next recorded by Luke who must be the same as the last one recorded by John.

5. Peter's denial to all those who stood by after which the cock crew the second time.

"And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew" (Matthew 26:73-74).

". . . And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:70 b-72).

This time Peter began both to curse and to swear.

The cursing would be using the language of the unbeliever (but not taking the name of GOD in vain as in current swear words), and the swearing would be the act of again calling GOD to witness to the statement he had: "I know not this man whom ye speak."

This last denial followed the third denial recorded by John and the third recorded by Luke. There the cock crew the first time right as Peter was speaking. Here the cock crew the second time right after Peter had spoken.

This takes into account all the denials. We find that there were not three of them, but EIGHT of them. Seven of these take place during this second trial.

SUMMARY OF THE EIGHT DENIALS OF PETER

1. Door -- Servant girl -- Trial: Annas
2. Fire (standing) -- Men. -- Trial: Caiaphas (as are all the following)
3. Fire (sitting) -- Servant girl of the High Priest.
4. Forecourt -- Same servant girl
5. Forecourt -- Another servant girl
6. Not stated -- Servant
7. Not stated -- Servant of High Priest & kinsman to servant whose ear Peter cut off.

--- First Crow of Cock

8. Not stated -- All, Peter cursed and swore.

--- Second Crow of Cock THE AFTERMATH

Four events now happen in rapid succession

1. The cock crew and Peter heard it this time with conscious significance. We might say, it registered.
2. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter: "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter . . ." (Luke 22:61 a)
3. Peter remembered what CHRIST had predicted would happen.

". . . And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Luke 22:61 b)

"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Matthew 26:75 a)

"And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Mark 14:72)

Evidently while these events were in progress Peter never called to mind what CHRIST had said.

4. Peter went out of the grounds of the high priest and wept bitterly.

"And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75 b)

"And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:72 b).

Sadly, it was certain that Peter was not singing that great hymn that night, "Oh for a look of the Saviour."

~ end of chapter 6 ~

02.07 - Why Peter Denied His Lord

Chapter 7 WHY PETER DENIED HIS LORD In our last study we looked at the Scriptures concerning the facts of Peter's denials, let us now go back and look at the significance behind these facts.

What was behind Peter's fall?

Peter did not fall because CHRIST prophesied that he would. Rather it is the reverse. CHRIST prophesied he would because Peter was going to fall -- the signs were all there based on Peter's nature. The cause of Peter's fall was not CHRIST's prediction, but Peter's life. As our sister Duck stated in her excellent study on another study, "It is like the roof on a greenhouse. It does not attract the sun because it is bright. It becomes bright because the sun shines on it." Peter didn't fall because GOD planned it to happen, Peter was only doing what comes natural when we take our eyes off of JESUS. Of course, you think he would have learned that back when he was walking on the water and took his eyes off of Him. Then again, some of us need to have the same lesson taught to us more than once before it sinks in, or "registers."

It is always true. "No one suddenly becomes base." Peter's fall was not a blow out, but a slow leak, and as such is the case for every man and woman that appears suddenly to deny their Lord and do that which is wrong morally and spiritually. There have been certain steps taken "in the flesh" before this. The steps may be somewhat secret or concealed, but they always exist. They may be found in every child of GOD who has ever "fallen into sin." It wasn't a fall at all. It was a deliberate walk in the flesh.

Let us then notice Peter's footprints.

1. Self-confidence: "But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Mark 14:29).

This was confidence in Peter, or better, confidence in Simon. Later on Peter would write that we are "kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5-7), even though in manifold temptations and trials. It was no longer the flesh that kept Peter. Peter then would say with Paul, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18).

2. Unreproveable (or unteachable) : "And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all" (Mark 14:30-31).

Peter knew it all. The Word of GOD could not reach him to reprove and correct him (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Whenever the Word cannot reach us before we fall, there is nothing left but failure. Here is one who would not listen to even his own Saviour speaking to him. In essence, Peter was telling JESUS that He was wrong! Imagine that, but that is exactly what he did by speaking the more vehemently.

3. Prayerlessness: "And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?" (Mark 14:37).

"Simon, are you of all people sleeping?" CHRIST here gives further warning to Peter which again goes unheeded: "Watch ye and pray, LEST YE ENTER INTO TEMPTATION. The Spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).

Without prayer, and the victory gained through prayer, the flesh will overpower the spirit of a man. He would will to do good, but have no power to perform it -- for again, "the flesh is weak."

CHRIST's words go unheeded: "And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him" (Mark 14:40) and they have no answer because there is none.

The person out of fellowship is so at ease and unaware of his spiritual state that he has no trouble sleeping: "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep" (Jonah 1:5).

I feel there is a lesson here also that needs to be emphasized greatly. Whenever I will not pray with another, I am the one who is wrong. Whenever there is a problem to be faced by the Lord's people and one will pray and another will not, the one who refuses to pray is always wrong. The flesh never wants to pray, and the one controlled by the flesh will not pray, for that very act (and continuous state) of prayer would reprove him and his wrong position.

GOD's man loves to pray, and the one in fellowship with the Lord loves the time of fellowship with Him. If we are not in fellowship, His presence is the last thing we want. Just as the last thing Peter wanted was for the Lord to look him in the eyes that night, we will soon be following Him afar off also.

It will be noticed that these footsteps of Peter are a series of chain reaction. Each one leads to the next and to the next. Having taken the first step, and refusing to be converted or reprov'd, one merely continues on the downward course.

4. Impulsive Actions: "And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear" (Mark 14:47). cf. John 18:10-11.

Peter was acting without thinking of the consequences of his action as we have already seen. He was acting to maintain his honor because he had previously boasted of what he would do. What happened to CHRIST's honor was immaterial.

In the garden when Peter should have been active, he was passive and asleep; now when he should have been passive he is active. Oh, how characteristic of "the flesh."

5. Unfaithfulness: "And they all forsook him, and fled" (Mark 14:50).

Now this should have been enough to cause Peter (and all of the others) to realize their spiritual condition. It was this prediction in Mark 14:27, "And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," that caused Peter to say, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Mark 14:29).

It had now been fulfilled, but Peter did not weep bitterly at this time. He has not hit rock bottom but is rapidly moving in that direction.

6. Following CHRIST afar off: "And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire." (Mark 14:54)

Intimate fellowship with the Lord has now been broken. This will only lead to further sinning.

Because Peter was following at a safe distance behind the procession, as CHRIST was taken to Annas' home, he was left outside in the street as the gate was closed: "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter" (John 18:15-16).

Evidently both Peter and John started following the procession together after fleeing the scene in the Garden. John went in with the procession moving quickly ahead so as to join in with the end of it, but Peter missed entering. John, who knew he was outside, went out and got him and came back in with him.

James Stalker reminds us: "A western house looks into the street, but an Oriental into its own interior, having no opening to the front except a great arched gateway, shut with a heavy door or gate. When this door is opened, it discloses a broad passage; penetrating the front building and leading into a square, paved courtyard, opens to the sky, round which the house is built, and into which its rooms, both upstairs and downstairs, look . . . On the side of the passage, inside the outer gate, there is a room or lodge for the porter or portress, who opens and shuts the gate; and in the gate there is a little wicket by which individuals can be let in or out."

John felt he was doing Peter a favor by bringing him into the house, but while John might enter without being tempted to deny his Lord, Peter could not. What a graphic illustration of the doctrinal truth Paul presents in Romans 14 and 15 and in 1 Corinthians 8-10 concerning the weaker brother. If we do something that causes our brother to sin, we have sinned against our brother. We may not fall, but if he falls, we sin also.

John, because he was known to the high priest and therefore to his servants, would have been able to move around with perfect ease, but not Peter. He was in a strange place and was probably fearful of being recognized as one of JESUS' disciples.

Whether John was present at Peter's first denial is not known; however, he is the only one who mentions it. It may have been that John hurried away not wanting to miss anything that was going on, and Peter was left behind. I personally feel John was there. At any rate, the very maid who let Peter and John in, questions Peter: "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" He saith, "I am not" (John 18:17).

Don't hurry over this. "Art not thou ALSO one of this man's disciples?" This maid knew John was a disciple of CHRIST for he was known unto the high priest and therefore to his servants; she is asking Peter if he were also a disciple, and she says this because she could reason why John would want to bring him in. Peter says: "I am not."

I imagine if you would have asked Peter right after this: "Why did you say that," he would have answered: "I don't know." It was something he said without thinking about it or premeditating it at all. Subconsciously Peter is fearful.

After this Peter stands with the officers and servants and warmed himself.

7. Wrong Company: "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not" (John 18:18-25).

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalms 1:1).

Nothing is mentioned further of John from this point on until we come to the cross and see him standing beneath it with the Lord's mother. The implication is that John as well as Peter went to Caiaphas' house when the Lord was taken there.

At Caiaphas' house another fire is kindled in the courtyard, and Peter is standing with the men warming himself. They ask him: "Art not thou also one of his disciples?" He denied it, and said, "I am not" (John 18:25).

Peter has emphatically said, "No," and he figures this will suffice; so the next time we see him he has set down at the fire and in light of the fire one of the maids of the high priest spots Peter. She intently looks him over and then speaks up: "Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus." But he denied, saying, "I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest" (Mark 14:68). "Woman, I know him not" (Luke 22:57).

At this Peter felt he had better change location. So he went into the precourt or forecourt which is the archway leading from the gate of the court.

8. Fearful.

Peter is now controlled by fear, and in this state the whole nature of the flesh will manifest itself -- given enough time.

The very same maid who spotted him in the light of the fire sees him again in the forecourt and began to say to them that stood by: "This is one of them." But he denied it (Mark 14:69-70 a).

Another maid saw him and said unto them that were there: "This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene." Being controlled by fear, Peter felt now the need to make his denial even more emphatic than he had done before, so he denied with an oath, calling GOD to witness: "I know not

the man" (Matthew 26:72).

Thus we have another step taken by Peter.

9. Oath -- Calling GOD to witness his lie.

Then after a little while, a male servant saw him, and said: "Thou also art one of them." But Peter said: "Man, I am not" (Luke 22:58).

Then the servant of the high priest who was a kinsman to the man whose ear Peter cut off said to Peter: "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Peter denied it. But the man confidently affirmed: "Of a truth this man also was with him: for he is a Galilean." To this Peter said: "Man, I know not what thou sayest."

While Peter was in the process of speaking, the cock crowed.

Then after a little while again, they that stood by said to Peter: "Of a truth thou art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee that thou art a Galilean." This causes Peter to panic and so to take his final step on his downward course. He began to curse and to swear and said: "I know not this man of whom ye speak."

10. Cursing: Peter's language as a fisherman before he met the Saviour.

Peter says in effect: "Does my speech betray that I am his disciple? Well then, listen closely to my speech. Does this sound like someone who is His follower? Would anyone who was His follower use language like this?"

Peter knew that they knew that no one belonging to JESUS would use such language as Peter was using. What a testimony Peter was unconsciously giving to CHRIST and to his disciples, but oh how wrong that such a testimony of CHRIST's purity and of His power to transform men should have been borne in this way from the Lord's own disciple.

Still today the world does not expect cleanness of speech and conduct from its own, but it does expect and demand it (and rightly so) of one of the Lord's disciples. CAN THE DISCIPLE OF THE LORD REVERT BACK TO THE OLD LIFE AND CONDUCT?

Yes he can. But he can never do so as a manner of life. Formerly, before he met JESUS, this was the way he lived. He can now only do this as an act, after which he will be convicted by the HOLY SPIRIT within.

Should he persist in sinning and hardening his heart to the HOLY SPIRIT's reproof, he is on dangerous ground simply because he is GOD's child. He cannot live this way for GOD will take him off the scene. Read very carefully, and very prayerfully, these following passages: Acts 5; 1 Corinthians 5, 11; James 5; and 1 John 5).

The cock now crows the second time. Peter hears it, and there comes to his mind all the words that CHRIST spoke to him, but he refused to listen and believe. It was just beginning to become light; the trial and beatings before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were over; CHRIST was being led out. At the very instant Peter was swearing and cursing, CHRIST was close enough to His disciple to pick up every word. With the crowing of the cock, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."

(Luke 22:61)

THE LOOK OF CHRIST

Eye met eye, and while no words were spoken, yet a volume of words were communicated. What a look it must have been. It had to bring conviction, and yet be filled with compassion, else Peter would have been brought to despair. One would imagine that the look must have been one of hurt love, for had it been one of angry indignation - it might have crushed the disciple on the spot!

BBB: Here is a preacher that is not only NOT singing, "Oh for a look from my Saviour," but also hoping that He didn't hear what he just said. But He more than likely did. A part of me wants to say, "Poor Peter, today would have been the one day to stay in bed." Isn't there something of the human element in all of this?

It was both a sword to cut, and a balm to heal. It was used as the climatic turning point in Peter's life. It brought Peter back to reality and spiritual truth. For the next fifty days Peter will be moving upward until he delivers to these same people the message of the HOLY SPIRIT as the powerful preacher of Pentecost. Did you get that? These same people to whom he now denies JESUS he will deliver that message.

HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

How far have we sinned against our Lord? It makes no difference how far we have gone, there is always forgiveness if we will but turn and seek it. But if truth be told, isn't even one step in the wrong direction too far? Let alone the ten steps of Peter.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The Lord is always faithful to His child. Satan would love to bring the child of GOD to the place of despair so that he plunges himself over the precipice that Judas used to end his life. If Satan can succeed in having the child of GOD do this, he can gain the victory and defeat the Lord's plan in that life. If Satan can make them a mental wreck over their sin, it will be a good second best.

WHAT DO WE NEED?

We need to look into the face of the One we have denied just as Peter did. Never mind you don't want to, you NEED to. When Peter looked at Him, he saw One who loved him with an infinite love EVEN IN HIS SIN. The Lord loved Peter even though Peter had just denied Him. He was on the way to the cross to die for Him -- greater love hath no man than this.

The very fact that CHRIST loved Peter was what broke Peter's heart.

As James Stalker has penned it: "He saw now what kind of MASTER he had denied; and it broke his heart. It is this that always breaks the heart. It is not our sins that make us weep; it is when we see what kind of Saviour we have sinned against." It is when we look into the eyes of our Saviour! We need to look in His eyes daily.

The remembrance of his fall and restoration never left Peter for one moment the remainder of his life. It colors everything in Peter's first Epistle. It might be a good idea to go over and read it after reading this sad tale from the life of Peter and see if you can see the face of JESUS in His Epistle.

THE WEEPING MAN

I have heard some say that they never like to see a man cry. I would to GOD we had men today who could cry. Many of the men GOD used have been men that wept before Him.

JOB

"My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death" (Job 16:16)

DAVID

"For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Psalms 102:9)

"And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (2 Samuel 15:30)

JEREMIAH

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jeremiah 9:1)

"But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive" (Jeremiah 13:17)

"For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed" (Lamentations 1:16).

NEHEMIAH

"And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of Heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4).

CHRIST

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41)

JOHN

"And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon" (Revelation 5:4).

PAUL

"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Php 3:18-19)

"And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him" (Acts 20:37)

PETER

"And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75 b)

"And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:72 b).

WEEPING IN THE SCRIPTURE

The Word of GOD tells us:

"Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Luke 6:21)

"Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep" (James 4:9)

"Weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15).

Here is weeping, not because of any personal sin, but because of a heart of compassion. Many times Scripture portrays weeping as the sign of the true repentance of the heart and conviction of sin.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:5-6)

EARTH HAS NO SORROW THAT JESUS CANNOT HEAL.

Duck Adds:

This story of Peter and his denial of Christ is one of my favorites. And it is true that Peter never forgot that night and what He did. That look from Jesus, well, I can't even begin to imagine what it must have looked like...though I got a feel recently of a little of what it might have felt like. The pain Jesus must have felt, to have been denied by one of His dearest, His rock, His Peter.

Jesus and Peter were both in the court yard. Peter was at the fire and Jesus was being spit upon, hit, geared, and other things by the crowd. But in the mist of all that it was Peter's denial that the Savior heard. And when their eyes met Peter's heart must have broken into a thousand pieces...just as the Savior's had. He had just denied the Man he loved more than his life. Because Jesus is our life.

But the story is far from over. Jesus told the Apostles to meet Him in the mountains. This was after the resurrection. But Peter was still having problems and talked some of the other Apostles into going to the beach. Now isn't that just like Peter...and how like us that is. Peter wanted to go fishing. It was what he knew how to do and what he did before Jesus. Peter did exactly what we do. He tried to go back to his old life. But once we have tasted of Jesus...and gotten glimpses of His Kingdom to come...that is all but impossible. Oh, you can go back, but it just isn't the same anymore.

They were all on the Sea of Tiberias and it was night when they got into the boat. Now there is another point. When we try to go back...isn't it always night, always dark. Well the boys caught nothing, a boatload of nothing. Isn't that what we always find when we go back, nothing. We come up empty. It's just not there any more.

Well when morning came...as it always does with Jesus...always the light, Jesus was standing on the shore. Now look what He calls the boys in the boat...rebels? Nope. Rogues? Nope. Ex-apostles? Nope...He calls them His children...and He ask the question no fisherman catching no fish wants to be asked..."Catching any fish, boys?"

Now most fishermen would answer , "well we got a few nibbles", or "the weather is just not good for catching fish" But the answer they gave was just "no" Know why? Sounds good when we think about the good old days, fun, friends, good parties. But when we get back there...it is empty, nothing there. Ever notice how the devil can always remind us of the kicks...but leaves out the kick-backs?

Want to know what happens next?...it is a super great story and I do love it so...it really speaks to a sinner's heart...

~ end of chapter 7 ~

02.08 - The Trial Before the Sanhedrin at Daybreak

Chapter 8 THE TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN AT DAYBREAK

It is shocking to find how few who write about the trials of the Lord even deal with this trial. Edersheim passes over it with just a few sentences. Many others do not even mention it at all, or combine it with the previous trial before Caiaphas. It is true that two of the Gospel writers pass over it with just a summary word, but even this is a very significant word. Dr. Luke alone brings out the details as to what took place. But in passing over events, let us remind ourselves that Luke and John pass over completely the trial before Caiaphas with the exception of referring to Peter's denials, yet no one would dare deny its importance. Even those books devoted to being verse-by-verse expositions of the Gospels often omit this trial by merely referring the person to see some other passage for the exposition -- which passage has nothing to do with this trial.

Here is what the Scripture says occurred.

"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor." (Matthew 27:1-2)

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate." (Mark 15:1)

What Matthew and Mark give in a summary statement, Luke gives in fuller detail.

"And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth" (Luke 22:66-71)

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE

Let us consider point-by-point what is taking place.

:66 -- "And as soon as it was day . . . "

All three Gospels mention this fact. The day has dawned. Thus this trial can in no way be confused with these trials that were carried on during the night. This is an entirely new trial. The fact is this is the legal ecclesiastical trial or religious trial. All that had transpired during the night was illegal, and every member of the Sanhedrin knew it. If it hadn't been, there is no reason for them to meet again after sunup; but the very fact that they all meet again after sunup to ratify and legalize the illegal action that they took in the early morning stands as condemnation to them all. The very fact, furthermore, that the entire Sanhedrin meets and does so in their judgment hall shows that they do

intend for this to be a legal trial and handled according to their code of jurisprudence. They are officially trying the case.

It will be before this same body that Peter and John will be questioned (Acts 4:5-22). Then once again did they appear before the same body (Acts 5:27-42). Stephen also had his day to witness to them (Acts 1:1-15, Acts 7:1-60). Later on Paul is brought before this tribunal (Acts 22:30, Acts 23:1-10).

Many things are different in reference to this trial when compared to the trial that had occurred in the darkness before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

WHAT WAS DIFFERENT?

The Place is Different.

Previously it was at the home of Caiaphas. Now it is at their council hall.

The Time is Different

It was dark then -- before the crowing of the cock. It is light now; morning has come.

The Officer-in-charge is Different

The high priest, Caiaphas, was officiating when the trial was conducted in his home. Now nothing is mentioned of Caiaphas and the implication is that he is in no way acting as president of the Sanhedrin, which action at the previous trial was completely contrary to the rules of the Sanhedrin.

The Procedure is Different

Before Caiaphas, the first thing they sought to do was to secure witnesses. Now there is no mention of witnesses whatever as this did not work out satisfactorily. They seek to convict CHRIST alone on His own testimony which was the end result of the trial before Caiaphas. After CHRIST makes the statement in this trial that they desire, they say that there is no need for witnesses. Thus they seek to get around both the Law, and their own code by this act.

The Action is Different

Caiaphas rent his clothes previously; no such action occurred at this trial.

CHRIST's Answer is Different

Previously, when He was asked under oath by the high priest if He were the CHRIST, the Son of GOD, His answer was "Yes, I am." Then He spoke of sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of Heaven. Now they do not put Him under oath.

"Art thou the Christ?", they said, "tell us."

"If I tell you," replied JESUS, "ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God"

"Art thou then the Son of God?", They all asked.

"Ye say that I am." or "It is true, I am." (Luke 22:67-70)

The Subsequent Action is Different

At the conclusion of this trial, they did not take a voice vote as had previously been done, but now they merely stand and indicate by this action their decision. They lead JESUS out immediately to take Him to Pilate. There is no violence in this court as there was after the previous trial.

The People Present At the Trial are Different

There is no indication of anyone present at this session of the Sanhedrin other than its members, while the servants of the high priest, officers and at least two disciples, Peter and John, were present the previous night. All the denials of Peter had taken place at the previous trials and no such events occurred at this trial. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAY

Before we leave the truth that it is now morning, we need to remind ourselves that this morning was the day when Israel moved out of the land of Egypt to the Red Sea having partaken of the Passover lamb the night before and applied its blood to their dwelling. What a day of deliverance for Israel it was, and it was to be commemorated each year -- and to day was that day. While Israel had deliverance, there was no deliverance for the Lord. He was paying the price for deliverance and redemption of others -- His own blood: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your Fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

WILLFUL BLINDNESS AND WILLFUL REJECTION

"And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together." (Luke 22:66)

The minute that the Sanhedrin could legally assemble they did so because they wanted to hurry this up before the populous could get wind of what was happening. It is probably close to 6 A.M.. Normally the Sanhedrin did not assemble until after the morning sacrifice at 9 A.M., but they cannot wait that long this day. This is not a normal day. The morning and the evening sacrifice this day will be the person of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

"And led him into their council," i.e., into their council chamber or meeting hall.

Luke 22:67 -- ". . . saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us."

Literally their first question was "If (as you say is true) you are the MESSIAH, tell us once and for all."

". . . and He answered them: If I should tell you, you will in no wise believe."

This is a double negative with the aorist subjunctive which gives the strongest possible negation. CHRIST's point is that they are not about to be convinced by anything He says. He had told them in the darkness of the morning hour and look what they did to Him. Will they do any differently now? CHRIST says they will not.

". . . and if I should ask (you), you will in no wise answer."

That is, you members of the Sanhedrin will not enter into a fair discussion with Me. If I interrogate you as what the MESSIAH will be and do, and whether these are fulfilled in Me, you will in no wise give Me an honest answer. You are resolved not to listen to truth but to condemn Me to death.

Previously CHRIST had asked them questions, but they would not answer, simply because they came each time to a wrong conclusion.

When they didn't want to accept the conclusion, they refused to answer the question (Matthew 22:41-46). Thus the issue is brought to the front and exposed to the light: the issue is they will not believe. The problem is willful blindness and willful rejection. THE PROOF OF JESUS' MESSIAHSHIP

Having stated this CHRIST then replies:

"And from henceforth the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." (Luke 22:69)

When asked whether He were the MESSIAH, He replies He is the Son of man and the throne-sitter. This is the last time CHRIST refers to Himself as the Son of man. Again the reference is to Daniel 7:13-14 : "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

The Sanhedrin, knowing the Old Testament prophecies, knew that the throne-sitter would be the Son of GOD: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psalms 110:1). They therefore interrogate Him further.

"And they all said: Are you then the Son of God?" (Luke 22:70) This is the issue upon which they have decided to condemn Him.

"And He declared to them: You say that I am!"

Here is a Greek idiom for "Yes, I am."

CHRIST combines three epithets and claims them all: MESSIAH, Son of Man, and Son of GOD. The last involved both deity and humanity and was the one the Sanhedrin refused to accept.

Not one of them will ever be able to say: He never told us who He was.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL VERDICT AGAINST CHRIST

"And they said: What further need have we of witnesses? for we ourselves have heard from His own mouth." (Luke 22:71)

They had not called witnesses.

They say now we do not need them.

We ourselves have all witnessed what He said.

This makes about 70 witnesses who have heard His blasphemy.

On account of His own testimony, they condemn JESUS to death. They had previously reached the verdict that for JESUS to claim to be the Son of GOD was wrong and necessitated that He die. It is exactly as CHRIST said. They are not in truth trying the case. They are not interested in evidence or discussion or witnesses. They will make no reply to reason or logic. They have completely and totally rejected light since the day they committed the unpardonable sin, so there is nothing left to them but darkness and hardness of heart. They meant not to try the case, but "to put him to death" (Matthew 27:1). THE JEWS ALONE DID NOT KILL CHRIST

The Sanhedrin in court session has officially ratified the action taken during the darkness of the morning. There was physical light now, but still great spiritual darkness. They had made an attempt to legalize their illegal actions. But, as A.T. Robertson says, "No ratification of a wrong can make it right."

The work of the Sanhedrin is officially over, but they cannot rest for they must now deliver the Lord over to Pilate and will stop short of nothing but His death. JESUS is now bound: "And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate" (Mark 15:1). This is contrary to their own code of conduct in a criminal case, but they are forced into it in order to secure from Pilate the verdict of death which they want. They cannot turn back now; their work is not yet over. They will not rest until they stand beneath His cross with folded arms and mock.

Previously CHRIST had predicted "he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes . . ." (Matthew 16:21). And again, "Behold, we go to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles . . ." (Matthew 20:18-19).

Thus far every word has been established. The Jews have had their part in His condemnation; now the Gentiles will have their part so that the whole world will stand guilty before GOD that the Lord might have mercy on all and to all to offer them salvation by grace alone.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

02.09 - JUDAS ISCARIOT - :The End of the Betrayer"

Chapter 9

JUDAS ISCARIOT - "The End of the Betrayer"

BBB NOTE: It is the opinion of this writer that Judas was actually the seed of the serpent, a son of Satan - and as such - was not savable at all.

Please read the following study on this site (www.baptistbiblebelievers.com) for more information:
COULD JUDAS ISCARIOT BE THE ANTICHRIST?

This study looks at the issue from a different perspective - and though I believe in error concerning Judas the man, still has merit in regards to humanity as a whole. Even today, many "repent" and "confess sins" to a priest - while failing to fall on their face before JESUS. To that end, this writer considers this an important study.

So, as you read this chapter in the study "the Six Trials of CHRIST," please bear in mind that what is said concerning the sinner's salvation could apply to a Hitler, a mass-murderer, or any other sinner - but in my opinion, not to Judas Iscariot. - END BBB NOTE

The HOLY SPIRIT gives us one final glimpse into the life of Judas Iscariot before He continues with the trials of CHRIST. There are a number of reasons why the SPIRIT desires us to have this final portrait as we shall see as we uncover what He has recorded.

Two passages deal with Judas' death.

Matthew 27:3-10

Acts 1:16-19

These two accounts are not contradictory, but complementary.

Matthew is speaking in general terms in regard to the suicide of Judas, while Dr. Luke in the book of Acts is recording the specific statement of Peter with its details "known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem." (Acts 1:19)

JUDAS' REPENTANCE

Let us look first at Matthew's account.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him . . . brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders." (Matthew 27:3)

There is no reason to seek to place this incident as occurring other than where it is placed in Matthew's account. Morning has come. The Sanhedrin have completed their trial of JESUS and condemned Him. They now lead Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. As they are taking Him, Judas then came to the chief priests and elders. After this event (which Matthew carries to its

completion for the sake of clarity) JESUS stood before the governor.

Mark and observe carefully: When Judas met the members of the Sanhedrin, they were traveling with JESUS to take Him to Pilate. JESUS CHRIST was in their midst.

Did Judas repent to the Lord and plead for mercy and forgiveness? Not at all. Scripture says, "he repented himself." (Matthew 27:3) What does this mean?

In order to answer this we must understand that Scripture uses two verbs "to repent." The word translated here "repented" (metamelomai) is used only six times in Scripture. This word is in contrast with a much more frequently used verb and noun (metanoew and metanoia) used 34 and 24 times respectively. The last two words involve in Scripture the idea of a change of mind and, consequently, of action and life. It is the only word used when we are commanded to repent (Acts, Revelation).

The other word translated also "repent," used here of Judas and five other times, has more of a connection with emotion, and thus remorse and regret. Let us look at each occurrence in Scripture.

USES OF THE WORD "REPENT" IN SCRIPTURE MEANING MERELY REMORSE AND REGRET

***Matthew 21:29 : "He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented (he regretted it), and went."

***Matthew 21:32 : "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

That is, the Sanhedrin had no regret for not believing in John's message even though the publicans and harlots did believe him. The reason they did not regret it was that if they had believed John, they would have had to accept the One of whom John spoke -- JESUS CHRIST -- and this was to them unthinkable. Thus they never regretted not believing John. (This shows the meaning of the repentance mentioned in verse 29 -- i.e., Scripture interpreting Scripture).

***Hebrews 7:21 : "(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)"

Here repent is not the idea of a change of mind, but a change of feeling, of remorse, of regret. This will never come to pass. The Lord gave this prediction in Psalms 110:1 and He will never regret this prediction because the Lord JESUS CHRIST will be all that the Father has anticipated.

***2 Corinthians 7:8-10 : "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same Epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Here the verb is used twice and stands in context in contrast to the other word for "repentance."

"For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent [regret it], though I did repent [repent it at first] . . . Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance [i.e., to a true repentance or change of mind. It wasn't just an emotional response only, but also a change of action and life]: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance [i.e., not to be regretted. True repentance will never cause regrets or remorse or heart or action. Amen and Hallelujah]: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Judas is an example of this. His sorrow, his regret, his "repentance" was more than he could bear, and it worked death -- it brought him to his act of suicide.

JUDAS ONLY REPENTED TO MAN -- NOT GOD

Judas regretted he had betrayed JESUS when he saw Him condemned by the Sanhedrin and taken bound to Pilate for execution. This whole thing had not worked out as he had thought. Perhaps he had calculated that JESUS would not have allowed Himself to be captured and condemned. If this or something similar was his thinking, he is still without excuse for over and over again CHRIST said what was going to happen in minute detail. Judas' problem was that he was an unbeliever. But he is still an unbeliever. He never falls before the Lord and asks forgiveness for his deed. Why? Because he is an unbeliever, and he died an unbeliever (Acts 1:25) : "that he might go to his own place"). Had Judas fallen before the Lord he would have been forgiven. It was Ambrose who said: "If only Judas had said, 'I have sinned,' to JESUS, instead of to the priests, he could have been saved."

The issue for Judas was salvation. This was his one need.

Now notice what took place concerning Judas:

1. He had a feeling of guilt (conscience).

Remember the words that CHRIST had spoken to him in the garden? They seem to be eating into his soul.

2. He had a great emotional response.

He was sorry for his sins, and would have given anything if he had not done this one act.

3. He gave up his sin and made restitution.

He brought back the silver to the priests, and when they refused to take the money back he forced it upon them for he wanted no reminder of this deed.

4. He confessed both his sin and CHRIST's innocence.

After all, someone will say, you cannot ask a man to do much more than this.

5. He would have done penance had someone told him what to do to try to relieve his guilty conscience.

But he still would have been lost. The reason is because none of this is salvation. The Lord JESUS CHRIST is salvation.

SORROW IS NOT SALVATION

It is possible for a man to feel the full depth and consequences of his sins, and be grieved for them so as to be under a strong conviction of guilt with a great emotional response and distress of mind and deep remorse -- all of this -- and yet never experience true repentance and salvation.

The reason is because there is a wide gulf between remorse and repentance. True repentance leads to the light; remorse leads away from it. Many a person has had remorse because of their sins, but never repented of them. True repentance leads the sinner to the Saviour. That which is false and wrong leads the sinner away from his only means of salvation, and it seeks to destroy his life so that he cannot come to the Saviour. The end of following Satan is death, but before death, comes remorse. Everyone who follows Satan ends up his life with the testimony, I played the fool. Yet this confession in no way saves him at all.

Beloved, if one should be reading these words and you have been remorseful because your life has been controlled by Satan and you have done things that you ought not, do not allow him to seal your doom in the Lake of Fire. Flee to the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Many others have fled for refuge before you and no one has ever been turned down: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18). All that will come unto Him He will in no wise cast out. The Lord JESUS is the only Saviour. IS ANYONE TOO BIG A SINNER TO BE SAVED?

Someone may say that Judas was too big a sinner to be saved by the Lord. We need to pause here and meditate for a moment, for the Poet Dante and all medieval writers considered Judas to be in the lowest part of the pit where the worst of all sinners are.

There is no question that this act of Judas was a great sin.

None other than CHRIST Himself said so: "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22). In fact, He said: "It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24).

But what Judas did in reference to CHRIST, Paul did as an unbeliever to the body of CHRIST. Paul addresses himself as the chief of sinners: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

Notice the words "mercy," "grace," "all longsuffering." Paul realized that had he not obtained this grace and had he gone to hell, he would have had the greatest punishment of anyone born of woman. The reason is because punishment is in reference to a person's works against the truth: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works" (2 Timothy 4:14) and "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" (Revelation 20:12). No wonder Paul loved the Lord so much, for the Lord forgave him so very much: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47).

Could Judas have been saved then? Yes, because Paul was saved, and Paul was a greater sinner than Judas. But why had the Lord worked to lead Paul to salvation and not Judas? There is an indication given to us in 1 Timothy 1:13, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Judas was not in ignorance though he was in unbelief. Judas had light and rejected light because his deeds were evil. He refused to come to the light lest his deeds would be manifested that they were wrong. He hardened his heart and rejected light. The love of money is the root of every kind of evil: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). How true this was in the life of Judas. It caused him to finally sell the Lord JESUS for 30 pieces of silver. Oh, how we need to be on guard in our culture against "covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Paul, on the other hand, was not so controlled. Paul was in ignorance, not in sin. Touching the righteousness which is in the law he was blameless (Php 3:6). Paul never sinned wilfully, that is with full knowledge that he was rejecting truth and light: "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1) and "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

Why are we going into this? Because it brings out one of the basic truths concerning salvation. From the human standpoint men are unsaved because they refuse to come to the light, because they reject the light and by an act of their volition harden their hearts against it. Consequently, every man is saved or lost because of himself, not GOD. GOD has provided salvation for everyone. He is not willing that any be lost. No one will ever stand before the Lord and say: "But I could not have been saved because you didn't choose me." Not at all. Judas will never be able to say this. Judas is lost because Judas chose to be lost and refused to come to the Saviour. It is choice that determines our eternal destiny. It is "sin" that hardens the heart. This is a law that operates in both the unbeliever and the believer.

The HOLY SPIRIT is the only one who can soften the heart and bring the sinner to the Saviour. He leads no other place than to CHRIST: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11). If we are being driven any other place, look out -- it is the devil.

SALVATION IS NOT AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO TRUTH

But there is one more practical point that needs to be emphasized today. Satan is a master at causing us to have an emotional response to truth when we hear a soul-searching message. This is "to repent" -- as Scripture uses the term six times -- with emotion and "regret" that we haven't lived for the Lord as we should, etc., etc., and etc. If this is all we have -- and usually it is -- it accomplishes nothing. True repentance goes beyond the emotions to the mind which thus activates the will. Until the will is activated, there is no true repentance. Let us take two examples:

one, the message preached to the unsaved, and the other, our own response to revelation as saved.

Acts 2:38 : "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" That is to say, on the basis of the fact that your sins have been remitted, be baptized as the response of an obedient heart.

Verse 37 shows they had an emotional response. Peter tells them to go on and repent, i.e., change your mind about JESUS CHRIST that He did not blaspheme when He claimed to be the Son of GOD. "And be baptized." Seal your faith in action by being identified through water baptism with the believers in the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

What do we mean when we say to a sinner, "repent," or "repent of your sins." The last phrase is anything but Scriptural. If we mean by "repent," be sorry for your sins, this is completely wrong. Judas was extremely sorry for his sins. Being sorry for sins does a person no good whatever. If we mean, "change your mind about JESUS CHRIST. He died for your sins and rose again from the dead," then we are right. It is best never to even use the word "repent" in dealing with an unsaved person because his concept of the word is "to be sorry for his sins," but this is not the Scripture's concept.

For example, in Revelation 2:5 : "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent," this is a message from the Lord for believers. "Repent" is to change our mind about the essentials and then "act" accordingly. We are to "repent and do." Now let us apply the word to our own lives and be doers of it and not hearers only, having merely an emotional response.

WHAT WAS THE FULL EXTENT OF JUDAS' COVENANT WITH THE SANHEDRIN?

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he [Judas] saw that he [CHRIST] was condemned, repented [had an emotional reaction in] himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders." (Matthew 27:3)

Many Bible scholars feel that when Judas covenanted with the chief priests and elders to betray CHRIST that it involved not only his arrest, but also involved Judas actually testifying against CHRIST, as a witness. Judas, however, was nowhere to be found during the trials before the Sanhedrin. Thus the Sanhedrin was forced to try to secure others to witness against JESUS. Judas' conscience would not permit him to testify against CHRIST for he knew He was innocent.

Now the Sanhedrin's chief witness steps forward, not to testify against CHRIST, but, because of a stricken conscience, testifies for Him. He testifies of CHRIST's innocence first by action and then by word.

1. He brought again the thirty pieces of silver.

This silver, which was so dearly covenanted, brought Judas no pleasure when it was in his possession.

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing" (Proverbs 10:2).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven" (John 3:27).

Oh the times we saw something that we thought would be the one thing that would us happy only to gain it and have it bite like an adder. Sin's pleasures are but for a season if they are enjoyed at all. The wages of the sin nature is death, but before death is that bitter agony of sorrow, remorse and shame: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death" (Romans 6:21). They that sow to the flesh always reap in the end corruption.

Amnon felt he just had to have Tamar. Nothing would satisfy his heart but her. He said: "I love Tamar. (2 Samuel 13:4)" Amnon sowed to his flesh and reaped corruption.

"Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her"(2 Samuel 13:15).

The end was death for Amnon. Look out for the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. These things never satisfy the unbeliever, let alone the believer.

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

"The folks who spend their days

In buying cars and clothes and rings,

Don't seem to know that empty lives

Are just as empty filled with things." A WITNESS FOR THE DEFENSE OF JESUS APPEARS

2. Judas testified to the members of the Sanhedrin: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." (Matthew 27:4)

Now just stop and think what is involved in this testimony. Here is the Sanhedrin's chief witness testifying to them, but he is testifying of what? He is testifying for CHRIST's innocence. I remind you again: This is the highest court in Israel whose code of jurisprudence was the finest ever developed of any nation. They have the responsibility of administering justice, and after a criminal trial, when a man was condemned to death, they were to remain in their seats in case any witness might appear to speak in the criminal's defense they would call back the prisoner and hear the evidence of the witness.

Is this what is happening here? Not at all. The entire Sanhedrin is moving as a body to go to Pilate in order to secure from him the verdict of death. Will they go back and retry the case hearing the new witness that has come before them? Not at all. They reply to Judas: "What is that to us? see thou to that." (Matthew 27:4)

What do they mean: "What is that to us?" Why, it is everything to them. It is their responsibility and it cannot be side stepped. In fact, this is the very reason that Matthew brings in this incident of the Sanhedrin with Judas. He is writing to the Jews, and in his account he is bringing a legal indictment against the Sanhedrin which would be valued in any court for their impeachment.

The testimony of Judas, being the very one who in the first betrayed Him, should have been more valuable to the Sanhedrin than any other man. It stands today as a monument to the Lord's innocence.

"What is that to us? see thou to that," not only has a bearing concerning JESUS, but also against Judas himself. If Judas had sinned by betraying innocent blood, it is the responsibility of the Sanhedrin to retry the case in order to condemn Judas and let JESUS go free. Legally, the one that should have been crucified that day was Judas, not JESUS.

The law says: "Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person" (Deuteronomy 27:25). If Judas was guilty of this, it was the Sanhedrin's responsibility to show it. If Judas had witnessed against CHRIST by his betrayal of Him, as he had, he deserved to bear the punishment that was to be given to CHRIST according to the law: "If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you" (Deuteronomy 19:16-19), and it was the Sanhedrin's responsibility to so punish him. Why didn't the Sanhedrin reopen the trial? Because the very evidence that would condemn Judas would also condemn themselves.

THE SANHEDRIN'S GREATER SIN

But here is their answer to Judas. When Judas came to them and he could be used by them in their scheme to apprehend JESUS, they were his bosom friends. Now that he has done what they want they have no more use for him but cast him aside. He finds himself despised by those whose tool he was. This has been repeated over and over again in time. The world loves for what it can get, and after that is obtained for which they were seeking, they have no more use for the victim of their desires.

The Sanhedrin have no grace for this man that has come to them in desperation. The guilty can never comfort the guilty. So the world can give no help to the sinner.

The Lord JESUS CHRIST is the only One who can give grace to the sinner regardless of his sin, and it is never too late to come to Him. Judas failed to come to the only One that could help him.

One penitent thief did come in the last hour before he died to show us this mercy seat is open to all, yet there was only one so saved lest any man might presume on the grace of GOD and so wait until the last hour. Now is the day of salvation. GOD has promised no one such an opportunity to repent.

Matthew 27:5 "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

Evidently the Sanhedrin were just in the process of leaving the Temple, and with JESUS being bound, Judas knew immediately the decision they had reached. Since they refused the money, he forces it upon them: "and he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed."

The price of treason is thrown into the Temple. The expression Matthew uses for Temple is "naos", and is always used in the New Testament of the Sanctuary itself where only the priests could enter, not of the outer courts: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:19-21).

Judas does not leave this money just any place, but the one place in all the world where the priests must decide what to do with it.

They have refused to hear the witness; they will now try the case in absentia. Judas has forced them to it through the providence of GOD. In all probability Judas may not even have realized why his impulse was to cast this money into the Sanctuary. Had he left it at his home, it would have become the possession of his heirs. Had he left it on the street, it would have become the property of the one who found it. Had he put it into the treasury in the Temple, the Sanhedrin would undoubtedly had left it there saying it was his to do with as he desired. But, having left it in the Sanctuary, it becomes an issue for the chief priests to meet and decide what to do with it. Let us follow the money as Matthew traces it, and then come back to the suicide of Judas.

Matthew 27:6 "And the chief priest took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood."

Whether they met immediately or a little later in the day is not the issue. It all probability it was later in the day after their encounter with Pilate had been entirely successful, for without this, what happened to the money meant little. Matthew, however, traces the money through to completion, and then he resumes the trial.

"It is the price of blood" -- Notice this! They, the chief priests, witness the truth concerning this money, and thus concerning the whole trial. It was the price of life. A man died, not because he was guilty, but because of thirty pieces of silver -- the price of a slave. Here was the legacy of a crime and the chief priests know it. Their consciences would not allow them to put it into the treasury, nor to keep it for themselves.

But this money could just as honestly have gone back into the treasury as it came out. Yet those who unscrupulously take it out cannot decently put it back in.

These chief priests have just committed the greatest travesty of justice that the world will ever see without one qualm of conscience. Now on this little thing their consciences are religiously scrupulous. What irony! Of a truth, CHRIST spoke of them: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to the leave the other undone"?(Matthew 23:23).

Many pinch pennies and spend dollars. Many are very scrupulous in small things and commit the greatest felonies before the Lord in gossiping and sins of the tongue which things really count.

But do you understand what the chief priests are testifying here? They are meeting in council of their own group: 24 chief priests. What they are doing is far more than deciding on 30 pieces of silver. It is an issue that is at stake. This money is blood money and the chief priests testify to this fact. But when they so testify to this they are testifying to the Lord's innocence! They are saying

clearly His life was bought, not justly condemned. He was innocent, but He died anyway. This money caused His death, and thus it is blood money.

Matthew 27:7 "And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in."

Someone among them has an idea. Why not use this unclean money for unclean people in an unclean place. The old potter's field is no longer of any value for making pottery as the land has been completely worked over. It is of such a nature that nothing will grow on it either. It is available today on the market, and could be purchased for this very sum of money. We could use it to bury the heathen that die in the city of Jerusalem and thus solve the problem of what to do with them. Motion seconded and passed. Meeting adjourned. The purchase was made.

Whether they were cognizant of it or not we cannot say, but it is very likely that they realized also that this land had the curse of GOD upon it, placed there through Jeremiah. They will use this unclean money to buy an unclean place in which to bury unclean people. "Strangers" refers to those outside of the nation.

Many times money gained in an unjust way has sought to be cleansed by using it for charitable purposes.

Matthew 27:8 "The potter's field."

The Sanhedrin desired it to be called: A field to "bury strangers in." (Matthew 27:7)

The people called it correctly: "The field of blood" (Aceldama, Haqal Dema).

This thing was not done in a corner. The people knew that blood money was used to buy this land and they so nicknamed it accordingly and the name persisted in spite of all attempts to wash it away. At the time of the writing of the Gospel of Matthew, about 30 years after the events took place, the name for the graveyard was still "the field of blood." Here, Matthew says, is the historical reason why. It is not a name that would normally be attached to a graveyard, even of a heathen one. Thus the people also testify to the Lord's innocence for they know it was purchased with blood money. But the only way this money could have been blood money was for the Lord to have been innocent.

Here was erected a perpetual monument, not to Judas, but to the Sanhedrin and to the infamous deed that they had committed. They have tried the case in abstentia and have found the Lord innocent. "They" are the ones who act the decision of their own council, as Matthew says in the following verses, and so seal their decision in deed. By this very important act they stand self-condemned.

It is a very important principle of Scripture that the Lord allows each man to pronounce his own sentence.

"And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow" (Luke 19:22).

"If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job 9:20).

"So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away" (Psalms 64:8).

Matthew 27:9 Matthew's quotation is full of meaning at this point and yet it presents some problems. The quotation is said to be from Jeremiah and yet the idea comes from Zechariah. Here then is a problem. Various solutions have been offered.

1. Some feel that Jeremiah originally gave the prediction but that it was not written down. It was transmitted orally until Zechariah recorded it. This would be similar to our Lord's statement in Acts 20:35 recorded by Paul: "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

2. Some think that Matthew originally wrote the words "the prophets" without giving any name, and that some early scribe placed the name Jeremiah by mistake. In favor of this view the Syriac version which is one of the oldest, reads simply "the prophet." The Persian version also omits it.

3. Some hold that Matthew originally wrote the words "Zechariah the prophet" and that an ignorant transcriber very early changed the word into Jeremiah. In favor of this position is that in manuscripts, names were often written in a shortened form in which only the initial letter would be different (IRIOU and ZRIOU). By the change from Z to I the mistake easily have been made.

4. Some contend that originally the former prophets began with Joshua in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the latter prophets began with Jeremiah rather than the present day arrangement which finds Isaiah first. Since each division in the Old Testament canon was known by the first book in the section (e.g., Psalms refers often times to the entire third division - Luke 24:44). Jeremiah would then stand in place of the prophetic prophets which would include Zechariah.

The solution offered by Augustine is no solution at all. He said: "Matthew forgot what he was doing and made a blunder. He quoted from memory, and inaccurately. He meant Zechariah and not Jeremiah." If writers of the New Testament can make blunders, then we can never know what is truth and what is not. We have no word of truth.

My own position is this. Matthew wrote Jeremiah and he meant Jeremiah, but he also quotes from Zechariah the essence of his prediction. Matthew is not confused; he knows what belongs to Jeremiah and what belongs to Zechariah having quoted Zechariah less than one chapter before (Matthew 26:31). In Matthew's thinking, Jeremiah is the more important of the two, while Zechariah is the specific. THE VALLEY OF TOPHETH

Jeremiah 19 is devoted to this area of ground of the Potter's Field. It was "the valley of the son of Hinnom. (Jeremiah 7:31)" He owned the ground. It had been called Tophet in the King James, but Topheth is the Hebrew word signifying the place of burning. It is first mentioned in 2 Kings 23:10 at the reforms of Josiah. Topheth was where the idol Molech had been set up and where the Israelites were sacrificing their infant sons and daughters, placing them in the brass arms of this god that had been heated to destroy whatever was placed there. Jeremiah gives a prophecy against it first in Jeremiah 7:31-32. He then enlarges upon this in Jeremiah 19.

This place will no longer be called Tophet nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, and it wasn't. It will be called: "The Valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place" (Jeremiah 7:32; Jeremiah 19:6, Jeremiah 19:11). Now in the enlargement of the prophecy Jerusalem receives the curses of the land of Tophet (Jeremiah 19:12-15).

This is what is behind the thinking of Matthew. "God so ordered it that the elders of Israel purchased the field on which the curse of Jeremiah rested, thus making it the property of the Jewish State. By so doing, they transferred that curse to themselves and the people." The curse of Tophet becomes the curse of the city of Jerusalem. GOD will make this city as Tophet, till there be no place to bury.

The chief priests of the nation as heads of State have purchased the land of Tophet and with it its curses to themselves and the people of Israel by this act. It will be fulfilled to the letter in A.D. 70 under the siege and destruction of Titus. The city will be laid "even with the ground, and thy children within thee" (Luke 19:44).

GOD will not be mocked. They have set their own judgment by this act.

ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY

Zechariah's prophecy gives us added detail. In Zechariah, chapter 11 we find the true SHEPHERD coming and ministering to the nation. But the Lord tells the SHEPHERD that it is "the flock of slaughter" that He is ministering to (Zechariah 11:4, Zechariah 11:6-7).

In verse 12 the SHEPHERD asks the nation to price His ministry. How faithful and how wonderful do you consider my ministry as the SHEPHERD? "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (Zechariah 11:12).

Is there anything significant about this? Most certainly there is. In Exodus 21:32 this is the price of a slave gored by an ox. This is their utter repudiation and contempt for the ministry of the Lord's SHEPHERD. But with it the nation in truth becomes the flock of slaughter. To prove this, the very money with which they valued the SHEPHERD was cast to the potter. According to Zechariah this transaction was carried out in the house of the Lord (Zechariah 11:13). This is an amazing prediction. The nation valued the Lord, and then bought the potter's field with this same money they used to value His ministry.

Jeremiah gives the curse; Zechariah shows the price; Matthew records it was transacted just as predicted.

JUDAS' SUICIDE

Having traced through the money and the purchase of the land with it, we need to go back and take a final look at the death of Judas. Matthew records only that Judas went out and hanged himself. Dr. Luke in the Book of Acts enlarges upon the details of the death of Judas.

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5).

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem;

insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood."
(Acts 1:18-19)

Only two men in all of Scripture commit suicide by hanging: Ahithophel in the Old Testament, and Judas in the New. Scripture had pronounced anyone hanging on a tree as cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Ahithophel was the counsellor and friend of David. He betrayed his master and went with Absalom in his rebellion against David, only to have his own words rejected. This led to his ignominious end (2 Samuel 17:23). In all of this Ahithophel is a type of Judas.

Suicide is treated by Scripture as being one of the most contemptible acts of which mankind is capable. In it all reason is cast to the wind. The law of self-preservation becomes deadened. Unbelief takes over as the person's master. The individual reasons it is better to leave than to stay and cope with life, failing to realize that it will be worse in death than life, for after death is the judgment.

In such an act the person seeks in effect to strike back at GOD.

It is a way of saying to GOD that He has not been good, righteous and loving; that it is impossible for the person to cope with the circumstances of life; and that there is no source of strength or place of help. Such an act, then, denies the goodness of GOD to all men. It denies the providence of GOD that He is seeking our repentance and turning to Him through the events that happen unto us. It denies the love of GOD that GOD loves me and the Lord JESUS CHRIST gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20). Socrates said that GOD has placed us here, as at some military post and, until He recalls us, it is our business to hold it. In this he is in line with the revealed truth of Scripture.

Peter tells us: "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity." How is this possible when Matthew tells us that it was not Judas at all that bought the land, but the chief priests? The point of law is this: The money was still considered to be Judas', and to have been applied by him in the purchase of that potter's field. It is very frequent in the Word to represent a man doing that which he is merely the cause or occasion for another to act. Acts 2:23 is an example. Speaking to the men of Israel, Peter says (Acts 2:23): "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The men of Israel had crucified Him through their leaders and through the Roman soldiers, yet the act was theirs. So with the property. The Chief priests would have made the act of valuing, selling, and purchasing all Judas'; but they themselves were equally guilty for all that transpired.

Looking at what happened to Judas, we find him dying a double death. Judas hung himself on a tree, but either the rope he used broke, or the branch of the tree, so that having suspended himself over a cliff he falls, not feet first, but he is thrown head first, perhaps caused by a slight incline in the slope. In this manner he hits at the bottom of the cliff a sharp rock that pierces his intestines and he dies an aggravated death. Only too late did Judas learn that the Lord JESUS CHRIST, whom he failed ever to call "Lord," holds the world and all things therein together.

Those who have visited Palestine tell us that there is a precipice over the valley of Hinnom where trees still grow quite near the edge. A rocky pavement exists also at the bottom of the ledges. Dr.

Luke records the vivid account of his death from the lips of Peter which was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem. He tells us further that at that time, some 43 days after the events took place, the people had called the place the field of blood (Acts 1:19). Thus we find that the name "The field of blood" has a dual significance. In Acts it is so called because it was the place where Judas died a horrible death. In Matthew the name is used thirty years later as an indictment against the Sanhedrin because blood money was used to buy this field. Both accounts are right but are approaching the events from a different point of view.

"Judas by transgression fell" (Acts 1:25) from the ministry and apostleship to which he was appointed. He fell because of unbelief in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and he went "to his own place." He refused mercy so there was only judgment left. He spurned coming to the only One who could extend mercy to him, so now he will receive justice for all eternity.

Friend, though "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", we may be "justified freely ("without a cause", John 15:25) by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:23-24).

The word propitiation may also be considered as "mercy seat." There is one place where GOD may show His mercy and manifest His grace to the vilest sinner. It is at the cross where the blood becomes the basis of GOD showing mercy to the sinner.

If you come -- mercy.

If you spurn the invitation -- justice.

You make the decision, but eternity is in it.

~ end of chapter 9 ~

02.10 - The First Trial Before Pilate

Chapter 10 THE FIRST TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

We now come to the civil trials which were three in number. CHRIST was first tried before Pilate and pronounced innocent. He was then sent to Herod who made a mockery of the whole thing, signifying the Lord's innocence. Finally He came back to Pilate who tried the case for a final time.

The time of day "was early" (John 18:28) which is an expression that signifies the fourth watch of the night. The sun had not risen as yet. The Sanhedrin had met in their hall for their condemnation of JESUS just as it was light. Matthew and Mark mention only that it was morning, and Luke, "as soon as it was day" (Luke 22:66). This trial would not have lasted over five minutes at the most. Since it becomes light an hour before sunrise, the Sanhedrin may have been before Pilate by 5 or 5:15 A.M. His first trial before Pilate could easily have been limited to five minutes after which time He was sent off to Herod. There before Herod CHRIST answered nothing. He was mocked and sent back to Pilate. All this could have taken place within a half hour, making it 5:45 A.M. Pilate could have said to them "Behold your King", which John says was "about the sixth hour" (John 19:14). John in all his Gospel, living among the Gentiles, reckons time according to the Roman method which begins the new day at midnight, rather than the Jewish method of naming the hours from sunrise. Thus all the events of the trials may be harmonized together as far as time is concerned, and with the fact that CHRIST was crucified at 9 A.M. in the morning which was the third hour as reckoned by the Jews (Mark 15:25).

WHY PILATE?

Why was it that the Sanhedrin took JESUS to Pilate? Why did they not execute Him themselves even as they stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:57-60), and as they would have killed Paul had he not been rescued by the Romans (Acts 22:22; Acts 23:10)?

The stoning of Stephen was a mob action, and it was illegal.

Judea was a conquered country, and, while the Romans sought to work with the existing governments of their conquered states, the right of the sword remained in their sole control. The Jews could try a man according to their own law, but they could not legally put a man to death. This they acknowledge before Pilate when they are seeking him to pass the death penalty upon CHRIST (John 18:31).

John records that this was in actuality fulfilling our Lord's own prediction that He was not going to be the victim of mob rule, but was to be delivered by his own nation to the Gentiles: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again" (Matthew 20:18-19), and receive, not stoning, but death by crucifixion: "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die" (John 18:32). Krummacher observes: "For the second

time they hand over their brother Joseph to the uncircumcised and to strangers. By this transfer they typified, at the same time, their own fate. The world's salvation, intended for them in the first instance, was by them most ungratefully given up to the Gentiles; while they themselves were thenceforward left to languish in darkness and the shadow of death."

Pilate was Procurator of Palestine, and was thus the representative of Caesar in Judea. To him was delegated authority from the Roman Governor of Syria the condemning to death of any person. The right of the sword was Rome's, not Israel's; and they knew this. Even though the Jews had tried a man, he was retried all over again in a Roman court by Roman law before the death sentence could be passed against him. The procedure to this point had been private, or nearly so, but it was the very essence of proceedings at Roman law that they were public.

While the private proceedings worked to the detriment of truth and righteousness, the public proceedings will also work to the same end. It is not the method that is wrong or right in either case; it is the heart of man that is defiled. WHO IS PONTIUS PILATE?

Before looking at the trial itself before Pilate, we need to take a look at this man who is the Procurator at this time. Palestine was a district under the authority of the Roman Governor of Syria. Pilate was Procurator from A.D. 26 to 36. He had been appointed by the Roman Senate, and made his residence in Caesarea -- a Roman name meaning "Caesar's town" -- which was a Roman or Gentile city, a small imitation of Rome with its theatres, baths, games, etc. On special Jewish feast days he would go up to Jerusalem with a large band of soldiers in order to keep order. While in Jerusalem he would make his residence in what had formerly been the royal palace built by Herod the Great. It was situated on the hill southwest of the one on which the Temple stood. It is said to have been a magnificent building, rivaling the Temple itself in appearance, and large enough to be capable of containing a small army. It consisted of the main building with two wings on either side. In between the two wings and in front of the main building was a broad pavement. It was on this pavement in the open air where the trial before Pilate occurs.

Pilate had been born in Seville, Spain. He hated the Jews and was detested equally by them. The former Procurators had ordered the removal of the image of the Emperor from the standards of the Roman soldiers before marching them into Jerusalem, in order to avoid the appearance of the worship of the Caesars, and so offend the Jews. Pontius Pilate did no such thing. He forced this hated emblem on them even though later he retracted. Also during his time as Procurator, he had robbed the Temple treasury and used the money to build an aqueduct to bring water into the city of Jerusalem. A number of revolts had arisen in Palestine against his regime. Each time there was a revolt, he would kill a number of Jews, and so use this tactic to suppress further revolts.

One such revolt is spoken of in Luke 13:1-3. Josephus does not even mention this particular incident which indicates something of it being a rather commonplace occurrence. Most Bible scholars feel this is a reference to "the followers of Judas of Galilee, who . . . taught that Jews should not pay tribute to the Romans, and of whom we learn, from Acts 5:37, that he drew after him a multitude of followers, who, on his being slain, were all dispersed. About this time that party would be at its height, and if Pilate caused this detachment of them to be waylaid and put to death, as they were offering their sacrifices at one of the festivals, that would be 'mingling their blood with their sacrifice'" (Jamison, Faucett, Brown Commentary).

Even among Roman leaders, Pilate was known for his inhuman cruelty. His discharge of his office in Judea had been brought to the attention of the Roman senate. It seems that at this precise time the Roman senate was investigating Pilate's running of his office. There had been so many revolts that they feel he cannot be a good administrator. Caligula does banish Pilate from his job subsequent to this time. Caligula himself was known for his inhumanity, but even he could not stand for Pilate's inhumanity. He banished Pilate to Gaul. It was while in Gaul that Pilate committed suicide. Thus you can see what kind of a man Pilate was.

With this background in mind of the Sanhedrin's hatred for Pilate and for Rome itself, think of the irony of their statement that they will make. While their hatred for Rome was great; their hatred of JESUS CHRIST was greater. They will, therefore, take the part of Rome and Rome's interests until finally they exclaim: "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). The passages that bear upon this trial are:

"And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" (Matthew 27:11-14)

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled" (Mark 15:1-5)

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaeen" (Luke 23:1-6)

"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my

kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:28-38)

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Timothy 6:13).

Let us now move through the events that occur.

John 18:28 : "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover"

Pilate was sitting in the Judgment Hall when they arrived with JESUS. The reason he was seated here is that someone had come ahead and notified him that the Sanhedrin were coming. He was prepared for their arrival.

But then they came, the Jews would not enter into the Judgment Hall "lest they should be defiled." This was to them a very important principle. Once again we see how meticulous they were to seek to keep the minute details of the law but "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matthew 23:23). They "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." (Matthew 23:24) CHRIST went in and He was not defiled. They stayed out and were defiled with His blood upon their hands.

John says they would not enter in "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover." (John 18:28) Here is given to us both the negative and the positive reason for their action. Now the Jews who led JESUS to this hall, but would not enter themselves, are not condemned for this action of their not entering in any more than of tithing mint and anise and cummin. The Lord said "these ought to be done, and not leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23). Here before Pilate their error was bringing their MESSIAH to Rome asking His death.

We want to make one further comment before leaving John 18:28. The Lord's whole purpose in the laws of defilement and separation from leaven for the nation of Israel was to teach them truth. The Lord emphasizes this in Matthew 16:6; Matthew 16:12 where He says to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees which was their doctrine. Paul also uses leaven as figurative of malice and wickedness (1 Corinthians 5:8) which is to be separated from the believer. Israel had kept the action but not the meaning.

She was going through the ritual without the reality. She had the ceremony without its significance. But, beloved, this is our danger too. Israel had made the law into a religion where acts or things defiled and other acts made you holy. This was totally wrong. Holiness is a matter of the heart and defilement is a matter of the heart. The Lord's disciples were criticized for eating with unwashed hands, i.e., hands that had not been ceremonially washed according to the traditions of the elders after that person had walked in the market place and may have come into contact with something common or unclean. Our Lord's answer was that defilement was not an external thing, but a heart condition: "Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly,

and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matthew 15:17-20). Let us never forget it.

Just because someone doesn't do everything just like we do it is no sign they are carnal and we are more spiritual. In fact, the moment we criticize another brother unjustly, even in our heart, we are the ones who are defiled.

Israel here was defiled because their hearts defiled them. CHRIST was pure, righteous and undefiled because His heart was right: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). The issues of life are heart issues, not church traditions or personal standards.

John 18:29 : "Pilate then went out unto them, and said, what accusation bring ye against this man?"

Because the leaders would not come to Pilate, he was forced to yield to their scruples lest his failure to do so resulted in uncontrollable mob action and tumult for which he would be called into question. Even though Pilate yields to their whims, the subsequent language reveals there is no love for these people in his heart either. Here is the Judge rising from his judicial bench and going out to the mob to try the case.

What does Pilate know about JESUS even before he steps out to speak to the crowd? Matthew will tell us later on that Pilate "knew that for envy they had delivered" JESUS to him (Matthew 27:18). His wife also will send word to him later that morning saying: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). Pilate certainly knew something of what was going on in the area and in all probability he and his wife had even spoken about JESUS CHRIST. Pilate displays, through the entire proceedings, a real interest in JESUS and a genuine respect, so that he must have had some previous knowledge of Him and knew that the Sanhedrin had for envy delivered JESUS over to him. Pilate's wife had, moreover, dreamed about the Lord this very night, and it was a vivid nightmare. Since Pilate had risen early this morning, he was not around when his wife, Precula (as tradition calls her) arose. She was so terror stricken by her experience that she felt compelled to send word to her husband.

"What accusation bring ye against this man?" (John 18:29)

For Pilate to try the case there must first be an accusation presented to him. Mark it well. Pilate is not asking them for the verdict they have reached in their trial with a view to merely carrying out the sentence they have passed. He begins from the beginning to try the case himself according to Roman law.

This puts the Sanhedrin in an embarrassing position. You will remember that their charge against Him, for which they had tried JESUS, was blasphemy. He was found guilty by them, and the penalty was death. But blasphemy was not a capital crime according to Roman law. Consequently, the leaders never once mention the true charge for they knew if they once did the

case would have been thrown out of court. For example, consider Acts 18:14-16 : "And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat."

But there is another reason why they do not dare mention blasphemy as their true cause for condemning CHRIST. Blasphemy in the Jewish sense was a man claiming to be GOD. But for a man to claim to be a god was true to a Roman. The Roman Caesar was god, and all were to worship him. "You mean you Jews do not accept Caesar as god?" Pilate would have asked them, and then they would have been on trial, not JESUS.

Their first approach is to side-step the issue. They put up a smoke screen seeking to evade the question and hoping this will suffice.

John 18:30 : "They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee."

By this haughtiness of speech they hope to cover up the weakness of their case. They are asking Pilate to forego any trial and merely pass sentence since they only bring malefactors to him, i.e., the worst of criminals, and if he were not one they would not have bother Pilate with Him.

John 18:31 : "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law."

Pilate is not about to yield. Rome was known the world around at this time for its legal justice and for its court system.

This was the Roman's pride even as the philosophies were the pride of the Greeks. Roman law demanded that criminal proceedings could be entered into only on definite accusations. Pilate is being investigated by the Roman senate at this very time, so he is forced to be very careful. He demands legal charges -- a civil and not a religious accusation -- against this prisoner. If the Sanhedrin does not wish to comply with Roman law, then they will have to try the case themselves according to their own law.

The Sanhedrin is losing the situation fast and they know it. Their indirect approach has backfired on them. In desperation they yell out the bitter and painful fact that they are subject to Rome.

"The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." (John 18:31)

Their stoning of Stephen, not too far distant, was an unlawful action on the part of the Sanhedrin. The power of life and death among the conquered peoples of Rome resided in the authority of Rome alone. While lesser powers might be given to the governments of the conquered nations, Rome never relinquished the right of the sword.

John 18:32 : "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die"

John adds one of his characteristic footnotes that what is happening is merely the fulfillment of what CHRIST predicted. Had the Sanhedrin taken things into their own hands as they did with Stephen, JESUS CHRIST would have been stoned and not have died by crucifixion (John 3:14;

John 8:28; John 12:32-33).

Since the Sanhedrin has sought the death penalty from Pilate, they are forced to yield and submit their articles of accusation. John does not record them because Dr. Luke already has given these to us and John is content to record events not covered by the other Gospels.

"And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king" (Luke 23:2)

Think of this. They have tried the Lord JESUS CHRIST and convicted him on one charge and now they present an entirely new charge before Rome. Many have thought this charge was a three-fold one; others, a two-fold. I personally feel it was all one charge and is so understood as such and treated by Pilate. In essence, "This One we found perverting the nation, even (namely) forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying He Himself is CHRIST king." The way they claimed JESUS was perverting the nation was forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying He was Himself MESSIAH-KING.

Notice that the Sanhedrin here takes the position of Rome and stands up for Rome's interests. They accuse JESUS CHRIST of treason, not against His nation, but against Rome. When the nation went after idols, the Lord sent them to Babylon, the center of idolatry, where Jeremiah said, "They are mad upon their idols" (Jeremiah 50:38). It was there that the nation got its fill and was cured of idolatry. Now the nation is going after Rome, and is mad after Rome, so that they will cry out: "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). The Lord will yet bring judgment upon them, for their false Messiah will make a covenant with the head of the revived Roman Empire which will be a covenant with death and sheol (Isaiah 28:15). Israel will learn, but only through great trial. GOD will give them up to their own heart. They want Caesar to be their king and they will have it until they acknowledge their offense and cry out, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matthew 21:9)

How truthful is this accusation? Was it true that JESUS was perverting the nation? The answer depends upon how you look at the situation, and this is the point. It was a half truth, but was made to Pilate with the intent to deceive him in taking it the wrong way. According to the Sanhedrin, JESUS CHRIST was rejecting the nation, not against Rome, but against themselves. This was the true issue, and this is why the Sanhedrin felt forced to act to get rid of JESUS CHRIST (John 11:48), "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him . . ." But the leaders used this as if CHRIST was perverting the nation against Rome. This was not so. In reality, they were the ones who had perverted the nation and the law through their traditions. They were the ones getting rich through religion. They were the ones also who were seeking a MESSIAH who would overthrow the Roman yoke. They rejected JESUS as their MESSIAH because He was not such a MESSIAH as they wanted (John 10:22-42).

Their proof offered that JESUS was perverting the nation is an absolute falsehood. CHRIST never forbid to give tribute to Caesar. The Sanhedrin had sent certain ones to catch Him in this very thing, but He refused to be caught (Matthew 22:15-22). He had said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's," when shown a Roman coin. This charge was a deliberate lie. Yet we know from history that the chief priests and the crowd there were the ones who were trying every scheme there was to get around paying

taxes to Rome. A person on the spot will always accuse someone else of the very thing of which he himself is guilty. The thought is that if I am guilty of this, he must be also. The Sanhedrin are on the spot, and so having told a lie they must cover it with truth. CHRIST had said He Himself is CHRIST-KING. In this they were right, he had claimed to be their MESSIAH, and had authenticated those claims with signs. The Sanhedrin had rejected the claims saying His power was satanic power not Holy power. They know His claim. They now seek to use it for their advantage. They speak the truth, but they say it in a way to deceive. They know Pilate would understand this in a political sense and so try the case. The charge has been made. Pilate must now act. He has the accusation, and he knows that if he dismisses this charge without investigation he will sure enough be in "hot water" with the senate which could pronounce him guilty of malfeasance in office. He now leaves the crowd and goes into the Praetorium to talk to JESUS (John 18:33). Remember that it was the very essence of proceedings under Roman law that they were conducted in public. But the Jews themselves would not enter into the Praetorium, thus making this talk between Pilate and JESUS private. At this point all four Gospels record certain aspects of the proceedings.

Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3, John 18:33-38 a

Right at this point in John's Gospel is the most complete, so we will follow the trial in John.

John 18:33 : "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus."

As Pilate went back into the Praetorium and sat upon the judgment seat, he then had the prisoner brought before him. The Lord had not been outside listening to what had transpired, but was inside the Praetorium while Pilate had secured from the Sanhedrin their accusations against JESUS.

Here Pilate comes face to face with JESUS CHRIST, and, whether he realizes it or not, he, and through him the Roman Empire, are on trial. The true JUDGE is JESUS CHRIST and the person on trial is Pilate. The very secrets of his heart are going to be exposed. The very same thing is true of Paul and Agrippa in Acts 26. No man comes near the light without having the light expose what he, in truth, really is.

"And said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?"

Because of the situation and the circumstances as they have developed, Pilate is endeavoring to make the prisoner incriminate Himself contrary to Roman law. He asks a question which is a true question and it stands in contrast to verse 37 where the question is asked with the expected answer to be given is yes. There the question in the English might be, "Thou art a King then?" Here the English is correct: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

This title "King of the Jews" will remain before Pilate and he will place it over the cross to the gall of the Sanhedrin. In this he will not change. The term "Jew" is the way the heathen had of designating all twelve tribes of Israel, and it was so used from the time of Esther (Cf. Acts 2:26; Acts 21:20-21; Acts 26:7). CHRIST is a KING not of just the one tribe of Judah, but of the entire nation and of the whole world.

John 18:34 : "Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?"

The Lord answers first with a question: "Why are you asking this of me. Is it because of actions that have been reported to you by your soldiers that either I or my disciples have acted in insurrection against Rome, or are you asking this because others of the same as I am -- Jews -- have told this of me?"

CHRIST wants to know, is Pilate asking this as Commander of soldiers that have told him about the incident of insurrection in the Garden that very morning, or is he asking this as Governor because the Jews have told him that this was His claim. The reason it was asked is because it makes a great difference in the Lord's reply.

This questioning of Pilate nettles him since he does not realize its significance. He thus has not been told about the incident in the garden.

John 18:35 : "Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?"

Pilate knew nothing except what the Jewish leaders had just told him. Moreover, he was not a Jew himself so as to know the significance of being the CHRIST nor to judge whether this One standing before him was or was not the CHRIST-KING. "You are accused by the Jews: therefore what have You done?" This is what Pilate wanted to know. CHRIST then proceeds.

John 18:36 : "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Every word is carefully selected by Him who is the Truth. The question cannot be answered yes or no, but takes explanation. CHRIST three times says, "My kingdom." He has a kingdom.

It is not of this world. It is not a temporal kingdom that is a political threat to Caesar nor usurps any power given to Caesar. If this had been the case then My servants, CHRIST says (literally "officers"; same word used in verses 3, 12, 18 and 22), would fight that I should not have been delivered to the Jews and by them to the Romans. The very fact that I am a prisoner shows I am not politically motivated. "Now my kingdom is not from hence." (John 18:36)

Oh how significant is this word "now." There will come the day when He will be against Rome and against Rome's Caesar whom He "shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). But that is another day and another hour. Not now is My kingdom of force and power against Rome.

John 18:37 : "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then?"

This is logical in light of the fact that three times CHRIST spoke of His kingdom. "You are a King then?"

"Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (John 18:37)

The other three Gospels merely record "Thou sayest" -- an idiom for "Yes, I am." John gives the enlarged, the complete, the emphatic answer. A king is born a king, and I was so born. And not

only born, but I came into the world. I was in existence before my appearance in flesh. I came to bear witness unto the truth. My kingdom is not a Jewish kingdom, it is a universal kingdom. It is for all men everywhere. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

The Lord is seeking the soul of this man and is approaching him on his own ground. Would he be truthful? If he would, he would thereby manifest that he belonged to the Lord's kingdom. Or would he play politics? Politics it had been for Pilate and politics it was to be.

Here was the difference between Rome and CHRIST. The kingdom of Rome was governed by expediency. The kingdom of CHRIST was governed by truth. The one was temporal and passing; the other, eternal and abiding. The one governed the bodies of men who were its citizens; the other, the hearts and souls of its citizens. The one was physical, the other spiritual. Just as Rome had extended its influence out beyond its borders; so CHRIST's kingdom was more than Jewish. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. Therefore, as many as received Him, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, whether they be paupers or kings, to them He gave authority to become the sons of GOD. (John 1:11-12).

Now the JUDGE has spoken. Would the prisoner, Pilate, play politics and do that which was expedient, or would he abide by the truth regardless of the outcome? Pilate is on trial. CHRIST had come to bear witness of the truth. The truth already existed, but CHRIST only bore witness of it. As such He is PROPHET as well as KING.

To this invitation by CHRIST to Pilate for him to be His disciple of truth, "Pilate said unto Him" cynically.

John 18:38 : "What is truth?"

Even though he asked the question, he wasn't honestly seeking its answer. With the asking of the question, he leaves the Praetorium and goes out once again to the Jews. His whole background is that truth is relative, not absolute. His question was not a question at all, but rather a declarative statement.

"What is truth" was his question, but he never waited to be instructed by the One who was Truth, but went out to act on his own. Here the Eternal Truth will be batted around and finally Pilate will succumb to the pressures of the moment.

CHRIST has spoken to Pilate, but will now be silent. During the remaining trials CHRIST will utter but one more word. Why? Is it because He has changed? Not at all. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He changes not. But Pilate has rejected truth, and he will be given no more truth until he acts on what he knows. The only revelation is that of sin and judgment to follow.

Thus the Lord deals with all in the same way, being the unchangeable and eternal GOD. He who spurns truth will receive no more truth to trample under foot, and it makes no difference whether he is an unbeliever or a believer. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, not naturally discerned. "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). Unless you are in right relation to the SON you will never know the Father, nor will you ever know the SON. "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 to us of God . . . 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" (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

Whenever you or I feel like the heavens are as brass when we pray and that we are not getting through, just remember that GOD hasn't changed. Whenever this Book becomes closed to new truth and it becomes dry and monotonous so that we complain as Israel, "all there is to eat is this light bread and we loath it," look out. The problem is with us, not GOD. The problem is sin, a wrong heart attitude and rejection of truth already revealed. The only revelation that will be given us is judgment.

As Pilate leaves the Praetorium this time, he has the One who was handed over to him escorted out of the Praetorium with him, all prepared to release Him. We know this from the subsequent things that happen.

PILATE'S VERDICT

"And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in him no fault at all." (John 18:38) Dr. Luke records the same words: "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).

The trial is officially over.

The charge was treason against Rome.

The verdict of acquittal was given.

The legal order to discharge the defendant was all that remained.

But it never came. For the Sanhedrin had not come for the verdict of acquittal. They had come for His death, not His release, and they were prepared to pay any price to accomplish it.

"And they were the more fierce . . ." (Luke 23:5). The announcement of His innocence sent them to more urgent pressure upon Pilate, and he was no match for them.

Josephus records for us in his "Antiquities of the Jews," XVIII, 3, 1 what happened when Pilate tried to force Caesar's image upon the people of Jerusalem that were on the standards of the soldiers. Pilate was the first to bring these images into Jerusalem and he did it secretly at night. When the Sanhedrin knew it they went to Caesarea in multitudes and interceded with Pilate for five days. On the sixth day Pilate had his fill and ordered his soldiers to have their weapons concealed and he would appear on his judgment-seat with the army concealed ready for action. When the Jews petitioned him once again, he gave the signal and his soldiers surrounded the Jews, and Pilate threatened them with immediate death unless they would leave off disturbing him, and go home. At this they threw themselves to the ground and laid their necks bare, saying they would take their deaths very willingly rather than have their laws transgressed and their city defiled. When Pilate saw their fanatical devotion to keep their laws inviolable, he gave the order to bring the images back from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

It was to these same people Pilate had condescended to leave the Praetorium and go out to them because of their cause when it was fixed and immovable. In this case it was the death of JESUS CHRIST.

Here came a barrage of fresh accusations, with the Sanhedrin being more vocal than before. At this point we must integrate the accounts of Matthew and Mark together in order to acquire the complete picture.

"And the chief priests accused him of many things" (Mark 15:3).

"And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" (Matthew 27:12-13).

"And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled" (Mark 15:4-5).

Or as Matthew states, "And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" Matthew 27:14)

He would not give any more truth to Pilate. He would not speak in His own defense. His resurrection from among the dead would be His vindication. Now He was as the lamb led to the slaughter. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Everyone was excited and disturbed in the entire gathering but JESUS CHRIST. This was their hour to do what they wished and He was completely surrendered to the will of the Father. He had complete calmness, and why not? His heart alone was right of all that were there. Pilate marvelled and well he might for others would have sought witnesses and sought to vindicate themselves. But "Jesus appealed to no one, either in Heaven or on earth."

In the new group of charges someone was heard saying: "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place" (Luke 23:5). Galilee had been a hot bed of insurrection against Rome and the mention of it was for the purpose of inciting guilt by association of place. But the charge was not sedition -- "the excitement of discontent against the government." With the mention of Galilee, Pilate feels there may be a way out of the dilemma in which he finds himself. "When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time" (Luke 23:6-7).

It was not an unusual procedure in Roman law to transfer a prisoner from the territory where he had been arrested to his place of origin to be tried. Herod was then governor of Galilee, while Pilate was of Judea. As a Galilean, CHRIST came under Herod's jurisdiction. CHRIST, in place of being released after the verdict of acquittal, is bound now once again and is conducted to Herod's residence to be tried by him.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

02.11 - The Trial Before Herod

Chapter 11 THE TRIAL BEFORE HEROD

Only Dr. Luke records the trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12). This trial would add nothing to the theme of Matthew, Mark or John, but it does to the theme of Luke. The Man JESUS CHRIST went through this experience, and He came out vindicated of any wrong. Pilate used this in his argument for CHRIST's release (Luke 23:15). This trial is referred to also in Acts 4:27.

In order to understand the full significance of the events that transpire as CHRIST appears before Herod, we must understand something of the background behind this man's life.

There was a family of Herods, and it is essential to keep the various ones in mind in order to understand the various events. Thus the name "Herod" was not a personal name, but the family or surname.

There is one major Herod in each generation.

Herod the Great sought to kill the infant JESUS by putting all babies to death in the area of Bethlehem.

Herod Antipas was the one responsible for killing John the Baptist and it is before this Herod that CHRIST appears now for trial.

Herod Agrippa I killed James the brother of John, and would have killed Peter also, but Peter was miraculously delivered from prison.

Herod Agrippa II was the king before whom Paul appeared, and it was this man that said: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28)

Herod Antipas is the major Herod of Scripture. That is to say, more is said about him and he is found involved in more incidents than any other Herod. These incidents give us an insight into what is happening at the trial and why. Let us consider them, and then we will look at the trial itself.

Luke 13:31-33

:31 -- "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee" (Literally, "for Herod wills to kill thee").

Can you imagine the Pharisees being interested in saving the life of JESUS CHRIST? Not at all. What they were interested in is terrifying JESUS from ministering in Galilee under Herod's jurisdiction and so have Him come into Judea and to Jerusalem where their authority could exercise more control over Him. But the Lord JESUS CHRIST does not terrify.

:32 -- "And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, behold, I cast out devils (demons), and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."

Since you are the message bearers to Me from him, go and return a message. I am working today and tomorrow, and then I am perfected. That is it. No man is going to do anything to Me before My time has come.

CHRIST accommodates the message bearers with a message to return. It may be that the Pharisees had picked up a bit of gossip from Herod's courtiers of what Herod expressed once to them: "And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him" (Mark 6:14). They capitalize upon it for their own ends.

JESUS calls Herod "that fox" and it was a perfect description of his character. Just because He used such an epithet does not mean that we have this right. We are still "not to speak ill of the ruler of thy people." Here is a case when the prophet is not sparing the king in denouncing his actions. Herod was plotting snares as a fox, while CHRIST was continuing to work His good works. He can plot all He wants, it will do him no good.

"To day and to morrow" seems to indicate a specific period of time which is very definite and it will neither be lengthened nor shortened by anyone. In the context it can neither mean literal days nor stand for years. It is used as a figure of speech for a period of definite duration.

"I am perfected." The next verse parallels this verse and shows that CHRIST will be perfected through suffering and death that He will encounter in Jerusalem. This word is the same as that used in Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 5:9.

". . . to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering" (Hebrews 2:10).

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect . . ." (Hebrews 5:9).

:33 -- "Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Luke 13:33)

It seems that this verse is addressed not to Herod so much as it is to the Pharisees. Jerusalem has the monopoly of killing the prophets, and the city will not be deprived of its right to kill the PROPHET. When I die, it will be Jerusalem, but I am not there yet, and I have the time until I arrive.

With the mention of Jerusalem as the executioner of the prophets, His heart breaks forth into what will be a prelude to the tears of Palm Sunday. Here it is anticipation; there it will be realization.

Mark 6:14-29

Here we have the events that led up to Herod Antipas killing John the Baptist. The details are important to understand in order to understand the trial of CHRIST now before Herod.

Mark 6:17 -- "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her."

Mark 6:18 -- "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

Mark 6:19 -- "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not."

Behind a man often stands a woman either for good or for ill. In this case, as with Ahab (Jezebel), it was for ill.

Herod Antipas was educated at Rome with Archelaus and Philip, his half-brother, son of Mariamne, daughter of Simeon. It was here that he acquired the tastes and the vices of the Romans. Herod Antipas was first married to the daughter of Aretas, the Arabian king of Petra. But while visiting in Rome with his half-brother, Philip, he fell in love with Philip's wife, Herodias, who was also niece to both. She left Philip and married Herod Antipas on the condition that Antipas would get rid of his first wife. Antipas' first wife learned of this and fled back to her Father.

Here, then, was a ruler of the Jews shamelessly defying the Jewish laws, first by marrying his niece, and secondly by marrying his brother's wife. This is the evil relationship that John the Baptist fearlessly denounced: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." (Mark 6:18) For this it eventually cost him his life. Luke adds another detail: "But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison" (Luke 3:19-20).

Herodias would have gotten rid of John the Baptist right now, but she couldn't get Herod to move any further than to put John in prison. She had the will; Herod had the power.

Mark 6:20 -- "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

The attitude of Ahab toward Elijah is remarkably similar. It was Jezebel, not Ahab, who plotted Elijah's death (1 Kings 19:2). John was both just and holy. He was righteous in all his relations to his fellow men, and holy in all his relations to GOD.

Now there seems to be much stated here. It seems that Herodias felt Herod might "get religion" from this Baptist as he had begun to change certain things about his life and was hearing this John gladly. Now she knew that if he got "converted" she would go, for the Baptist said it is unlawful for Herod to have her. But she could not go back to her first husband, therefore an evil mind only plots more evil. Herod had commenced to do many things in response to John's preaching to him. It only remained for him to do the one major thing and Herodias would be gone. She felt forced to act.

Mark 6:21 -- "And when a convenient day was come," that is, when a convenient day had come for Herodias to act and secure what she wanted, "that Herod on his birthday made a supper for his Lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee."

Everybody that was anybody was there.

Mark 6:22 -- "And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in," (who was Salome according to Josephus) "and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee."

What a contrast. Here was a man who was listening to John preach one day and throwing off all restraint the next. Here is wine, women and song, and it leads to the silencing of a man of righteousness. You cannot go sin's way without reaping sin's wages.

Mark 6:23 -- "And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom."

What a promise of a fool. He has fallen into the trap set by his wife, and soon it will spring shut.

Mark 6:24 -- "And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist."

She was totally unprepared for knowing what to request, but her mother wasn't. Yet when her mother spoke, she entered right in with the request. She was one with her mother in wickedness else she would not have danced this kind of dance in the first place.

Mark 6:25 -- "And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by (Literally, "as soon as possible," or "at once.") in a charger the head of John the Baptist."

She returns immediately while the guests are still present and before the spell of her dancing has passed, and makes her request to be carried out at once.

Mark 6:26 -- "And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him he would not reject her."

This brought him back to reality, and grim reality it was. He felt he could not slight her by treating the oath and promise he had made as a joke. Had she waited until another day, he might have done so.

Mark 6:27 -- "And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,"

Mark 6:28 -- "And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother."

The deed was done, but the consequences linger on. Mark is telling us this entire episode because when Herod hears about JESUS, his conscience is so sensitive that "he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him" (Mark 6:14). His murdering of John the Baptist haunted him, and because he heard JESUS was also righteous, he felt this was John risen from the dead now performing miracles. This is startling. Herod was Idumean by descent through his Father, and Samaritan through his mother, yet by religion was a circumcised Jew and a Sadducee. But Sadducees do not believe in resurrection (Acts 23:8). In reality, they try to convince themselves there is no resurrection when they know better. Every once in a while their true feelings come to the surface under extreme pressure: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and

who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:15-17).

But how does all this relate to CHRIST and His appearance before Herod now? Herod knew that he had done wrong in regard to murdering John the Baptist, and so did everyone else. Soon after this event, the Father of Herod's first wife, King Aretas, invaded the country to avenge his daughter's wrong, and Herod's forces were totally defeated. The populous considered this as divine punishment for what he had done concerning John the Baptist.

Herod's own mind too was haunted with remorse for this action, and, in order to deaden his piercing conscience, he began to fill his court with constant activity. He had singers, dancers, jugglers, circuses -- anything now was welcomed at Tiberius. His constant pursuit was for pleasure and something new with which to amuse himself.

Once the very mention of the name of JESUS and the hearing of his deeds would have filled Herod's heart and soul with terror and trembling, but that time is passed. Now when he saw JESUS, (whether he was coming in chains or not made no difference) "he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him" (Luke 23:8). CHRIST had acquired great fame as a miracle worker, and perhaps he would display His skill before Herod. this would have given great satisfaction to him, and he might out-perform any of the magic Herod had previously seen. Certainly the Lord ought to consider it an honor to display his abilities before the ruler and all the others that had come to his court. As far as Herod was concerned, this was going to make this day, and his visit to Jerusalem, complete. How wonderful it was to have the opportunity to see JESUS since He had never honored Tiberias, where Herod resided, with a personal visit.

Herod had become like a fat blob of protoplasm, like a spineless jellyfish, without character or stamina. All that entered his mind was his own pleasure. He never allowed it to cross his conscience once that he was trying a man, and that righteousness and justice were at stake. His conscience had been so seared that these things were no longer issues of importance. All that mattered was Herod's enjoyment and pleasure.

No wonder CHRIST warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15). Herod was mad after pleasures. All that Paul states will come in the last days of the church age, and is in truth, here today, is true of Herod.

"This now also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

This is the leaven of Herod and "from such turn away," child of GOD, or it will corrupt your character likewise.

CHRIST is now standing before Herod in the ancient palace of the Maccabees where Herod resided when he was in Jerusalem. Herod had never before seen the face of JESUS, though most of the Lord's life and ministry was in Herod's territory of Galilee, nor had he heard a word from the Saviour's lips. But "he had heard many things of him," (Luke 23:8) perhaps from his steward

Chuza, whose wife Joanna was one of our Lord's disciples (Luke 8:3).

Herod's highest hopes were "to have seen some miracle done by him." (Luke 23:8) CHRIST was to Herod just as another juggler or magician that came to his court. His only interest was that which satisfied the flesh. He was looking for the pleasure of a moment.

To this CHRIST did not respond. He had not come to be a Miracle-worker. He said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matthew 12:39). The sign He will give Herod, and the world, will be His resurrection. This is His sign; this is His vindication for His claims.

There are men like this in every age who desire to see and hear GOD's servant, not to be changed in life, but to be entertained and to reveal their broadmindedness. They will marvel at the Lord's power and even seek to hear what He has to say, but that is as far as they will ever go. They are a part of this world system. They love it, and they are not about to change. They will die in it, and will die in their sins.

Woe be to the man of GOD that will do anything to satisfy their flesh. We are only to reason with them in reference to righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25).

Luke 23:9 : "Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing."

Concerning the subject of Herod's questions, Scripture is completely silent. Many a man would have considered this the opportunity of a life time, and would have used it to give forth the truths of GOD. But the Lord's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). He does not cast pearls before swine. (Matthew 7:6)

But why did the Lord answer not even one word? Herod had heard the truth over and over again from John the Baptist. Herod's need was not more knowledge, but to act upon what he already knew. Until he did this, no more truth would be given him.

Kings and rulers came to Solomon to hear his wisdom. Yet a greater than Solomon was present, and by the very fact that He was greater, He spoke not a word. Here in this instance the Lord's silence hurts far worse than speaking could have. I feel we are thoroughly justified to complete the picture.

CHRIST is standing before Herod and looking straight at the murderer of John the Baptist. The Lord's eyes were piercing into the very innermost secrets of Herod's heart.

There was another voice that was speaking still to Herod. Long had Herod sought to put out of his consciousness the voice of John the Baptist, but "he being dead yet speaketh." CHRIST was silent to allow his voice to be heard.

Herod becomes all the more uncomfortable because CHRIST would not break His silence. The air is electrified with tension. Again the king is on trial, and the PRISONER is the JUDGE. Now the CREATOR stands before the creature who sits in sinful splendor, but there is another day and another place when the Lord will sit upon a great white throne, and it will be in truth a throne of righteousness and purity. Before Him the dead, small and great, will stand. There the books will be opened, and every man will be judged according to the atrocities that he has done against the

truth, which are recorded in the books. Then they will be cast into the lake of fire for ever and ever (Revelation 20:11-15).

Luke 23:10 : "And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him."

These bitter enemies of our Lord had seated themselves to watch the show, but when it failed to materialize they stood to their feet vehemently accusing Him. Their last accusation before Pilate had been sedition, and this charge was now brought before Herod. The acts of sedition had supposedly taken place in Herod's province.

Herod finally has had enough.

Luke 23:11 : "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."

Here is Herod's verdict. It is acted out by him and his bodyguard that had accompanied him to Jerusalem. Herod indicates by this that he regards JESUS as a foolish and contemptible person. He is to be mocked and ridiculed, not to be feared.

So calloused of conscience, Herod makes as if CHRIST's silence manifested His stupidity, and that the reason why he did no miracle was because He was powerless. It is either this or fall down before the Lord JESUS and confess his sins, but Herod is not about to do this. He has traveled the road of sin too far to retreat now. He had set his course and hardened his heart before, and now he was reaping the consequences of that hardened heart.

CHRIST would not put on a show for them, so they will make their own. Herod with his bodyguard set Him at nought, i.e., they treated Him with contempt and ridicule. In their mocking, CHRIST is arrayed "in a gorgeous robe." (Luke 23:11) This is significant and deserves our attention.

The expression means "bright" and it signifies a glistening white robe. This adjective comes from the verb "to shine." Another related word signifies a "torch," "lamp." The same word used here is used in Acts 10:30 and Revelation 15:6 of the glistening garments of angels.

Roman princes wore purple robes, and this is why the Roman soldiers put on CHRIST a purple robe when they mocked Him as KING. The Jewish kings, however, wore a white robe, which was often rendered shining or gorgeous by interweaving silver in the cloth. Josephus tells us that the robe which Agrippa wore was so bright with silver that when the sun shone on it, it so dazzled the eyes that it was difficult to look on it.

Now one does not have a robe around like this just anywhere. How was it that one was available here in Jerusalem? Josephus tells us that Herod Antipas' full brother, Archelaus, after mourning seven days at his Father's funeral feast, i.e., of Herod the Great, "put on a white garment and went up to the temple" (Wars, II, i.i). There the people were want to make him king, but he wanted, from the Roman's first, the complete title to the kingdom. He later received it, and was reigning in Judea when Joseph returned with Mary and JESUS from Egypt, and it is for this reason that Joseph returns to Galilee (Matthew 2:22).

When the Jews complained to Caesar that they would rather be subject to Roman governors, Caesar divided Herod the Great's kingdom into two parts, giving "the one half of Herod's kingdom

to Archelaus, by the name of Ethnarch, and promised to make him king also afterwards, if he rendered himself worthy of that dignity; but as to the other half, he divided it into two tetrarchies, and gave them to two other sons of Herod, the one of them Philip, and the other to that of Antipas who contested the kingdom with Archelaus" (II, vi, 3). Archelaus did anything but render himself worthy of this dignity, and was finally banished to Gaul. Archelaus' ethnarchy is reduced into a Roman province, and Pilate was sent as procurator.

Through the misrule of Archelaus, the Herod family loses half of their territory, and this may be the personal problem between Herod and Pilate spoken about in Luke 23:12. Herod Antipas wanted the territory awarded to Pilate. He had contested it even when it was given to his brother. But now, through the politeness of Pilate sending JESUS to Herod this day because JESUS belonged to Herod's territory, that enmity of long standing was cleared up. They became friends. Luke gives us both the day and the occasion of it.

The white robe -- the gorgeous robe -- was then that worn by Archelaus and had been left in Jerusalem where he lived. Someone thought about it -- perhaps even Herod himself -- and placed it on JESUS to ridicule His claim to be a KING. Herod thought such a claim to be absurd. At this gesture Herod and those present must have doubled over with laughter. And it is while the assembly is in such a state that Herod orders JESUS sent back to Pilate. But we cannot so leave this white robe. This is the only robe Luke mentions in connection with CHRIST, and if he mentions any, it has to be the white one. The reason is that the Gospel of Luke presents CHRIST as the Man, the Perfect Man. He is sinless and spotless. He is intrinsically white.

If the Father will cloth the sinner who has returned to Him with the best robe (Luke 15:22), how much more will He so cloth the SON. When CHRIST was transfigured before the three disciples, Luke tells us "the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening" (Luke 9:29). This word glistening means "to send forth lightning, to lighten; to flash out like lightning, to shine, be radiant" (Thayer). The same word is used of the glittering of armor in Nahum 3:3 and Ezekiel 1:7. This was our Lord's raiment, and the disciples "saw his glory" (Luke 9:32). The Lord is now "crowned with glory and honor" (Hebrews 2:9), and someday "He shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

When David brought the ark of the covenant into the Holy City he was "clothed with a robe of fine linen" and "David also had upon him an ephod of linen" (1 Chronicles 15:27). The white linen all through Scripture speaks of purity and righteousness (Ezekiel 9:3). It is thus used in the tabernacle, and in the book of Revelation where the bride is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" and where the armies in Heaven which follow the Lord are "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Revelation 19:8; Revelation 19:14).

When Eliakim is given the government of David, he is seen to wear the robe of that government: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a Father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Isaiah 22:20-22). Here is a picture of the true MESSIAH whom GOD will make as "a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house" (Isaiah

22:23-24). But the nail that was there previously -- the antichrist -- shall be removed completely out of his place (Isaiah 22:25).

Here is the picture, and in the Gospel we have a pre-picture of the future fulfillment. Archelaus was unrighteous and was removed, and the robe of the house of David and of its glory was laid upon the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Archelaus was not the nail but was an imposter.

Little did these unbelievers, acting in mockery and ridicule, realize the significance of their actions. But the robe was His to wear and someday He will wear it in His glory.

But not only will the Lord be wearing that white robe someday, also we have the privilege of being clothed in His righteousness and whiteness.

"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).

That robe which Adam lost, we gain in CHRIST. We are to put on the Lord JESUS CHRIST (Romans 13:14), and be clothed with humility (1 Peter 5:5). We are to be continually transfigured even as CHRIST was (Romans 12:2).

JESUS is sent back to Pilate wearing this white royal robe as He returns, for this is the meaning of the passage: ". . . and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate." (Luke 23:11) CHRIST is wearing this robe through the streets of Jerusalem, but He is wearing it bound and led as a prisoner of men. How different it will be when He comes again.

His wearing it was intended to be a parody of His royalty, but at the very same time it was an indirect declaration of His innocence. Though the Lord had spent most of His earthly life and public ministry in the territory of Galilee, yet the ruler of Galilee had nothing to lay to His charge.

He was "without blemish, and without spot." (1 Peter 1:19) ~ end of chapter 11 ~

02.12 - The Second Trial Before Pilate

Chapter 12 THE SECOND TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

We now begin the sixth and last trial for the Lord JESUS CHRIST. It is the second time that he appears before Pilate. The previous trial before him ended in acquittal, and Pilate will state this himself as he reviews the proceedings. This trial, because it ultimately ends in the Lord's crucifixion in spite of the fact of His complete innocence, is very extensive and is covered by all four evangelists. It should be kept in mind that only Luke gives us the true sequence of two trials before Pilate with the trial before Herod between them, while the other writers merely record the events before Pilate as one continuous, unbroken series of incidents.

Matthew 27:15-26, Mark 15:6-15, Luke 23:13-25, John 18:39-40, John 19:1-16.

During the time that CHRIST was before Herod, the city was beginning to awaken from its slumber of the night unaware of the events that had transpired while they slept. They begin to congregate together before the Praetorium because it seems Pilate had established a precedent each year previously of releasing a prisoner to them on this feast day.

While this certainly was not justice, it was mercy, and was loved by a people who were bitterly opposed to the yoke of Rome over them. It was also much like the very birth of the nation itself for which they commemorated the passover days. The nation had been guilty of gross sins in Egypt:

"And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates" (Exodus 20:6-10).

and were in the place of bondage. They were not redeemed because of any righteousness on their own part, but merely because of the mercy of GOD:

"Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy Fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Deuteronomy 9:4-6).

Once delivered they were permanently free from their former bondage. The people, who had each year secured this act from Pilate, do not want to let it die, but will vigorously clamor to have it done again.

Thus we read:

"Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them" (Mark 15:6-8).

When JESUS is led back to Pilate there is a considerable crowd before him of the town's people, and it is not merely a crowd consisting mainly of the members of the Sanhedrin as was true the first time.

Furthermore, not all of the Sanhedrin had accompanied CHRIST to Herod's residence, so as they return, the entire Sanhedrin must be summoned. It appears that they were together in one place, presumably at the Temple, and they quickly came. "And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people" (Luke 23:13). Pilate begins to address them, and rehearses the decision of the two civil trials.

"Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him" (Luke 23:14).

Herod's own verdict was for acquittal.

"No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him" (Luke 23:15).

Herod's verdict was that the case was too ridiculous to even try. It was a joke, and was so treated.

Pilate had unquestionably hoped that the case had been settled by Herod for this would have gotten him off the hook from making a decision concerning JESUS CHRIST before the Sanhedrin and this multitude. With the populous of the city gathered before him now, conditions were even worse for Pilate than before.

We must realize too, that Pilate was technically justified in sending JESUS to be tried by Herod, as well as suspending His release until He returned from him. Even though Pilate had found no fault with this man, yet he could have been ignorant of the customs and laws of the nation and the interrelation of these laws with Roman laws. Herod would have been thoroughly acquainted with both.

The very fact that Dr. Luke records that this "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves" (Luke 23:12), is worthy of even further meditation. All through Scriptures we find the history of nations as well as individuals hinging on one little thing. It was true in Esther as it was true of the birth of CHRIST, and it is true here. Had Pilate and Herod retained their enmity this day and not have been reconciled by this event, Herod would have tried to give a different verdict from what Pilate had rendered. But such was not the case. Pilate announces Herod found Him innocent also.

"I will therefore chastise him, and release him" (Luke 23:16). And Luke adds why he said this: "(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)" (Luke 23:17).

Pilate was seeking to use this custom for his own benefit. He saw in this a way to get himself out of the dilemma in which he found himself. We dare not pass over this hurriedly. Pilate has just pronounced the verdict of both himself and Herod. JESUS has been tried and is acquitted. Justice demands that the case be immediately ended and the prisoner be released at once; and further that He be protected by Rome from all harm or violence should the need arise. But this is not what we read. Pilate, having rendered the dual verdicts of acquittal, now ceases to act as judge, and acts as politicians. He will seek to appease the Sanhedrin's wrath by scourging CHRIST, and yet release Him because He is innocent.

Gerhard wrote in 1889 concerning Pilate's actions: "Be consistent with thyself, Pilate, for, if CHRIST is innocent, why does thou not send him away acquitted? And if thou believest him deserving of chastisement with rods, why dost thou proclaim Him to be innocent?" At this point four reporters, representing the Associated Press, the United Press, the International Wire Service, along with local reporter from the Jerusalem Press-Scimitar, give us various aspects of what went on. Each is reporting what in truth he saw and heard, but each looks at the events in the light of his own personality and purpose for reporting. Each hears these things in the Aramaic language, but is forced to translate them into the language of international communication which is Greek, and this accounts for some slight variations. Let us as nearly as possible piece together the complete picture.

With the coming of day, the multitude was going up to the Praetorium and began to request that Pilate do as he had previously done and release a prison to them:

"And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them" (Mark 15:8). With CHRIST having returned now from Herod, this presents in Pilate's thinking a way out for him. He knows the course of action he will take before he comes before the people. First he calls for the members of the Sanhedrin to all be assembled:

"And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people" (Luke 23:13).

Then he takes his position on the tribunal which was the official seat carried to the pavement before the Praetorium since the people would not enter therein:

"When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19).

From this seat he addresses the Sanhedrin as the leaders of the people (Luke 23:13). He renders his verdict of innocence (Luke 23:14), and that Herod had found nothing worthy of death (Luke 23:15 above). Pilate's decision is then given: "I will therefore chastise him, and release him" (Luke 23:16). Here was Pilate's statement of intent, and with it his whole plan was exposed to his opposition. It now was only a matter of time for the Lord's opposition to rally its forces and defeat Pilate's plan. The protest against this was immediate from the Sanhedrin

This would not satisfy them whatever. They had come from His death -- nothing else would appease them. With Pilate's original plan thwarted, he is forced to go one step further. He knows that Rome has one prisoner that is "notorious," named Barabbas. His crimes are listed by the

Evangelists as robbery:

"Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber" (John 18:40).

sedition, or high treason:

"(Who for a certain sedition made in the city, . . . " (Luke 23:19 a).

and murder:

". . . and for murder, was cast into prison.)" (Luke 23:19 b).

The penalty for these crimes against Rome was death by crucifixion. A cross was in the process of being prepared for this "notable prisoner" (Matthew 27:16). along with two other lesser personages. These were to be crucified as an example of what will happen to any others that would commit such crimes against Rome.

Having placed the destiny of JESUS in the hands of the people, Pilate decides to give them the choice between two men. He will release either Barabbas or JESUS. So "Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:17). For Pilate the decision was obvious. There was no logical comparison between the two. "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matthew 27:18). All reason and logic demanded that they select JESUS who is called the CHRIST. Their immediate response was,

"Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber" (John 18:40).

"And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas" (Luke 23:18). As Pilate sat there on the judgment seat at this very moment, an important event occurs:

"When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19).

Matthew alone records this event. As such, it is another indictment against his own people. Just as earlier in the Gospel, wise men from afar came to worship the young child while Israel did not, so here a Gentile heathen woman knows concerning His person and character, but Israel does not know.

GOD has often used dreams in making known Himself to man. He did so with Pharaoh and with Nebuchadnezzar, and so He does with Pilate's wife. It seems that it was only during the reign of Tiberius that the governors of provinces had been permitted to take their wives with them. For Pilate's wife, who tradition names as Claudia Procula, to send a messenger to her husband while he was occupied with official business shows something of the impression the dream had upon her. She knew it was supernatural. Upon arising and finding her husband gone, she must have inquired as to the nature of his business at such an early hour. Learning that it concerned the One of whom she had dreamed and had suffered many things in her dream, she felt compelled to warn her husband. It could not wait. The Lord in His compassion was in this giving Pilate himself a

warning. What Pilate does will be against increased light. He himself knows JESUS is innocent. Now there is the confirmation through his wife of this fact from Heaven.

Her message to her husband was short and to the point. It is literally to have nothing to do between him and that righteous man. No one can prosper who allows anything to come in between them and Him. Pilate did not prosper even though he sought to wash his hands of the affair and to make the Nation bear the entire guilt.

He was soon to be banished from his office, and the historian Eusebius says that soon afterward, "wearied with misfortune," he killed himself. How can we hope to prosper if we allow something between us and this Man who is infinitely righteous? Since He is righteous, to the extent something is between ourselves and Him, it only indicates our unrighteousness.

"Nothing between, e'en many hard trials,
Tho' the whole world against me convene;
Watching with prayer and much self-denial,
I'll triumph at last, with nothing between.
"Nothing between my soul and the Saviour,
So that His blessed face may be seen;
Nothing prevented the least of His favor,
Keep the way clear! Let nothing between."

-- C.A. Tindley

While Pilate was receiving the messenger with the urgent appeal from his wife, probably no more than 30 seconds went by. He had previously committed the case into their hands. They had been empowered with the verdict. They have the choice between two men: Barabbas and JESUS. This short space of time was enough to allow the members of the Sanhedrin to disperse among the crowd to persuade them to ask for Barabbas.

"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus" (Matthew 27:20).

"But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them" (Mark 15:11).

Having mingled with the crowd the entire Sanhedrin will be united as one voice for Barabbas to be released and for JESUS to be crucified. Coming from every section of the crowd and with others joining in with them, when the question is asked it will appear as if the whole were united.

The governor, having regained his composure after this message from his wife, is now ready to ask them again for their decision.

"The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called

Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified" (Matthew 27:21-23).

Mark's account is almost identical:

"And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him" (Mark 15:12-14).

Luke only enlarges on a few statements:

"Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. " (Luke 23:20-23 a).

Pilate had placed the decision in their hands thinking he knew which way they would go, but he was wrong. He is trying desperately to change their course of action, but to no avail.

"And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed" (Luke 23:23 b).

Luke is telling us that the verdict was very definitely one-sided, but by no means unanimous. These gathered before Pilate were mainly the people of the city and area of Jerusalem. They were not the same as the Galileans who had accompanied JESUS into the city with shouts of "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matthew 21:9 b). This present assembly was mainly the people of Jerusalem who were under the complete control of the Sanhedrin. The common message that the fickle crowd shouted "Hosanna" at the first of the week, and "Crucify" toward the last of the week, is entirely wrong.

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Matthew 27:24).

Notice that this act was done, not at the very end of Pilate's dealings before the crowd, as has been supposed by many, but actually midway in them. Even after CHRIST had been scourged He is brought forth to the crowd, and Pilate's hope is that they will say it is enough and change their verdict. The point we are making is this: Though Pilate is washing his hands he is still not through in seeking to get JESUS CHRIST freed, but will try twice more to attain this decision, but to no avail.

What is Pilate seeking to do in washing his hands before the people?

This action by Pilate has been greatly misunderstood, mainly from a lack of understanding of the culture of the nation. It is poor and faulty exegesis to read into this event what it would signify in our culture. We must come to understand what it signified in their culture.

"And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.

Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 21:6-9).

The entire rite and the words used were Jewish, not Roman. Under the Law in Deuteronomy 21:6-9 the elders of a city would wash their hands with water when they were free from the murder of a person and they were unable to find the guilty person.

Moreover, David the king cried out when Joab killed Abner: "And afterward when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner" (2 Samuel 3:28). The judgment was to rest on Joab and his seed from that moment on, and it did: "Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his Father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread" (2 Samuel 3:29).

"I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord . . . Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency" (Psalms 26:6; Psalms 73:13) speak of the same language.

Edersheim informs us: "The Mishnah bears witness that this rite was continued. As administering justice in Israel, Pilate must have been aware of this rite. It does not affect the question, whether or not a judge could, especially in the circumstances recorded, free himself from guilt. Certainly, he could not . . ." (II, 578).

Pilate is unable to reason with the people who are now given to their emotions. He has only one recourse that he knows at present. Normally this would have been effective to bring the people back to complete sobriety. "When a Judge, after having declared the innocence of the accused, actually arises from the judgment-seat, and by a symbolic act pronounces the execution of the accused a judicial murder, from all participation in which he wishes solemnly to clear himself, surely no jury would persist in demanding sentence of death" (II, 577-8).

This is what Pilate is doing. Did it have the desired effect upon the nation which Pilate wished? Not at all. Nothing Pilate is trying is working. When the Elders performed this rite, the prayer response was: "Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge." (Deuteronomy 21:8 a). Then GOD says: "And the blood shall be forgiven them" (Deuteronomy 21:8 c).

Here is no request for mercy whatever, but on the contrary a brazen request for His blood. "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). How calloused; how defiant.

Pilate even in the province of GOD uses the very words -- "See ye to it" -- that the Sanhedrin had said to Judas which broke him to such grief because he had betrayed the innocent blood "Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4) that he went out and hanged himself. Yet it didn't phase these people.

Just as they asked, they received

GOD granted their request. These people began to suffer mercilessly after GOD gave them space to repent under the Apostles, and still they hardened their hearts even more: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your Fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Then in 70 A.D., 38 years as GOD reckoneth the generation in the wilderness, it came upon their children, who were just like their Fathers, and it came upon them:

"But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:18-24).

Still they suffer and will continue and will continue to do so until in the great tribulation they acknowledge their sin and seek His face:

"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early. Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Hosea 5:15-6:3).

Little did the people or the Sanhedrin even remember their words, for in Acts 5 when the Apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin, "Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28).

No, the Apostles were not motivated with the purpose of bringing the innocent blood of the Son of GOD whom the nation and leaders murdered upon the city. The Sanhedrin had already brought it upon themselves and their city. The Apostles were proclaiming that there was salvation for them individually and collectively in no other name:

"And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people . . . Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved . . . Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 3:23; Acts 4:12; Acts 5:31).

The nation, who had been judicially blinded:

"For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39).

"Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine

enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:42-44).

willingly accepted the judicial guilt for the murder of CHRIST. Pilate's guilt will be personal and moral. He was wrong because he was willing to gamble with an innocent man's life. He gambled and lost. He in no way goes free of responsibility, but our Lord's words are very exact in this regards: "Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:11).

So, Pilate's command to scourge JESUS is obeyed.

What was the reaction of the Sanhedrin at the sight of JESUS, the Man?

"When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him" (John 19:6 a).

The sufferings CHRIST had endured might have been enough for the people, but this was not enough for the Sanhedrin. Nothing but His death would suffice. His wounds would heal, they felt; His death would not. How wrong they were.

Pilate had reached the end. He is exasperated that they will not listen to reason: "Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him" (John 19:6 b).

Even though Pilate says this, yet this action is impossible for the Jews to do. Pilate has gone around in a circle. He started out with the statement: "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). This did not satisfy because the Jews wanted death. Now Pilate refers the entire case to their own actions. He will not simply ratify their decision. If they want crucifixion, let them do it.

Pilate now is controlled also by emotion. The fact that they cannot crucify anyone seemingly does not cross his mind.

"I find no fault in him."

It might do us well to gather together at this closing declaration, just how many times Pilate has rendered this verdict.

1. At the 1st Trial before Pilate.

"Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man . . . he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all" (Luke 23:4; John 18:38).

2. At the 2nd Trial before Pilate.

"Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him . . . When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying,

Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Luke 23:14-15; Matthew 27:19).

3. After the crowd renders their decision.

"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified . . . Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him . . . And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go" (Matthew 27:23; Mark 15:14; Luke 23:22).

4. At the washing of Pilate's hands.

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Matthew 27:24).

5. After the scourging of JESUS.

"When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him" (John 19:6).

He is the Holy One and the Just One: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you" (Acts 3:14). With Pilate referring the case to them, the Sanhedrin bring out to Pilate the real reason for their bringing JESUS to him asking for crucifixion. This is an entirely new complaint with a new examination.

"The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7).

But the Sanhedrin never examined the evidence concerning His deity. No man makes himself the Son of GOD. He either is or he is not. Since they would not take the evidence of His miracles, He Himself said there would be no sign but the sign of the prophet Jonah -- death, burial, resurrection and the Gospel going to the Gentiles.

For being prophet, CHRIST suffered the mockery following the trial of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. For being king, CHRIST suffered the mockery of the Roman soldiers. For being the Son of GOD, He suffered the mockery on the Cross.

No longer is the Sanhedrin appealing to Roman law or a Roman crime. They are appealing now to their own law and to a crime against that law, which, they feel, is Pilate's duty to uphold since he is their governor.

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid" (John 19:8).

Up to this point Pilate had been quite apprehensive about the entire proceedings. He had heard of JESUS before and everything he heard was good. He knew that for envy the Sanhedrin had brought JESUS to him. He had received his wife's stirring message and may have even gone to speak personally with her while JESUS was being scourged and mocked, for Pilate would never have permitted the mocking of JESUS by his men had he been around. When he returned and

saw what they had done, he decided to use the mocking as a means of securing JESUS' release. Above all of these things he had observed the composure of JESUS CHRIST during the entire time, and this could not have strongly impressed Pilate. His prisoner was not like other men.

We must remember that Pilate is a Roman, and when he hears of JESUS' claim of being the Son of GOD, he would understand this according to his own background. Among the various religions and traditions of the nations, the gods had sons, and some of them appeared on earth.

In Acts 14 when the people saw what Paul and Barnabas had done in their city, they thought: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:11).

In light of this new development, Pilate wants to speak to JESUS one more time.

"And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou?" (John 19:9 a).

When Pilate asked JESUS, "Whence art thou," he is not asking for his earthly origin because Pilate already had sent JESUS to Herod when he learned that He was a Galilean. He is asking in effect: "are you from earth or from Heaven?"

"But Jesus gave him no answer" (John 19:9 b).

This is the fourth time we have seen the silence of JESUS CHRIST before His accusers.

1. Before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

"And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:62-63).

" But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61).

2. Before Pilate in the 1st Trial.

"And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" (Matthew 27:13-14).

"And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled" (Mark 15:3-5).

3. Before Herod

"Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing" (Luke 23:9).

4. Before Pilate in the 2nd Trial (John 19:9) In each case His silence was far more eloquent than any word He could have spoken. It is a mark of wisdom not only to speak, but also to be silent.

Why was CHRIST silent at this point? Some have felt it was a question He could not answer with a yes or no to Pilate. Had He answered "yes," Pilate would have understood it in a pagan idea which

would not have been right. He could not say that He was not the Son of GOD and therefore He said nothing.

Certainly this cannot be the full explanation because He who is truth surely could have witnessed and conveyed truth to Pilate so he could have understood.

Remember, however, what we have already discussed. When Pilate left speaking to JESUS CHRIST before in the Praetorium, he left asking the question: "What is truth." He never waited for the answer. Pilate at that time rejected truth, and he is not given any more truth with the exception of the fact of his sin and the reason for it: "Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:11). CHRIST broke His silence to Pilate for this one thing alone.

Stalker adds also: "JESUS would say nothing about whether He was the Son of GOD or not, because He did not wish to be released on this ground. Not as a Son of GOD, but as an innocent man, which Pilate had again and again acknowledged Him to be, was He entitled to be set free; and His silence called upon Pilate to act on this acknowledgement."

Krummacher states that had CHRIST disclosed His true person and nature to Pilate, it would only have increased Pilate's responsibility and judgment. His act of silence was, therefore, an act of compassion and mercy.

Before we leave this, we need to realize even a further significance. Had JESUS CHRIST not have been the Son of GOD, He was duty bound to stop such a thing right here. This is the only way He could have been a good man. Had He made the statement: "I am not the Son of GOD," the charges would have been dropped by the Sanhedrin, and the case dismissed. Since He did not make that statement, He will die. He will die, not because He made Himself the Son of GOD, but because He was in fact the Son of GOD. He will prove that He was by His resurrection from the dead:

"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

Pilate is upset because CHRIST will not reply to his question

"Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" (John 19:10).

The "me" is emphatic in the whole sentence. Oh how haughty is a little man in a big place. The only way he can show his importance is with words. Yet Pilate was speaking the truth in one respect. He could have released CHRIST, and because he did not the responsibility for failing to do so was his.

CHRIST now breaks His silence to judge His judge.

"Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:11).

Think of the dignity with which He speaks in such a situation as He was, with the intense pain in His body from the scourging. CHRIST judges the entire situation. It is not Pilate who is the judge,

but He is the Judge. Pilate is on trial. And here is the verdict of the righteous Judge. The Sanhedrin has the greater sin because they have sinned through wickedness, while Pilate is sinning through weakness. They have full knowledge, while Pilate does not. Pilate has been forced to try the case, while the Sanhedrin has been responsible for the indictment.

All the power Pilate has is that which is given "from above." The Lord Himself has delegated that authority to men even though it would be used against Himself. He is the CREATOR of the ages (Hebrews 1:3) and all that occurs in the various ages.

Notice also that sin is not the same. There are degrees in reference to sinning, and therefore there are degrees in regard to punishment. Every man will be rewarded according to his works against the truth. The answer greatly impressed Pilate. It causes him to think rationally again rather than emotionally. He returns determined to release JESUS CHRIST.

"And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar" (John 19:12).

For every move Pilate makes, the Sanhedrin had a countermove, and a more effective move. Pilate was being backed into a corner. Being "Caesar's friend" was the most coveted position a politician could have, while to incur Caesar's wrath was always feared. Pilate was even now being investigated by the imperial throne, and to have a new charge brought against his administration was the last thing Pilate wanted. The Sanhedrin knew this and they played it for all they could.

One of the last proverbs recorded of the wisest man in the Old Testament was "The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Proverbs 29:25). It is always true. Pilate feared to do the right thing -- the just thing -- which his conscience told him he should do because he feared for the consequences. A charge brought against him of releasing a man who claimed to be king over Israel, when which release brought a tumult among the Jews, would certainly be hard to explain. Furthermore, any local king would, in the eyes of Caesar, be in competition against him; and for a Roman governor to uphold such an one, would be a charge of high treason. If Pilate were convicted of malfeasance in office, it would mean banishment and perhaps even execution. The Emperor Tiberius was a despot who only too well enjoyed humiliating subordinates, particularly those who manifested any threat to himself. Philo, who lived at this time, tells us that the Sanhedrin had once before held this same threat over Pilate's head to secure what they wanted.

Pilate feared men and it ensnared him. In place of doing what was right, and letting the chips fall where they will, even if it be his own life, he sought to save his own neck, and to do so he had ultimately to sacrifice CHRIST. He sought to save his own life, but he lost it. The very thing that Pilate feared occurred. It was not long before those same men did lodge a complaint against his administration to Rome. Pilate was recalled from office, banished and he took his own life. The Sanhedrin were engaged in political blackmail, and Pilate became a mere puppet in their hands. When they had enough of him, they pulled the strings to have him removed in spite of his compromises with them. Pilate was too weak a person to say: "Here I stand," and so he yielded to their demands.

You will observe that the Sanhedrin began their proceedings before Pilate against CHRIST with the charge of treason against Rome, then sedition against Rome, then blasphemy according to

their own law. Now if they do not get what they want, their charge will be against Pilate for high treason.

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha" (John 19:13).

JESUS is brought out again to the crowd after having been privately interviewed by Pilate. Pilate sat down on the Bema seat so that what action he now takes will be official. The sentence must be pronounced in the presence of the Accused.

The incident is so important for the whole world that John marks the exact place, day and approximate time in the Roman world.

"And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!" (John 19:14).

Some hold that it is impossible for it to be "about the sixth hour," but this is not so. The events of the trials, particularly before Pilate, are given by the four Evangelists in great detail because of the importance of what was occurring, while the actual time involved could have been very short. If it were 6:30 a.m., it would still only leave 2 1/2 hours for moving out to Mount Calvary, digging the holes for the crosses, crucifying each prisoner with probably JESUS crucified last. John records it as it was.

From all indications Pilate knows JESUS will not be released, but perhaps there is one ray of hope still left in the back of Pilate's mind: I want to give them one more chance. For this reason he says: "Behold your king!" Moreover, because he is seated on the judgment seat, their decision, as well as his, is official.

"But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King?" (John 19:15 a). This is the last Pilate will say to them. The response of the chief priests is the record of history: "The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15 b).

The nation has just officially committed national suicide. They not only reject their true MESSIAH, they accept the head of the nation from whom will arise the Man of Sin. For the rejection of JESUS CHRIST the nation will suffer the destruction of their City and those within it, and will be in exile among the nations; for their making Caesar their king, they shall suffer the period our Lord called "the great tribulation." (Matthew 24:21)

"Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away" (John 19:16).

The Sanhedrin won the case, not by justice but by craft and the clamour of the populace. This was true in spite of the fact that one of the finest laws of the Romans is: "The idle clamour of the population is not to be regarded, when they call for a guilty man to be acquitted, or an innocent one to be condemned" (Law 12, Code de Poenis).

Pilate signed the sentence for the crucifixion of JESUS CHRIST, and with it gave in writing an extract of the crimes He had committed which was to be placed over the head of the condemned

criminal so that the public might know for what crime He died.

Since there was only one crime and there was ample space, Pilate wrote the crime in three languages: Hebrew (Aramaic) and Greek and Latin (John 19:20) "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS"

The chief priests went to Pilate and objected, but on this Pilate would not concede:

"Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written" (John 19:21-22). From this we know that Pilate was in charge of the crucifixion, not the Sanhedrin, for in that case they would have written what they wanted. This way they could not. On what grounds was JESUS to die? One and only one. "He came unto His own, and His own received him not" (John 1:11). There GOD has made provision that as many as received him, to these He will give the privilege to become the sons of GOD. How is this accomplished? Simply by believing in His name, i.e., in whom He is and what He has done. He was "God manifest in the flesh," and He died that whosoever it may be that believes in Him should never perish but have right now everlasting life.

JESUS is not on trial; you are on trial.

You are the judge.

What is your verdict of Him?

~ end of chapter 12 ~

02.13 - The Man Named Barabbas

Chapter 13 THE MAN NAMED BARABBAS

After washing his hands and the people responded to take the guilt of it to themselves and their children, Pilate issues two orders to his soldier: the release of Barabbas and the scourging of JESUS.

"Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified" (Matthew 27:26). "And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will" (Luke 23:24-25).

We want to follow both of these orders, for, in the providence of GOD, we have the meeting of type and prophecy, antitype and fulfillment. [***We will be looking at both of the orders in two different threads***].

Through the Old Testament there are two separate threads of proof of the divine inspiration of all Scripture. This is a book that man could not write even if he wanted to. The one line of proof is that of type with its counterpart of antitype in the New Testament. The antitype is the fulfillment of the truth of which the type was merely a propicture.

The other line of proof is specific, detailed prophecies predicted years before it could have been known which have been fulfilled in exact detail. Only GOD could give either and cause them to be fulfilled. The major theme of both type and prophecy is the person and work of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

I have made a list of 59 different Old Testament prophecies which I have so far found that were fulfilled this very day of 24 hours of human history. These prophecies are in addition to the predictions CHRIST made Himself which we gave at the very beginning of this study.

There never was a day like this before in human history, and there will never be another to equal it. All history is moving toward it, and all history moves from it. It stands as the very center of history. History is actually HIS-story. As JESUS CHRIST is sent to be scourged, Psalms 129:3, "The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows," is being fulfilled as well as many other passages.

But something else is occurring at this very same time. It is in no way by accident that a man by the name of Barabbas is at this very time being released and set free. He stands in the providence of GOD as a picture of the sinner set free because another, who was innocent, is taking his stripes and will die on his cross in his place.

This theme of Scripture that ends with Barabbas started in the Garden of Eden. There innocent animals were sacrificed by GOD in order to provide for Adam and Eve an acceptable covering before GOD.

It is seen in every animal sacrifice made in the Old Testament, each one portraying a different aspect of the one infinite sacrifice of GOD's perfect LAMB.

Nor should we think merely that this typology extends only to animal sacrifices. Sometimes one animal was sacrificed while another went free. This was true of the two goats on the day of atonement, and of the two birds of Leviticus 14.

Moreover, sometimes there were no animals involved at all. The ROCK that was smitten was CHRIST we are told by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10. The Lord JESUS CHRIST Himself likens the brazen serpent as a divine illustration of the believer's personal appropriation of the sacrifice of CHRIST to himself.

Sometimes typology has used the life or the death of men as an example of CHRIST's sacrifice. The death of the High Priest in Israel freed all those in the cities of refuge, and in this the High Priest stands as a picture of CHRIST our Great HIGH PRIEST. The Kinsman-Redeemer portrayed in Ruth is a type of our Great KINSMAN-REDEEMER, the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

With CHRIST and Barabbas, type and antitype meet. CHRIST is the antitype of all the types, pictures, figures, symbols and illustrations that foretold of Him. But Barabbas is a picture, a divine picture, a picture planned and arranged in the providence of GOD of you and of me. Barabbas is the type and we are the antitype. It is not by mere chance that Barabbas was available this day of all days to be traded for JESUS CHRIST. He was there in prison under the sentence of death by crucifixion that the Gospel message to my heart and yours might be a personal relationship with JESUS CHRIST. Here is the story.

1. Barabbas stood under the righteous condemnation of the law.

Justice demanded his punishment. This is acknowledged even by one of the lesser personages in this threesome who admitted to his own fellow as he hung on a cross: "But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:40-41).

If Barabbas had received justice, he would have died on the center cross. It had been prepared for him. He was to have the center cross because he was the ringleader and the most notorious of those being crucified this day. He was a sinner that had knowingly broken the law, and knew that the demands of that broken law must be met. He was to die justly.

2. Barabbas knew the One who was to take his cross and take his place was innocent.

Pilate had so declared Him to be over and over again. The one member of the trio testifies that he knew it: "but this man hath done nothing amiss." (Luke 23:41) He rebukes his fellow because he also knew it and yet was mocking. If both of these knew it, we can know that Barabbas knew it also.

3. Barabbas knew that JESUS CHRIST was for him a true substitute.

There was in truth One dying in his place and stead. Pilate had given the people of Israel their choice; it was Barabbas or JESUS. If one was freed, the other suffered. If JESUS had been freed,

Barabbas would suffer justly. If Barabbas is freed, JESUS must suffer unjustly -- the just for the unjust.

4. Barabbas knew that he had done nothing to merit going free while another took his place.

There were no good works or deeds of righteousness to which he could cling as a hope to merit salvation. He had no worthiness; he stood with no merit; he could claim no righteousness. He was saved by the divine act of mercy and grace. None other than GOD Himself was working to have JESUS crucified and Barabbas freed. GOD was working in the one as much as the other, yet the people themselves were doing just what they wanted to do and were totally responsible for their actions.

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:13-15).

5. Barabbas knew CHRIST's death was for him perfectly efficacious.

He was forever free from the law that condemned him, because another died in his place. Non bis in idem, no man shall be put twice in jeopardy is a maxim which has come down to us from the Romans. The law could never touch Barabbas again.

Krummacher has penned it well: "Observe now the result of the decision. Barabbas and JESUS changing places. The murderer's bonds, curse, disgrace, and mortal agony are transferred to the righteous JESUS; while the liberty, innocence, safety, and well-being of the immaculate Nazarene become the lot of the murderer. Barabbas is installed in all the rights and privileges of JESUS CHRIST; while the latter enters upon all the infamy and horror of the rebel's position. Both mutually inherit each other's situation and what they possess: The delinquent's guilt and cross become the lot of the Just One, and all the civil rights and immunities of the latter are the property of the delinquent." When JESUS CHRIST died He died for Barabbas -- no, He died for me and He died for you. Had he been only an innocent man among men, He could have died for only one man -- Barabbas. Had He been GOD and not man, He could have died for no man, for GOD cannot die. Since He was the sinless God-Man He could taste death in a point in time for every man.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:4). "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,

who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

Time will not permit us to even begin to exhaust this theme.

We were sinners, have broken the law and so under the curse: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10).

We were legally dead in trespasses and sins: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:1-3).

But GOD through mercy and grace and for His great love wherein He loved us did something we couldn't do for ourselves: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).

He did it all through JESUS CHRIST, and not because of any works or merit wherein we could boast: "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 2:8-9).

He took all the crimes against us: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14).

This picture is vivid. When a man was in prison under Roman law, his crimes were written out and nailed to his cell door. When a prisoner was set free, he would be handed this indictment having it cancelled by writing that it was fulfilled. He would then nail this to his own front door showing his right to be free. When a criminal was executed, this indictment was taken from his cell door and was nailed to the cross.

JESUS CHRIST took that which was against us and paid its price, nailing it to His Cross: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14). He had no crimes, so He died for mine.

He "died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thessalonians 5:10). "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Barabbas was one sinner; Paul was -- he says he is chief -- I am one; you are one. CHRIST died for you too.

Where can we stop in this wonderful theme, for there is just no stopping place. The Scriptures about that this is the Gospel. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Then there is "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account" (Philemon 1:18). "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:26-28). "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10-14). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls . . . For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit" (1 Peter 2:24-25; 1 Peter 3:18). "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world . . . In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:9-10). "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood . . . And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 1:5; Revelation 5:9). And others. And still there is more. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32).

Only until you realize your terrible state under condemnation and death, with no way out but JESUS CHRIST, is there any hope for you to be saved. If you have any hope of making it any other way, then JESUS CHRIST died in vain as far as you are concerned: "I do not frustrate the

grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

But He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our part is to believe in Him. We must believe the good news as it comes to us just as we are -- in our sin. It isn't a matter of cleaning up our lives first; it isn't a matter of self-reformation. JESUS CHRIST is dying in our place just as we are.

Could you imagine Barabbas saying: "I don't believe it," or "I won't accept it"? Not on your life. This was good news; he accepted it and was delivered, forever free. Would a Barabbas today refuse such an offer? It is not very likely in the legal realm that a man would, but there have been some.

What if a Pardon is Refused?

Martin Dalton died March 23, 1960 at the age of 91. He had been 63 years behind the bars of Rhode Island State Prison. He murdered a New York business man in East Providence, Rhode Island in 1897, was found guilty and sentenced at the age of 28. In 1930 his case was reviewed. He was granted a full pardon and could go free being 61 years old. But he refused. He chose to remain in prison. Could he refuse a pardon? Yes. According to a decision made by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1830: "A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon the acceptance by the person implicated. It is hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson died in prison."

While few today may refuse this pardon in the legal realm, this same offer in the spiritual realm is being refused by one Barabbas after another. Why? It is because "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

May, by the grace of GOD and the working of the SPIRIT of GOD, your eyes be opened to see your personal Saviour who loved you and gave Himself for you. May you not spurn the Lord's pardon.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

JESUS CHRIST had died for you. He can do nothing more than what He has done. "It is finished!" (John 19:30) The decision is yours. What will you do with Him?

Leaving Barabbas we follow JESUS.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

02.14 - The Scourging of Christ

Chapter 14 THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST

John alone at this point gives us the true sequence of events. He shows that after the scourging, JESUS is brought back again before the people as Pilate seeks once again to have Him released, but to no avail. Matthew and Mark give the account of the scourging and mocking but do not record Pilate's last efforts to free JESUS since these efforts were fruitless. Luke goes from the trial right to the road that leads to Calvary.

"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him" (John 19:1).

Like the crucifixion itself where the Scriptures are silent except for the words, "They crucified him," so here. A veil is drawn over this scene, and it is done purposely. We should therefore be content with only a few comments and then move on. The scourging and mocking by the soldiers takes place within the palace itself, and was not seen by the people. John writes to clarify this point. After it was all over, Pilate brings JESUS back before the crowd and they see Him for the first time in this condition.

The scourge consisted of a handle to which several leather thongs were affixed. These were weighted on the ends with jagged pieces of bone or metal. This would help tear the flesh and make each blow more effective.

The victim was stripped, and usually tied to a post with his hands also bound: "And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25) so as not to be able to defend himself. The blows were normally applied to the back and loins but sometimes the whole body. We shall see shortly reasons for believing that the face and whole body of CHRIST was scourged. The punishment by scourging was so severe that the victim usually fainted, and not rarely died.

According to Jewish law a man could receive no more than forty stripes: "Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee" (Deuteronomy 25:3). For this reason the Jews limited their scourgings from either rods or whips to 39 stripes so as never to break this law if perchance they have miscounted: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep" (2 Corinthians 11:23-25).

With the Romans, however, no such limitation was observed; it depended entirely on the commander in charge. The implication of the text is that JESUS CHRIST received a Roman scourging, and it was by no means limited to 39 stripes.

Pilate had a reason for the severity of this flogging. He was seeking to present JESUS CHRIST to the crowd once again and hoped that the severity of His sufferings would suffice. The very fact that

JESUS CHRIST is unable to carry His cross is another indication of the suffering He previously encountered. It is not a case that the Lord would not carry His cross; He could not carry it, and the soldiers knew it and knew why this was the case. The soldiers have finished the scourging, and now they enter into a little sport with this One who is before them. Though it is a breach of military discipline, their own hostility toward the Jews is taken out on the Lord. Not wanting any of their buddies to miss this "they call together the whole band" or cohort of soldiers (Mark 15:16), perhaps the same that were used to capture Him in the early morning. They now give a mock coronation to the KING.

"And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him" (Mark 15:17-20).

Once the direction was started it continued until it was a full dress occasion. A king must have a robe. They found an old military cloak of purple color. This they threw over His bleeding form and clasped it on the right shoulder: "And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe" (Matthew 27:28). This robe was one worn by Roman generals and sometimes presented by Rome to foreign kings. A king needs also a crown. This was supplied by intertwining the twigs from the long-spiked thorn bush which grows in Palestine into a crown. This was put upon His head: "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head" (Matthew 27:29 a). One thing still was lacking. A king needs a scepter, and finding a reed they place it into His right hand: "and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:29 b). Then they spat upon Him: "And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head" (Matthew 27:30). With the reed, they hit Him on the head. Let us not think of this reed as some little thing that bends every time it is used. This is not the case. The most common reed in Palestine grows in immense quantities in the Jordan valley along the river and its tributaries. It is a lofty reed often 20 feet high. It would be something like what we know as bamboo. This was what they first used as a scepter in His right hand, but then took and smote Him on His thorn-crowned head over and over again.

John adds one other detail: "and they smote him with their hands" (John 19:3). It is in the imperfect tense, which indicates that they kept on smiting Him. All their mockery was in reference to CHRIST being King, while that given before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin was in reference to His being Prophet.

This is still the hour when all that they willed to do was done, but all who had dealings with Him merely revealed the baseness and depravity of the human heart. The heart is deceitful above all things and "desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9); who can know it? Since the human heart is being revealed, it is any human heart. It is my heart; it is your heart. Here is a picture of what I would have done had I been there.

"Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!" (John 19:4-5).

Even though Pilate ordered JESUS to be scourged as the preparation for crucifixion, and this was carried out, Pilate still wants to release Him. He previously had said: "I will chastise him and release him." (Luke 23:16) He comes back to the crowd now saying to them: "Behold the man!" Is this not enough!

Little did Pilate realize that by this very act he was fulfilling Scripture. We have not examined many of the passages that have been fulfilled during these trials because this has been outside the scope of our present study, but there is one which is significant to this occasion. We need to look closely at Isaiah 52:13-15.

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."

The Hebrew is a very descriptive language, and a very careful examination of these verses reveal precious truths. The measure of many being astonished at Him reveals that He was so disfigured in His appearance from man and His beauty from the sons of men that He would startle all that look upon Him. In Isaiah 52:13-15 we have an overview of JESUS CHRIST as the true SERVANT of the Lord, followed in chapter 53 by the detailed examination of this One under three categories: (1) the cross (Isaiah 53:1-3); (2) the tomb (Isaiah 53:4-9); and (3) the resurrection (Isaiah 53:10-12).

Here is a brief outline of Isaiah 52:13-15 for our meditation.

A. The Servant and His Position, Isaiah 52:13.

1. The Exclamation: "Behold," "Lo," "Look!"

Something of the utmost importance is going to be stated.

2. The Subject: "My Servant."

It is not a King that is introduced, but a servant.

He is One who is sent by GOD to accomplish a work and to fulfill a mission.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:1-4).

3. The Action:

a. The perfect obedience of His earthly life: "shall deal prudently."

b. The resultant exaltation by the Father: "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."

The three words are not synonymous, but progressive. They refer to (1) the resurrection; the ascension; (3) the seating: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:20-22).

4. The Astonishment: "As many were astonished at thee."

a. The object of the astonishment: The MESSIAH.

b. The subjects of the astonishment: The believing remnant.

B. The MESSIAH and His Sufferings, Isaiah 52:14.

1. His Face: "his visage was so marred more than any man."

It was His face that was marred more than that of any man.

2. His Physical Form: "and his form more than the sons of men."

His form was disfigured more than the sons of Adam. Delitzsch says that "His appearance and His form were altogether distorted."

C. The KING and His Glory, Isaiah 52:15.

1. His Object Ministry: His action.

"So shall he sprinkle many nations (the Gentiles)."

He is going to startle the Gentiles as well as Israel that He was in truth the MESSIAH.

2. His Subjective Ministry: The Actions of the Kings.

"the kings shall shut their mouths at him."

They will do this because of astonishment and reverence.

"for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."

What could not have been told them by any man and was previously unheard of, they shall see and shall understand.

Let us return to this very significant verse of Isaiah 52:14.

The first word is a reference to His face. In the Hebrew it signifies the disfiguring of the face. The second word is a reference to His physical form.

GOD says: "Behold my servant." (Matthew 12:18)

Pilate says: "Behold the man." (John 19:5)

and later says: "Behold your king." (John 19:14)

When they looked, what did they see? Isaiah 53:2 b tells us: "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

Three things are involved in these words:

(1) No form to Him showing His body is beyond recognition.

(2) No comeliness (or honor) because He is rejected by His own people, crowned with thorns as a symbol of the curse, and partakes of a rebel's scourging and death. Hanging on a tree makes Him, according to the law, an accursed thing: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

(3) No beauty (or sight).

There is not reason why we should look on Him. The sight is repugnant to our esthetic nature. Israel did not want a suffering Saviour; they wanted a conquering deliverer. He did not answer to their ideal. Barabbas did. They did not want someone spiritual, but someone political. Sin was not troubling them; therefore a Saviour from sin could not delight them.

Why was JESUS in such a condition that both His face and physical form were disfigured from that of man? Let us review the Saviour's sufferings.

The trial before Annas:

1. "And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?" (John 18:22).

The trial before Caiaphas:

2. "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands" (Matthew 26:67).

"And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands" (Mark 14:65).

"And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?" (Luke 22:64).

Buffet Him, which is "to strike with the fist" from the word: "the knuckles."

3. Smote Him with the palms of their hands.

The trial before Pilate

4. "Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified" (Matthew 27:26).

"And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe" (John 19:2).

Scourged Him. This must have been all over His body.

5. "And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head" (Mark 15:17).

"And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands" (John 19:3).

Plaited a crown of thorns and put it about His head.

6. "And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him" (Mark 15:19).

Kept on smiting Him on the head with a reed (rod).

7. "And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands" (John 19:3).

Smote Him with their hands.

After the trials:

8. "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots" (Matthew 27:35).

"Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (John 19:18).

Crucified Him.

It is because of our Lord's great disfiguring that He sought all the more to prove to His disciples that it was He who was alive after His resurrection:

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them" (Luke 24:39-43).

and they required all the more proof to be sure:

"The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:25-29). The world, still in their unbelief, sees JESUS as the object of ridicule and mockery. They still would crown Him with a crown of thorns in their hatred for Him.

By faith we who believe see JESUS crowned with glory and honor:

"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" (Hebrews 2:9).

He who once was crowned with the symbol of the curse now wears the garland of the highest honor. As the perfect servant of JEHOVAH, GOD has supremely exalted Him:

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Php 2:9).

Someday He shall appear wearing many crowns or diadems: "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself" (Revelation 19:12).

These crowns were ribbons or bands which indicate rulership and authority. In that day all shall know He is KING OF KINGS AND Lord OF LordS (Revelation 19:16). The fact that He is who He is will startle many Gentiles as well as the whole nation of Israel. By faith we know who He is today.

~ end of chapter 14 ~

02.15 - Spiritual Truth From The Study of The Trials

Chapter 15 SPIRITUAL TRUTHS FROM THE STUDY OF THE TRIALS

Each lesson that we have had on the trials of what is recorded in Scripture has revealed many pertinent lessons and truths. We have sought to bring these out as we have moved through Scripture, and it is not our purpose here to review any of these. Our purpose now is to stand off and look at the entire procedure that has occurred and seek to answer the question: Why is so much space devoted to this in GOD's Word? What is the lesson and lessons for us in this study? Knowing the facts of what has occurred is only the means of answering this final and important question.

1. There is one major truth that the HOLY SPIRIT is seeking to establish, and all other truths and lessons are completely subordinate and insignificant in comparison to this one. This one important fact is that JESUS CHRIST is sinless. His whole life was examined and no one accused Him of one wrong word or act: "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (John 8:46). He did not sin before the trials. He did not sin in the trials. He did not sin on the cross. Therefore He died sinless: "The just for the unjust that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18)

This is why the Epistles write of this One:

He did not sin: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22).

He knew no sin: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In Him is no sin: "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

Peter addresses Him as the Holy One and the Just: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you" (Acts 3:14).

The writer of Hebrews attests that he was sinless: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

Gabriel called Him "holy": "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

We need to keep in mind that as we approach this one day of history more and more space and words are devoted to telling us what took place and why than any other period in the life of CHRIST. A total of 13 chapters tells us of this one day.

The reason is all important. The world is searching the life of JESUS CHRIST in order to accuse Him, but they find nothing.

You will remember that Daniel's life was also searched: "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (Daniel 6:4).

Our Lord is greater than Daniel. He had enemies that listened to every word He spoke seeking to trap Him in His speech or His actions, but they found nothing: "Which also our Fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our Fathers, unto the days of David; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your Fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your Fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:45-52).

The examination given CHRIST was far more intensive and lengthier than that of Daniel, and yet they found nothing.

It is essential if CHRIST is going to die for others that He be sinless. There is no other way that He may be the Saviour of the world. Since this is so very important, the Scriptures devote much space to it.

The trials examine and re-examine CHRIST from every angle, but find nothing. He, through it all, exposes His enemies' sins, but manifests that He Himself is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26).

He did not need "to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's" (Hebrews 7:27). He could offer up Himself as the one sacrifice for sins forever because He was sinless.

The trials reveal then, one important fact: JESUS CHRIST is sinless. The Cross reveals the other significant truth: He is our substitute. His death is vicarious. The one is as important as the other. You must have a sinless Saviour or you have no Saviour at all. His death would have meant nothing more than what modernism says of it, had JESUS CHRIST not been sinless. This is what changes Calvary and the doctrine of the atonement from being merely the death of a martyr dying for a principle for which he held, or any other such inadequate or erroneous concept into a vicarious propitiatory death. Vicarious means He died in the place of the sinner: He was the sinner's substitute. Propitiatory means that He made complete satisfaction for sins to the Father.

What changes Calvary to become a place of propitiation, and the Lord's death vicarious is who He is. We all know what He did. He died on a Cross. This is not in question. Who died on that Cross makes the difference in what happened.

Since GOD was in CHRIST and sinless, He could taste death for every man on the Cross so that all can be saved. He makes reconciliation possible. Yet all goes back to the Person. The trials reveal the Person, His character and nature, and so establish the nature of His work on the Cross.

What more could be said or done to prove the sinlessness of JESUS CHRIST that has not been done in these trials? The answer is nothing.

The HOLY SPIRIT has labored to prove this point simply because it is so essential to our salvation.

All the rest of the instruction and lessons that we derive from these trials is subordinate to this theme. This is primary; all others are secondary.

2. The Example of CHRIST for the Christian.

Here is a theme which Scripture itself tells us is for us who are believers in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. CHRIST is our example in suffering.

"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:20-23).

In CHRIST's sufferings through these trials, I see at least four important ways in which He is our example. Some of these are interrelated and yet by dividing them up we may see different aspects of what CHRIST's sufferings teach us. a. We are to be careful not to sin either by attitude, action or word when we go through unjust trials. (1 Peter 2:22-23 above).

How easy it is to allow the old sin nature to take control and have the wrong attitude. And when we do it will ultimately show itself in wrong speech and action. The old sin nature cannot remain timid or bashful when it is in control.

We must be very careful in these particular circumstances not to be under the circumstances. When we get out of fellowship we always sin before we get back into fellowship. The reason is this. The only way we learn we are out of fellowship is through sinning, which sin is wrong and must be acknowledged by our confessing it in order to be forgiven, cleansed and restored to fellowship.

Therefore, we are to be careful. The exceeding better thing is not to get out of fellowship in the hour of trial.

b. We are given the example of committing ourselves and our trials to the Lord. "but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23 b).

The Lord knew that the Father does not and cannot change. He is immutable.

Since He is the same, and He is righteous before, He commits His trial and all that He is to this One.

"He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (Psalms 22:8). "He trusted." This is a different word for trust from that used before in the Psalms in Psalms 22:4-5 : "Our Fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried

unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." It carries the idea that He rolled Himself and His case on the Lord.

What CHRIST was accused of on the Cross was not sins, but trusting the Lord. They ridiculed Him for His piety.

When our Lord didn't understand why, He trusted. He has given us the example. When we cannot see and understand, we can trust. CHRIST went to the right person with His problem and He trusted in the right One. So He has given us the example. When we have a problem we are to go to Him and we are to roll ourselves and our case on the Lord and trust Him who does all things well. c. We are shown by the Lord's experiences the divine pattern that is for all believers and pilgrims on this earth.

GOD's program calls for sufferings first, and the glory to follow.

"Searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11).

As they did to the Lord they will do to His own.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:18-20).

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12).

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church . . . To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:24; Colossians 1:27).

Cf. The Tabernacle Lampstand. It is beaten into an object of eternal glory, all from one lump of pure gold. The center shaft is JESUS CHRIST; the branches are the believers. He has already suffered and been glorified; today we are completing the sufferings of the body and we shall be glorified together. d. These trials reveal more than anything else in Scripture that a Holy GOD must have a future day of reward for the innocent and of punishment for the wicked and the injustice that has been committed.

Righteousness and justice demand it. Scripture declares it a reality.

On the basis of this truth, CHRIST is our example of "patient endurance." We are to look beyond this present to the future glory. We are not to live for this life, but for the next. This is what CHRIST did, and He is thus our example.

"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, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Hebrews 12:1), i.e., lack of patient endurance in the midst of severe trials, "and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith . . ."

CHRIST is our example in patient endurance and suffering even to death as we strive against sin.

Think of the nature of His sufferings.

1. Intense.
2. Varied.
3. Prolonged.
4. Complete (i.e., to death).

Yet even this does not convey the whole picture.

There were sufferings in body because He was a man.

There were sufferings in soul because He was a perfect man.

There were sufferings in spirit because He was the God-Man.

No man ever suffered more; yet through it all He patiently endured, not by the power of His divine nature, but as man yielded to GOD and to His will.

He is our forerunner who wears the victor's crown. There He stands the mighty conqueror.

3. There is one other spiritual truth concerning these trials of the Lord that is of major importance to the believer.

Paul writes in Php 3:10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."

We would like to quote this and stop there, and Paul does not. He continues: "and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

Whatever Paul went in for, he went in with all he had. If it was worth anything, it was worth everything.

When he was in Pharisaism he went in with everything he had.

Notice what Paul had to glory in

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Php 3:4-6).

He could glory in family.

He was a Jew, not a Gentile.

He could glory in customs.

He was a Hebrew, not a Hellenist.

He could glory in orthodoxy.

He was a Pharisee, not a Sadducee.

He could glory in activity.

He was zealous, not indifferent.

He could glory in ritual.

He was blameless, not ceremonially unclean.

All of these things would be gain for Paul had he continued in Pharisaism, for he would have probably been as great if not greater than his teacher, Gamaliel. But the Lord got a hold of Paul, and he did a complete about face. These things of the flesh were no longer what he sought. Now his zeal and all of his efforts were in another direction -- an opposite direction.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but 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 mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Php 3:7-9).

Php 3:7 -- In this program there was no place for self-glory whatever, and if any came in, it was loss for CHRIST and for His work.

Php 3:8 -- Now Paul was pressing just as strongly in the opposite direction to gain CHRIST and His approval. He was pressing for the top. He was throwing everything into it.

Php 3:9 -- Paul wants no mere legal righteousness. He wants faith righteousness, not only for justification but for sanctification. The just shall live by faith.

Paul's desire is now to go on in Christian experience: "That I may come to know Him in experience."

I do not want just to know about Him, but Him. You can know about a person without knowing the person Himself. You can know about them by walking with someone who knows them; you can only know them personally by walking yourself with them.

"For I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12). We are content to say all too often, "I know what I believe." It is important to know what we believe, but it is equally as important to know Who we believe . . . personally.

"and the power of his resurrection." (Php 3:10)

Paul wants to know in experience in his own life also, the power that CHRIST experienced in His resurrection.

The word for power is "dunamis."

It is used in Ephesians 1:19 ff.

We have already experienced this power positionally in the Gospel (Romans 1:16), but now Paul wants to experience it in his life in time. But Paul knows a Scriptural principle. No one can experience resurrection with its glory, without experiencing suffering and death first. Thus the only way to come to know in experience the power of His resurrection is to come to know

"the fellowship of his sufferings." (Php 3:10)

The church at Philippi was fellowshiping with Paul in the spread of the Gospel: "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now" (Php 1:5).

Fellowship means "to make common," "to have things in common." It signifies sharing something with someone else. In this sharing one partakes of what the other has or does.

Because of the Philippians financial support of Paul, they were sharing or fellowshiping with him in the furtherance of the Gospel.

A person may fellowship not only in this but with food, ideas, attitudes, etc. Php 2:1 mentions "fellowship of the Spirit." In this every believer shares in the Person and ministry of the HOLY SPIRIT, and is thus used by Paul as an incentive why there should be unity of mind and direction because of this mutual sharing.

So here Paul wants to share in the sufferings of CHRIST. Only as he shares in these sufferings that CHRIST experienced can Paul come to know in experience this One.

What a contrast between Paul and us. The last thing we want to do is suffer, particularly unjustly. But the believers in the early church were different, and perhaps this is why they turned the world up-side down. They received when they were counted worthy to suffer for the sake of the Lord.

"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:41-42).

"And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:23-25).

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

"For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Hebrews 10:34).

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Consider:

"For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day" (1 Corinthians 4:9-13).

And listen:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4).

This suffering that Paul wanted to share in, is something he wants perfected in his life to such an extent that he is through this "being made conformable unto his death." (Php 3:10)

The word signifies "to bring to the same form with some other person or thing."

Paul wanted to know the Lord JESUS in personal experience to such an extent that His resurrection power was his together with the mutual sharing of CHRIST's sufferings so that being completely yielded to the will of GOD and His likeness in meekness and lowliness, he could even die like JESUS CHRIST died.

His is an ambition not many have had.

You cannot throw yourself into anything more than this. Even now in Rome Paul was between life and death: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Php 1:20). where it could be either one of the other.

Paul knew he could never share in CHRIST's atoning sufferings. This is not his desire. He wants to share in the Lord's unjust sufferings for righteousness sake. Thus it is what begins as a spiritual battle in Gethsemane and ends on the Cross. It includes all the sufferings of the trials. This is coming to know Him in experience.

~ end of book ~

S. The Death of Death

The Death of Death Study By: John W. Lawrence This is a very long single chapter study on Death.

Death and the Word of God:

“The Apple and Adam”

I have entitled this message “The Apple and Adam,” but I can just hear someone say: “Don’t you know that it wasn’t an apple that Adam ate?” Well, I want to tell you right now that I do not know at all that it was not an apple Adam ate. Scripture does not say it was an apple—but Scripture also does not say it wasn’t an apple. It was some kind of a fruit tree, and it could have been an apple just as well as it could have been a peach. But if you are against Adam eating an apple maybe you would like, “The Avocado and Our Ancestor”

“The Date and Our Dad”

“The Fig and Our Forefather”

“The Grapefruit and Our Grandfather”

“The Peach and Our Parent”

“The Prune and Our Progenitor” or “The Cherry and the Chief”

There is no indication whatever that this fruit tree ceased to exist after the fall and that it did not perpetuate itself on earth, as was true of the tree of life. Therefore you may make it any fruit you want. The point is that it wasn’t the fruit of the tree that was bad, but Adam and Eve’s disobedience to the known will of God. The Lord had specifically told them in Genesis 2:16-17, “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The Hebrew of “thou shalt surely die” is “dying thou shalt die.” It is a Hebrew idiom that makes the statement very emphatic. Adam understood this else Adam would also have been deceived. Since he was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14) it follows he did understand. However, he may not have fully understood all of the ramifications of his act of disobedience.

Death was something totally foreign to God’s creation. God is life and He had constructed the world in accordance with His own nature of being. The world that God had made was “very good”—a statement that could not be made when death entered upon the scene. What a change was brought into the world by man eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! God has said, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” “At the moment in time that you do what I have commanded you not to do, dying you shall die.” Death was the instantaneous result of disobedience.

I. The Immediate Consequence of Death to Adam and Eve A. Psychological Anxieties and Fears

What are some of the consequences that came upon the scene as a result of this judgment that immediately fell upon Adam and Eve? Death is a terrible thing, and one of the first results of sin entering into the world and death by sin was that Adam and Eve feared God. The whole gamut of 'fear' entered on the scene beginning with Adam and Eve hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:8). And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:8).

Man had known no fear before, but now he was full of fear. He was fearful of his Creator; he feared judgment; the whole area of guilt entered with all of the anxieties of life. All of the problems of hostility, anxiety, fear and perplexity entered immediately when Adam sinned.

B. Substitutional Sacrifices

Adam and Eve began to realize something of the consequences of sin when God made for them coats of skins. In order for this to be done innocent animals—animals that had done nothing—gave their life in order to provide an acceptable covering for the man and the woman. Adam and Eve saw the first physical death when these innocent animals died to provide for them "coats of skins." The consequences of sin coming into the world are not fully understood until one sees the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ as "the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." He died that we might be clothed with His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Here is the sacrifice of the innocent One who knew no sin, did no sin, in Him was no sin, for us who are sinful. He died as our substitute, in order to provide an acceptable covering for us before God. The full consequence of sin entering into the world is understood only in the light of Calvary.

C. Hostility in the Animal Kingdom

As the curse fell upon mankind and the world, the animal world was also greatly affected. Adam and Eve would realize something of the further consequences of sin in the world as they visualized the hostility in the animal world. When the animals passed before Adam, he named them all, but at this time there was no hostility at all. The animal kingdom was one big, happy family. No animal was carnivorous. No animal would hurt or kill another animal. Their food was, just as man, the produce of the earth.

Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so (Genesis 1:29-30). With the fall of man there was a change in the animal world. The whole of creation found itself in the bondage of decay and corruption together with man. Moreover without exception every creature experienced groaning and pain. Their very existence was in jeopardy and survival was a fight. Each animal had its enemies as it sought to exist in a hostile world. Animals were killing and eating other animals. What a contrast with the world as God had made it, and with the state of things as they will yet exist on earth in the millennium.

God says in Isaiah 11:6-7 : The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead

them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

D. Deterioration and Infirmary in Body

Another way Adam and Eve would have realized the consequences of death in their life was the physical condition of their own bodies. Instantaneously with their sinful act their bodies began to deteriorate. Their teeth developed cavities, they had aches and pains, sickness and infirmities. They were living in a body that was dying and doomed to destruction in the dust.

E. The Loss of Loved Ones But Adam and Eve only experienced the full significance of their act when Eve, the mother of all living, held in her arms her own son (Abel) who had been killed by her other son (Cain). The awfulness of death was brought fully home at that time to Adam and Eve.

Death is the great enemy of mankind. Few people even want to talk about it; they do not even want to think about it. They seek to push it out of their mind and keep on living as if it will never happen. Some have even deluded themselves into thinking there is no such thing as death, that death is only an illusion, a lie, that it does not exist. How wrong can you be. If there is no such thing as death, then God lied to Adam right from the beginning. But He did not lie.

Death, and the fear of death, holds many all their life in bondage (Hebrews 2:15). Yet the Lord Jesus Christ became a man specifically so that He could die, and “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14). Death has been conquered by Jesus Christ. Death was swallowed up in victory because the grave could not hold the Lord Jesus. His resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection. Someday death will be completely conquered, yet it is the very last enemy on God’s time schedule to be defeated. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26).

II. The Meaning of Death

Death means “separation” regardless of the type of death involved. Death is never cessation of existence, nor is it cessation of consciousness.

James 2:26 says: “the body without the spirit is dead.” Whenever there is a separation of the spirit of a man from his body, at that moment death takes place. Just as long as the spirit of a man inhabits the body and is not separated from it, there is life. In Luke 16:1-31 we read the account of the rich man who died and went to Hades. There in Hades (i.e. his soul was in Hades and his body was buried in the ground) he was in torment. He realized also that the beggar that sat at his gate and ate the crumbs from his table was in Abraham’s bosom. He could reason and think. He desired water and someone to return back from the dead to warn his brothers of this place. There was full consciousness of being, thinking, feeling, and remembering.

III. The Three Important Types of Death in Scripture

There are three important types of death in the Word of God: spiritual death, physical death and eternal death. Each death is separation, is the result of sin, and has its remedy in Christ.

A. Spiritual Death

Spiritual death is “separation from God in time.” The moment Adam and Eve sinned they died toward God. Adam and Eve died spiritually right away and this is seen in the fact that they hid themselves from God. They had a nature that was contrary to God’s nature and that nature, now fallen, found no fellowship with God. The life Adam and Eve possessed did not respond to the life possessed and enjoyed by God. God had not died. Man had died spiritually. No longer did he have spiritual life; he was spiritually dead.

Because this was Adam and Eve’s permanent nature as a result of their sin, this nature is passed on to each child born of the seed of man. We are all born spiritually dead toward God. Thus in Ephesians 2:1 we read: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” This is why Scripture says: “There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:11-12). The natural man being spiritually dead would never seek after God; he would always seek to hide from His presence. The reason is because he is spiritually dead. The message of the gospel is that God seeks after us and finds us. The Lord Jesus is come “to seek and to save” that which is lost.

God’s work is to undo the work of sin and death, and the remedy for spiritual death is spiritual life. The word “quickened” is an old English word meaning “to make alive.”

Ephesians 2:1, “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

Ephesians 2:4-6, We who were dead, have been “made alive.” Salvation is the work of God. Only God can give spiritual life in the place of spiritual death.

John 5:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from [out of] death unto [into] life.”

Once we were in the state of death, but by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ we leave that sphere once and for all and we enter into life with God and all that it entails.

Many individuals who have been born once never realize that they are dead toward God. But whether they feel it or not, they are—and God says they are. If you place a weight on a corpse, he does not feel it at all. Thus the unsaved man may not feel separated from God, but he is.

B. Physical Death

Physical death is the separation of the spirit and/or soul from the body. James 2:26 says, “the body without the spirit is dead.” Whenever the soul leaves the body, physical death ensues.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Physical death in the world is the result of the sin of one man—Adam. To be “in Adam” is to be under the sentence of death. The genealogy of Adam is given in Genesis 5:1-32. “This is the book of the generations of Adam” (v. 1). As we read on in this book we read over and over that short phrase: “And he died.” This is the book of death. But there is another book. In Matthew 1:1 we read the only other time the same phrase occurs: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.” To

be “in Christ” is life and peace. As in Adam all die; in Christ all shall be made alive. Listen to these words of Paul: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17). Because Jesus Christ lives, we shall live also (John 14:19). Even though we may die, we await that future day of our resurrection or the complete redemption of our body (Romans 8:23). God’s remedy for physical death is resurrection.

C. The Second Death or Eternal Death This death is spoken of in Revelation 20:12-15, and it refers to “eternal separation from God.” This state is spoken of as that of perishing.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;
15 that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:14-16).

1. It is spoken of as hell or gehenna. It is a place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels—a lake of fire—where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

2. It is spoken of as a place of utter darkness (Jude 1:13).

3. It is a place where in eternity will be found “the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters and all liars, [all of these] shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 22:8).

I have heard men say in a joking way: “Well, if I go to hell, I am surely going to have a lot of company.” Beloved, this is a fallacious statement. It is correct that there will be many there, for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13). But Scripture says it is a place of utter darkness, “the blackness of darkness for ever.” Even though it is a lake of fire, it is not something that is light; it is something that is darkness. God is light and His kingdom is a kingdom of light; this is a place of utter darkness. There is no light there.

I do not know whether you have been in total darkness, but if you have, you realize that you can be standing right next to another person and yet there is no help, no feeling between you and them. There is nothing that satisfies you. You are alone! You can be in a crowd, but you are alone! This is the place that is called the second death.

Eternal death is the result of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, and failing to believe that He is the Savior of the world. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:17-18).

What do you have to do to be lost? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! But you do have to do something to be saved. And the person who is born once, if they do not do anything, will die twice. There is a second death. If we are going to escape this second death we must have a Savior. If there is no second death, there is no need for a Savior. If we are going to escape this second death and dying twice, we are going to have to be born twice—we must be born again (John 3:7). This is the

message of the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to those who rejected Him and said: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). The issue between life and death is the person of Jesus Christ. What think ye of Him? The Lord said the Holy Spirit would be sent into the world to “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me” (John 16:8-9).

There is only one sin that will take a person to a Christless eternity, and that is failure to believe on the Savior of the world. There is salvation in no other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). The Word says we are to save some “with fear, pulling them out of the fire” (Jude 1:23). When we talk about the second death, we certainly are not talking about something that is a wonderful subject—but it is a reality. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ came, “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15). Do you know you have eternal life? Do you know that if you should die today you would go to heaven because the blood of Jesus Christ has saved you? Do you know that you have been rescued, redeemed, taken out of the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son?

If you don't, you'd better, for this is real. These are not my words, but God's. This is God's revelation; I am merely the mailman. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun, and there is only one way unto the Father. Jesus Christ said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Do you know you are saved? If not, why not, and why not settle it right now?

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12). The decision is yours. The issue is life and death.

Death and the Work of Christ:

“The Cross and the Christ” The greatest parade that the world has ever seen is the parade of death. It started with Adam and it has continued from that day to this. The largest cities in the world are not Tokyo or New York but they are the cities of the dead. In the words of Paul, death has reigned as a king over mankind: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). “By one man's offence death reigned by one” (Romans 5:17).

Death reigned as king over the whole human race until Jesus Christ came and conquered death.

I. The Distinction Between Restoration and Resurrection The very first thing that must be understood is the difference between restorations to life and resurrection. Twice in the Old Testament people were restored to life. Elisha restored to life the Shunammite's son in 2 Kings 4:32-37. Then after Elisha's death, a man was restored to life when his body touched the bones of Elisha in 2 Kings 13:20-21. These are the only two occurrences of restorations to life recorded in the Old Testament. In the New Testament there are three recorded occurrences, and these are but samples of many that occurred in the ministry of Jesus Christ. One was a little girl 12 years old,

another was a young man, and the third one recorded was an older man, Lazarus by name. In the first instance death had just occurred; in the second case the funeral procession was in process; in the last situation Lazarus had been dead four days. In each of these cases the person was restored back to life again, only to die at some other time. Their restoration was to physical life. Not one of these had gone through death into life so that they could not die again. But Jesus Christ did. He was not restored to life. He was resurrected to life. The life He enjoyed as a resurrected being was not a life subject to death. He came out of death into life. Death had no more power over Him.

Thus we read in Romans 6:9, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." And in 2 Timothy 1:10, "Our Savior Jesus Christ ... hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

How did Christ abolish death? He did so by going 'through death.'

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

We may diagram it thus:

The only One who ever passed "through death" into eternal life is Jesus Christ. In doing so He conquered death. He has the keys of death. It is for this reason that the Lord Jesus is called "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:15, Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).

II. The Deaths Christ Died

We've observed that Scripture speaks of three kinds of death: spiritual, physical and eternal. When Christ died, He took care of the problem of death. He dealt with spiritual, physical and eternal death. In order to do so, He died twice; or He experienced two separate and distinct deaths. He experienced physical death, but He also experienced spiritual death.

Because He was an Infinite Being, He went through physical death, and today there is a man with a body in eternity. Physical death is conquered. There is a man in glory who is the guarantee that all believers will also be there someday in the presence of the Father. But it is also true that because He was an Infinite Being, the Lord Jesus Christ experienced in spiritual death what a finite person would take an infinite number of years to experience. Thus the Lord, by experiencing spiritual death, took care of eternal death for the believers. He tasted death for every man. No man need die eternally. Provision has been made for his salvation. The lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels, and the Lord takes no pleasure in man being involved in the condemnation that is due the devil. To stay in the City of Destruction is to perish with the ungodly (cf. Genesis 19:15-26). To remain in the kingdom of darkness is to become involved in the judgment that will be given those who oppose God and His gospel (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Salvation is available for man; it is not available for the devil or his angels. It is available because of the deaths Christ died.

It is striking that in the Hebrew of Isaiah 53:8-9 two plurals are used. It says: "He was cut off out of the land of the living [plural]; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death [plural, 'deaths']". It is often true that the

Hebrew uses abstract qualities in the plural, but it is also true that the Lord Jesus Christ was cut off from the land of the living both Godward and then manward. The living God was separated from the Son in the darkness of the cross; He was cut off for the first and only time in all eternity from the living God. Then He was cut off from those living on earth. This would signify He died twice—and that is exactly what the next phrase says. In the first death he made His grave with the wicked for He hung between two thieves. His second grave, (that which was physical) was with the rich. He was buried in a rich man's tomb. Thus the prophet prophetically sees both His grave with the wicked and His grave with the rich in the deaths He died. Only God could write it so exactly.

A. The Spiritual Death of Christ on the Cross The Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross for a total of six hours. It was not by accident that three of those hours were in light and three were in darkness. The darkness was a supernatural darkness. It was not due to an eclipse of the sun because this day was the Passover. It was full moon, and an eclipse of the sun can only take place when it is new moon. The moon was 180 degrees wrong for there to be an eclipse.

It was not dark because of there being storm clouds in the sky, for there was not a cloud in the sky this day. The Prophet wrote of this day: "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day" (Amos 8:9). God did just that. It was noon when darkness fell over the land. It was a supernatural darkness from the Lord.

During the first three hours the sufferings of Christ on the cross were at the hands of men. During the last three hours, He suffered at the hands of a righteous and holy God. From 9 a.m. until noon, man was at the cross pouring out his worst—mocking, reviling, deriding—while during the very same time God was offering up for man His very best. From noon until 3 p.m., man was offering up his best—the only sinless one who had ever lived—while at the same time God was pouring out His worst.

During the first three hours our Lord was the "sinless" Son of God (Hebrews 7:26); during the last three hours He was "made sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21), and He became the accursed thing. Because God cannot look on sin, neither did He allow man to look on the Lord during this time. God, for the only time in eternity past or future, was separated from the Son, and a veil was hung over the light of the sun in order that man might realize the gravity of the moment.

During the first three hours, Calvary was only a hill outside the city of Jerusalem where the Son of Man was crucified; during the final three hours, Calvary became the brazen altar of God where the Son of God was slain for our sins.

During the light, Christ bore the weight of His own body on the cross; during the last three hours He bore the sins of the whole world.

During the period of light at the cross, we see God's day toward which everything had been moving in time, but we see man's night in which the blackness of the fallen human heart was manifest toward Christ. During the period of darkness, we see God's night when His wrath was poured out on His own Son and which was the only time in eternity in which there was separation between the Father and the Son. But during this same period we see man's day when salvation is now available to sinful man by grace through merely looking by faith to the cross and the work that Christ did in this moment in time. In the first three hours, Christ bore the fires of man's wrath against Him. All the torture man could give was poured out. Death by crucifixion was the greatest

torture man had ever devised. In the last three hours, the Lord bore the fire of God's wrath in His very being, manifesting that He was an acceptable sacrifice—truly “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” In these last hours Christ endured all the sufferings of hell. The fourth cry of the Lord upon the cross, which took place near the close of the final three hours, was: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” This forsaking of the Son by God the Father and God the Holy Spirit had taken place the moment sin was imputed to Him. God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Habakkuk 1:13). This was the cup of wrath that Christ anguished over in Gethsemane. The fifth cry on the cross was “I thirst.” Here the fires of God's wrath were burning within Him. In the sixth cry on the cross Christ said: “It is finished.” He had completely accomplished redemption. He had “paid in full” the requirement of holiness and righteousness. Nothing more could be done. The Father is satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ for sin. The seventh cry on the cross finds Christ saying once again “Father.” He is now back in fellowship with the Father. Spiritual death or separation is over. A complete satisfaction spiritually has been made. Christ died for our sins. He bore the wrath due us in His own body on the tree. He tasted death for every man.

Remember that it is the death Christ experienced on the cross of spiritual separation from the Father which provides eternal salvation for us. It is not the physical death of Christ that saves anyone, but His spiritual death. Our message is about a cross—this is what we preach—not a tomb.

Christ said He had the power to lay down His physical life at any time and to take it up again (John 10:18). Had Christ laid down His life at another time before finishing the work of redemption and propitiation on the cross, not one of us could have been saved. Even after spending three hours on the cross, had He laid down His life, yet no one would have been saved. The physical death is not the important death. Christ had to go through physical death even as He went through the incarnation and birth. Yet He came out of death being raised from the death. Nevertheless the death He endured and tasted that is significant to our salvation is His spiritual death with the Father and the Holy Spirit. His passing through physical death was then only the logical outcome of His being a perfect sacrifice for sin.

Next we want to consider what happened as the Lord passed through physical death and was raised by the power of God.

Let us never forget that Christ “once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust” (1 Peter 3:18). He bore “our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). “Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh” (1 Peter 4:1). He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Christ ... “who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). “Christ ... hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Ephesians 5:2).

B. The Physical Death of Christ on the Cross

Besides the Lord's death of spiritual separation, there occurred after this experience physical death. The soul and human spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ were separated from His body, and physical death occurred. We want to spend this lesson looking at what occurred when Christ died physically on the cross.

John records: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar; he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30). Luke adds another significant detail. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). The expression, "he gave up the ghost" is an old English way of simply saying, "He expired"; "He gave His last breath."

Here is a man laying down His own life. No one had ever done this before. Men have no power over their own life, but their times are in the Lord's hands. However with Christ, He had the authority or right to lay down His own life and to take it up again (John 10:17-18). The fact that Christ did not lay down His life until the sin problem was finished which makes salvation possible for mankind, and makes His death efficacious.

We want to follow first the physical body of Christ after death, and then follow the soul and human spirit of Christ following death.

1. The physical body of Christ After the death of Christ on the cross, John gives a detailed description of what happened to the body of Christ,

John 19:31-42 The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath for that Sabbath was a high day, asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; 33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; 34 but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. 35 And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. 36 For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." 37 And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced."

38 And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body. 39 And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. 40 And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. 42 Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. In this account John gives us the evidence for actual death. We may be assured that Jesus Christ physically died for the following reasons.

(1) The appearance (19:30). Christ cried out; it was a cry of relief. He bowed His head and He expired for the last and final time. His actions signify death.

(2) The expert announcement (19:31-33). The very fact that the Lord's legs were not broken was because legal experts on the subject of death knew He was dead already. They witnessed to this fact by not breaking the Lord's legs.

(3) The absolute certainty (19:34). Since these soldiers dare not make a mistake, and since it would not hurt a dead body to have a sword thrust into His heart cavity to make certain He was dead, the Roman soldier did just that. Now there can be no question about it. Life as we know it could not function in a body with a gash into the heart sac large enough for a man to thrust his hand.

(4) The visible fact (19:34-35). John himself says that he was a witness to the fact that he saw both blood and water pour forth from the spear wound. Here was the postmortem performed upon the body of Christ. Since the blood had already separated or coagulated into the red clot ("blood") and the limpid serum ("water"), it proves that Christ had not only died, but He had been dead some time.

(5) The handling of the body (19:38-42). The final proof that Jesus Christ was dead was the handling of His body. Anyone who has handled a corpse knows what I mean. There is no guesswork involved as to whether they are dead or not. There are two valid witnesses in Israel, both members of the Sanhedrin, who handled His body and they can witness to the fact that this man was dead.

Now by the mouth of two or three witnesses, the truth may be established. Here are many witnesses. All who were there at the cross saw how He died. The soldiers witness to His death by not breaking His legs. The crowd again can testify as to the spear piercing His side. The writer of the Gospel is an eyewitness of the blood and water coming from His riven side. Finally, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus are witnesses that they prepared a corpse for burial.

Before the cross, men did whatever they willed to the Son. In fact, Christ had said in the Garden: "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). Whatever man willed he did to the Son of God, but after Christ died, no unbeliever ever touched the body of Christ. Both Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus were believers, and their claiming Christ's body forced them to expose themselves as His followers. This caused the Lord's body to be buried in a rich man's tomb in a garden that was close to Calvary. With the body in a tomb "that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid" and with a stone rolled over the entrance and sealed with the seal of Rome, let us now follow the story of the soul and human spirit of the Lord.

2. The soul and human spirit of Christ

It is most unfortunate that otherwise excellent teachers have stated that Christ's body went into the grave, His soul went to paradise, while His human spirit went into the presence of the Father. In support of this, the passage of Luke 23:46 is given: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit': and having said thus, he gave up the ghost," or expired. That Christ had a body, a soul and a human spirit is very factual. He was perfect man, and so likewise all believers will be forever glorified in body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Furthermore, it is true that the physical body of Christ went into the tomb, but the soul and human spirit are never divided so that one goes one place and the other goes another place. The soul and human spirit are the immaterial part of being. My soul and human spirit are the real me, and they inhabit at this present time my body. The real person of the Lord was His soul and human spirit, and these were commended into the hands of the Father. For what purpose? That the Father

might perform His wishes and desires. Here is a committal, not of place, but of purpose—of accomplishment. The Father could do as He saw fit. Redemption was over. The Son knew where He would be and had just mentioned it, namely in paradise (Luke 23:43). But whether He rose again, He committed to the Father to perform even though He had the power to raise Himself from the dead. The Son wanted the Father to vindicate Him by the resurrection from the dead if His work was acceptable to Him. Thus into the Father's hands He committed His spirit. a. Where did Christ go? This brings us to the question: Where did the soul and human spirit of Christ go at death? The person of Christ was together in one place. He said to the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Did Christ and the thief on the cross go to heaven when they died, or did they go somewhere else? In order to answer this question it is necessary to understand what is spoken about the place of the departed spirits both in the Old Testament and also in the New. The place where the soul or spirit of man went at death was called by the Hebrews 'Sheol.' It meant simply, "the place of the departed spirits." The Greeks had the word Hades for identically the same concept. Hades was the abode of the dead. Neither the term Sheol nor Hades designated anything concerning the righteousness or unrighteousness of the person involved. All—righteous and unrighteous—went to Sheol or Hades.

We learn further in both the Old and New Testaments that Sheol and Hades were within the earth itself. One passage in both Testaments will suffice. In Numbers 16:1-50 we have the rebellion of Korah. Moses said in reference to these who rebelled;

29 "If these men die the death of all men, or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. 30 But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD."

31 Then it came about as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground that was under them split open; 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah, with their possessions. 33 So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly (Numbers 16:29-33). From this it may be seen that Sheol is in the earth. The Lord Himself verified this, and was even more specific. He said: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Thus Sheol or Hades is not only a place in the earth, but it is in the heart of it. From the teaching of the Lord in Luke 16:1-31 concerning the rich man and Lazarus (vv. 19-31) we learn that there are two compartments to Hades. There is an upper portion where the righteous go which is a place of bliss, and a lower portion for the unrighteous which is a place of torment. In this place where there is full capacity of personality with intellect, emotion and will, the righteous and unrighteous sections are divided by a great gulf fixed so that none can traverse from one to the other. With this background we are ready to consider where Christ went when He died. He went to Sheol or Hades which was in the heart of the earth. But He went to the upper portion of this place. It may be called "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22) because it is a place of endearment and blessing. It was called by Christ, speaking to the thief on the cross, "paradise." The Lord told this man: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This again signifies a place of bliss. Paradise is a word of Persian origin signifying "a royal park or garden." Paradise, then, is equivalent to Abraham's bosom or the upper portion of Sheol or Hades.

Now we can understand why Peter said on the day of Pentecost, quoting what David said of the Messiah,

“For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:25-27). The word hell here is very unfortunate. The Greek word is ‘Hades,’ not ‘gehenna,’ and should be so translated here and many other places in the New Testament. Peter is quoting from Psalms 16:1-11 which speaks of the Messiah, and there the Hebrew word is ‘Sheol.’ The soul of Christ did go to Sheol or Hades, but it was not left there.

29 “Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:29-32). This is the reason the Apostles’ Creed says: “He descended into hell.” It also is the word Hades, and very definitely Christ descended into Hades when He died on the cross (cf. Romans 10:6-7). b. What did Christ do? This brings us to what did Christ do there in Hades? The Lord never went anywhere but that He did something. He had a purpose and a plan, and He accomplished it. We find that there was both a proclamation and a liberation performed by Him. He both spoke a message and did a work.

(1) His words.

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:18-19).

It was by His death He went and proclaimed a message to the spirits who were in prison in the upper portion of Sheol or Hades. This verse has nothing to do with offering salvation a second time to the lost. This verse does not teach this and neither does any other verse in Scripture. The word “preach” means to make a proclamation, to proclaim something. Christ told them that the sacrifice for their sins had been made. He had made it on the cross (cf. Romans 3:25). All through the Old Testament sins were only “atoned” or covered over temporarily. Now there had been a complete taking away and remission of sins that are past. Even though these in the righteous portion of Sheol were “unjust” and had been once “disobedient” yet they were saved by grace through faith, and Christ’s death had made their salvation complete.

(2) His work. The passage that tells us about what Christ accomplished when He died and went to Hades is Ephesians 4:1-32.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.” 9 Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. (Ephesians 4:7-10).

Verse 7 states that the church, the body of Christ, has received grace gifts from the head of the church that ascended on high. Verse 8 then states that when Christ ascended, He did two things. First He led captivity captive (we will come back to this in a moment), and second, He gave gifts unto men. These gifts given to the church on earth are enumerated in verse 11 as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors-teachers. Completing the passage we find in verse 9 that before Christ ascended He first descended. Furthermore, His descent was into the lower parts of the earth. It was not into the lowest parts for He did not descend into the lower part of Sheol or Hades, but was in the upper portion. Verse 10 gives the wonderful truth that the Lord's ascending was not half way from Sheol, but all the way above all heavens. Christ ascended, not just to the earth's surface after being in the heart of the earth, but He ascended to the highest heaven, even to God's throne where He sat down. He assumed His original position in the trinity. With this background, let us consider the phrase, "He led captivity captive." Literally, "He captivated captivity." When an Old Testament believer died, he could not go into heaven because the way had not yet been provided. The blood was not on the mercy seat. Christ had to die and be resurrected and He has provided a new and living way whereby we may approach the Father on the basis of the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19). But more than this, Christ had to be the firstfruits of death. No one could enter in God's presence through death before the Son did. He is "the forerunner" (Hebrews 6:20), and the leader of many others being their Captain (Hebrews 2:10).

Thus believers in the Old Testament died in hope of a future day of victory and of resurrection (cf. Hebrews 6:2), yet they had to wait in the upper portion of Sheol until the blood was on the mercy seat and until Jesus Christ led the way. The Old Testament believers were held captive then in Sheol, but Christ came and proclaimed that they were able with His resurrection to go free from their prison house, and when Christ rose from the dead He took all those held captive in the upper portion of Sheol to heaven with Him. He captivated captivity.

Thus the Lord's ministry was not only on earth, but under the earth. With this in mind we can understand what we read in Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." This is exactly what Christ did. He first made the proclamation and then He captivated captivity. When He ascended, He took with Him into God's presence all of those that were held captive in the upper or righteous portion of Sheol. He emptied it completely of any inhabitant. But this is just the beginning. Not only did Christ empty the righteous portion of Sheol or Hades, and lead them all to heaven, but He closed down Hades from receiving any more righteous souls when they die. He changed the place where the righteous go at death. When a righteous person dies, he no longer descends into Hades, but he immediately goes to be with Christ. The moment the believer is absent from the body, he is present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Paul was "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better" (Php 1:23). Furthermore, he was one who was caught up into paradise and this was none other than God's throne or the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:24). Paradise was no longer a place in the heart of the earth, it was up in heaven (cf. Revelation 2:7). Christ had changed its location by His work in death and His work through death. This is why Christ said: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell [Hades] shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Not one person will ever be saved and descend into Hades where the gates of Hades will open to receive this person. The Lord will not lose one. Thus through death Christ destroyed both the power and the fear of death.

Thank God for the deaths Christ died. He tasted death for every man. He through death has conquered death, and stands the Victor over death. He is the One who could say: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death" (John 8:51). Christ has changed death for every believer.

Death and the Present Session of Christ:

"The Bier and the Believer"

If the Lord tarries, each of us will someday come face-to-face with death. For each couple, one will be buried, the other will bury, one of us will be in the casket, the other will stand beside the bier. At that time all the emotions of the human heart will be strained and stretched to the fullest capacity until it would seem that the heart would break. As a couple should be prepared for marriage before the wedding, so should we also be prepared, as much as is humanly possible, for separation before it occurs.

Albert Kennedy Rowswell's poem, "Should You Go First" seeks to express this anticipated separation. Should you go first, and I remain To walk the road alone, I'll live in memory's garden, dear, With the happy days we've known. In spring, I'll wait for the roses red, In summer, lilacs blue; In autumn, when the brown leaves fall, I'll catch a breath of you. Should you go first, and I remain For battles to be fought, Each thing you've touched along the way Will be a hallowed spot.

I'll hear your voice, I'll see your smile Though blindly I may grope; The memory of your loving hand Will buoy me on with hope. Should you go first, and I remain To finish with the scroll? No dark shadows shall creep in To make this life seem droll.

We've known so much of happiness, We've had our cup of joy; The memory is one gift of God That death cannot destroy. Should you go first, and I remain, One thing I'd have you know, Walk slowly down the path of death, For soon, I'll follow you.

I'll want to know each step you take, That I may walk the same, For some day, down that lonely road, You'll hear me call your name.

Some unknown author, realizing that the true Spirit-filled believer has much more to look forward to, rewrote the last stanza to read: Should you go first, and I remain, One thing for sure we know;

We'll meet again in that bright land Beyond the golden shore;

God's great salvation we've received Through Jesus' matchless Name, And there in Heaven united be, We'll never part again!

I would like to have us realize what Jesus Christ has done to death. He has changed death for every believer. He has done so for three reasons. First of all death is completely changed for the believer because Jesus Christ conquered death.

I. Jesus Christ Conquered Death From Adam until Christ came and died, death reigned as a king over mankind (cf. Romans 5:14, 21). In all of this time only two escaped dying—Enoch and Elijah—yet for all who died, they were held captive by this reigning monarch we call death. When

Jesus Christ went to the cross, He did a perfect work in reference to death. His death was to ultimately be “the death of death.”

First of all by partaking of the death of separation from God, He tasted death for every man. No man need taste the fires of hell. The lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Second, Christ went through death in order to be the victor over death.

While everyone else was a slave to death, He conquered death so that death was subject to Him and not He to it. Death is now the Lord Jesus Christ’s servant, and He is its Master and Lord. This was not always true. This is why we read in Hebrews 2:14, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15). A few comments on this passage are pertinent. The only way that God the Son could die would be to assume the nature of man. God cannot die, but someone who is both God and man could die. But being both God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ could not only die, He could conquer death and so become its new master. The old master and lord of death was the devil. This is why we see in the Old Testament that the devil had the power of death in his possession, and would oftentimes use it as he did in Job, chapters 1 and 2. In this passage, the only reason that Satan did not employ it in reference to Job himself was because the Lord had, in his case, specifically restricted him. However it was Satan who was responsible for the death of Job’s servants who were tending his oxen and asses, the servants tending his sheep, the servants tending his camels, and all of his ten children.

Satan’s power of death over all mankind is illustrated by Pharaoh’s rulership over the children of Israel in Egypt. Even though the Israelites were God’s children, they were under the domain and power of Pharaoh. Pharaoh had and exercised at times death over his subjects, and did so in order to keep them in fear and in bondage. Though Pharaoh had the power of death over the Lord’s people as well as his own, he did not exercise it to annihilate the Israelites because he wanted them as his slaves to do his work. Dead slaves would profit his kingdom nothing. Yet Pharaoh’s power of death kept the Israelites in a state of fear and bondage.

However, with the death of the lamb at Passover and the blood applied to the dwellings of the Israelites, everything changed. No longer were the Israelites under the bondage of Pharaoh, and no longer were they to be in fear of death. Now the Lord was the one they were to fear, not Pharaoh (cf. Matthew 10:28). Just so this is exactly what happened when Jesus Christ died. He took death out of the hands of Satan for the saved, and death is controlled today by nail-scarred hands. So we read in Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” The word “hell” here is Hades, and the best manuscripts read death first followed by Hades: “I have the keys of death and of Hades.” When a person has keys he has authority over what the keys fit. Whoever dies and whoever enters heaven and Hades is in the Lord’s power. He has the keys and He has not delegated this authority to Peter, or to anyone else. It is not Peter who stands at the gate of heaven to decide who enters therein, but the Lord. In order to complete the picture, it is necessary to realize that Satan still has the power of death at this present time over those who are in his kingdom. While the child of God has been rescued out of the kingdom of darkness and from the power of the prince of this world (Galatians 1:4; Colossians 1:13), this is not true for unbelievers. They still are in the

bondage of Satan. When Paul commanded that the Corinthians excommunicate the person who had sinned from fellowship with all believers, he said this: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:4-5). Here is the truth that Satan has the power of death in his kingdom. In this case the believer, who is saved, by the power of God is put back into the sphere of Satan, and outside the ministry and the prayers of the church, outside the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Father's throne, outside the ministry of the angels who minister to those who are heirs of salvation. He is placed in this sphere so that Satan may operate and even physically destroy his life. This is the sin unto death which only a believer can commit.

II. Jesus Christ Causes Death

Death has been completely changed for the believer, not only because Jesus Christ conquered death, but because now, in the life of the believer, Jesus Christ is the cause of death. You may ask: "How can this be such a wonderful truth?" First let us see that it is true in Scripture, and then contemplate why it is so very precious. This truth that the Lord Jesus is responsible for the death of believers is verified not only by His having the keys of death but also by what we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:14. We read in verse 13 that we are not to sorrow for those who have fallen asleep in Christ as others do which have no hope, "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The phrase that is so important is "sleep in Jesus." The Revised Version margin reads: "through Jesus" and does so because this is the literal rendering of the phrase in the Greek. Paul knew the preposition for "in" and he could have certainly used it here if that was what he intended, but he did not. He plainly said these who are believers "sleep through Jesus." This signifies causative action. Jesus is the one responsible that they fell asleep before He returned. He is, moreover, not just indirectly responsible, but directly responsible for their death. This is the way all of the early Greek writers understood the phrase, and they certainly knew their language. Later in church history men wanted to find some other way of rendering this Greek construction, because to understand it as "through Jesus" made Jesus Christ responsible for the believer's death. Yet it is a parallelism: "God will bring with Him—those who have fallen asleep through Jesus."

What men have failed to realize is that if Jesus Christ is not responsible for the believer's death, then there is only one other who can be, and that is the devil himself. While the devil was responsible for causing death at one time, this is no longer so for the Lord's child. By the authority of the Word of God, any believer who dies, regardless of how he dies, dies because "Jesus" took him home to be with Him. This precious truth should give us a whole new understanding of death for the child of God. Satan is not responsible for the death of believers. Fate is not the cause for a person dying. "Jesus" is. The very fact that Paul here uses the human name for the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, is significant. "Jesus" is used by itself very sparingly in the epistles, and I feel it should also be used, accordingly, very sparingly in our speech. Paul uses it only a total of twelve times; seven times it is used in Hebrews; and six times in the book of Revelation, making a grand total of twenty-five times in all the Word of God.

"Jesus" is the Lord's human name. It signifies the Lord as one who can "be touched with the feelings of our infirmities." Here is the one who wept over the death of someone He loved dearly.

He knows what we experience because He also experienced the same. We are not to sorrow as others who have no hope, but we still do sorrow—and He knows and cares. The sting of death will someday be completely removed. If someone tells you that the believer should have complete victory over the death of a loved one because it no longer bears any sting, he is out of touch with reality, and also he does not know the Scriptures. The Word says the sting is removed only when death is swallowed up in victory through resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:54). Then we at that time will be able to say: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (15:55). Until that time death has a sting and the grave is victorious for a season.

We still sorrow, and we should. God does not want us to repress that sorrow. But we should not sorrow for believers as others who have no hope.

III. Jesus Christ Consecrated Death This brings us to our third consideration. Jesus Christ has changed the entire content of death. Even though it is still appointed unto men once to die, yet death is no longer the same thing for believers. The Lord changed its nature by His resurrection and ascension.

He said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). The Lord stands as the firstfruits of the coming harvest of resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23). Jesus Christ’s resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection. Furthermore, it is the guarantee of our acceptance before the Father for all eternity. Jesus Christ “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). The Lord, through suffering and death, is doing a work of “bringing many sons unto glory” (Hebrews 2:10). He is the Captain of our salvation; He is our forerunner, and the guarantee that someday we will also be bodily in the presence of the Father just as Jesus Christ Himself is now (Hebrews 6:19-20). Not only did Christ change death for the Old Testament believers by leading captivity captive to heaven when He ascended, but He has changed death for all believers today who die. We need never fear death as an experience. Paul was one who was caught up into paradise to the very throne of God (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4). There he “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (12:4b). After this Paul faced death at Rome and he actually preferred death if this was the Lord’s will. For him death was to gain, not lose (Php 1:21). His own personal desire was “to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (1:23). To remain behind was what was hard.

Now the only way that there could be blessing in death for Paul and for any believer was that the soul went immediately to be with the Lord. New Testament Scriptures speak about a person who is a believer and has died as sleeping, but it is never the soul that sleeps. Sleep is only used of the body. The analogy is that just as the body sleeps, it pictures but a temporary situation. Soon there will be an awakening, and the mind and body will again function as one. This is a picture of the believer whose body sleeps but his soul is with the Lord. Later the Lord unites both together at the rapture, and the believer will be body, soul and spirit before the Lord.

13 “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall

rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The Son prayed to the Father in John 17:1-26, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ..." (v. 24). This has been answered in part, and today the souls of all the righteous are with the Lord. Moreover, whenever a believer dies now, he goes immediately to be with the Lord. Paul said,

"Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Paul was confident about this; it was a settled issue for him and he knew for all believers at Corinth. For all believers he says, we are well pleased, we take pleasure in rather our being away from home out of the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Conclusion Our Savior Jesus Christ has "abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). He has destroyed death. Jesus Christ's resurrection was the death of death. "How is this possible," you say, "when men still die?" Here is how. When Adam sinned in the garden, spiritual death was immediate. Physical death came later as a consequence of that act. Just so when Christ died on the cross, the provision for eternal life was immediately available. Physical life or resurrection life followed later in God's program as a result.

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish [should never experience eternal death], but have everlasting life." When I believed, I had at that moment everlasting life. Everlasting life does not begin at my death, but when I received Jesus Christ.

"He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13).

Death at that moment was abolished. I will never be separated from God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. Even though I may go through a state of physical death, there is no separation from the Lord.

"For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). Where there is no separation from the Lord, there is no spiritual death. I have life, then, and immortality right now through believing the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, and someday I will have also incorruption.

"... in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:52-53). The believer, then, may die physically, but there is no spiritual death. The believer is at no time

separated from the Lord, even at the instance of physical death. The person who suffers at the time of death is never the believer who dies, for he goes immediately to be with the Lord. Those who suffer are the ones who are left behind. As the Lord has dealt with spiritual death and abolished it by offering life and immortality to all who will believe the gospel, so the Lord will someday abolish physical death. It is, however, the last enemy that shall be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26).

After this comes eternal death which is called in Scripture, the second death. We have seen that God has a remedy for spiritual death. It is to believe the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. We have seen that God has a remedy for physical death. It is resurrection by Jesus Christ that will take place in God's future program. Now what is the remedy for the second death? When and how is it destroyed?

Beloved, it is not destroyed—ever. There is no remedy for eternal death once it is entered into. There is no escape from this torment that was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 6:2; Revelation 14:10-11; Revelation 20:10; Isaiah 66:24). It is everlasting, never-ending punishment which was never meant for man, but which he receives when he fails to flee to the only person in all the world who can save a sinner from destruction. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. If He is rejected, there is no other (cf. Acts 4:12).

Jesus Christ, through His death, has provided escape from eternal death, but once eternal death is entered, there is no escape. It is a place where “the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” It is spoken of as a place of “everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2), and stands in contrast to “everlasting life.” As the one is eternal, so is the other.

Since there is no escape, this is why Paul wrote: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). There is no salvation, no escape, in that day. Our Lord said: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: But strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). The broad way ends in “destruction.” The narrow way ends in “life.” Each man chooses which way he will go—the way of the Lord or the way of the multitude. The one starts out broad, but it ends at a point—destruction.

The other starts out narrow—Christ is the only way unto the Father (John 14:6)—but it ends in life.

What way are you going?

Death and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit:

“Dying Grace and the Believer”

Dwight L. Moody was once asked if he had dying grace. His reply was “No, I don't. The Lord has not called me to die. When He does, He will give me dying grace.” His point was this: the Lord does not give grace until we need it. When He calls upon us to go through an experience, He then gives us grace equal for the occasion. A few hours before D. L. Moody's home-going, he awakened from sleep and said: “Earth recedes, Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go!” His son who was standing by his bedside said: “No, no, father, you are dreaming.”

“No!” said Mr. Moody, “I am not dreaming: I have been within the gates: I have seen the children’s faces.” A short time elapsed and then, following what seemed to the family to be the death struggle he spoke again: “This is my triumph; this my coronation day! It is glorious!”

Dying grace is a term or expression that we use to express what happens just before a believer dies. It may be a longer or a shorter period of time, but it refers to that peace and elation which is experienced just before death. It may be something experienced when the person himself knows nothing about his home-going, but the Lord did. It may be when death is certain, as in the case of dying with cancer, that dying grace is extended to the believer over a long period of time. Even though there may be great pain and suffering, yet in the midst God gives rest and peace. Thus the believer is enabled to have a wonderful testimony and perhaps the most productive period of witnessing of God’s power in all his life. In this lesson we want to look at this dying grace, and see what is involved.

I. Dying Grace: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

We who are saved so often take all of the blessings we receive from the Lord for granted. This is very unfortunate and inconsiderate.

David said:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Psalms 103:2).

“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” (Psalms 40:5).

“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand” (Psalms 139:17-18).

Here is just one of those great blessings: when we die, we receive from the Lord dying grace. In order to see what dying grace is, we need to begin at the beginning. When we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we were given eternal life. It is God’s gift to all those who believe on His Son (John 3:14-16; 1 John 5:11-12). God’s word says: “Whosoever believeth in him [His Son] should not perish, but have eternal life.” We are part of the whosoever. We have believed; we cannot perish; we have eternal life.

What is so wonderful is that we are not promised eternal life at some future date, but we have it right now in time. It is not a case that we may not make it; it is a situation where we already have it. Moreover it is impossible to have eternal life and then suddenly not have it. If such could happen then we never had eternal life, because you cannot have life that never ends and then suddenly have it end. This is a contradiction. It is an impossibility. But God says we who are the “whosoever” have it.

Because every believer has eternal life, and has it in time in a human body, he has life that never ends. There is a sense, then, where the believer will never die. In fact the Lord Himself said: “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26). How is this possible?

Death in Scripture speaks of separation. But the believer will never be separated from the Lord. Therefore the believer will never die. No one ever died in the presence of the Lord Jesus because He is the Lord of life. No one could die in His presence. His very presence is life (cf. 1 John 5:11-12). Thus the believer may change his abode from earth to heaven, but he will never die because he will never be separated from Him. Paul said: "I stand persuaded that death shall [not] be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39). As we have seen, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). Since we live with Him here and go on living with Him there, we never die. We are continually in His presence.

Now it is the work of the Holy Spirit to take the Word of God and lead the believer into its full blessings. It is the Spirit that "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God ... [and] we have received ... the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12).

What the eye has never seen, what the ear has never heard, what has never been understood in the experiences of man, God reveals them to us through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). This is very true at the time of death. As the believer approaches death, the Holy Spirit within shows him something of the glories of the other side. In seeing what is ahead, he desires to depart and be with Christ which is exceedingly the better thing. This is dying grace. It is the desire to go on living on the other side in the Lord's presence.

Some may say: "Well, I am certainly not looking forward to dying this year." This is good I am glad you are not. We have many things we want to do. We have families to raise, and work for the Lord that is unfinished. It is right that we have things to live for, and that we are not ready to leave. The point we need to remember is that we will not be given grace to die until and unless it is our time to depart and be with Christ.

Some of us may wish the Lord would come for us, or that He would call us home. We desire this not really because we love Him, or love His appearing, but we would just like to escape the pressures and trials here below. This is a most unfortunate state. It means that we have not been appropriating His grace for the situations we are in. God is able to make all grace abound both in life and in death. For some of us, we would much more appreciate the Lord giving us dying grace and taking us home, than what He is doing. His will for us is to appropriate living grace and be more than conquerors right here on earth in time. Whatever may be our need for grace, let us appropriate it.

II. Dying Grace: The Actual Experience

There is a great contrast that is seen between the death of a believer and the death of an unbeliever. This is something that is not seen so much today because of all of the modern drugs that are given people. So often today the individual who is dying is so drugged that the difference between the death of a person who is a believer, and the death of a person who is an unbeliever is not distinctly seen. But this was not true in previous generations.

I want to give you death-bed statements made by both unbelievers and believers. Remember in listening to these that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34).

A. Unbelievers

These receive no dying grace. They have no grace because they have spurned the grace of God which is found only in Jesus Christ (cf. Titus 2:11). You will notice that sometimes these are just words and phrases, and not complete sentences.

Talleyrand Perigord: "I am suffering the pangs of the damned."

Merabeau: "Give me laudanum that I may not think of eternity."

Francis Newport: "Oh, that I was to lie upon the fire that never is quenched a thousand years, to purchase the favor of God and be reunited to Him again! But it is a fruitless wish. Millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer to the end of torments than one poor hour. Oh, eternity, eternity! Forever and forever! Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell!"

Thomas Hobbs (a skeptic): "If I had the whole world, I would give it to live one day. I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of the world at. About to take a leap into the dark!"

Thomas Paine (a noted American infidel and author): "I would give worlds if I had them, that 'The Age of Reason' had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! O God, what have I done to suffer so much? But there is no God! But if there should be, what will become of me hereafter? Stay with me, for God's sake! Send even a child to stay with me, for it is hell to be alone. If ever the Devil had an agent, I have been that one."

Francis Voltaire (the noted French infidel): He was one of the most fertile and talented writers and strove to retard and demolish Christianity. His cry in health concerning Christ was, "Curse the wretch!" He said once, "In twenty years, Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear." Some years after his death, his very printing press was employed in printing New Testaments. The Christian physician who attended Voltaire during the last illness, has left a testimony concerning the departure of this poor lost soul. He wrote to a friend as follows:

"When I compare the death of a righteous man, which is like the close of a beautiful day, with that of Voltaire, I see the difference between bright, serene weather and a black thunderstorm. It was my lot that this man should die under my hands. Often did I tell him the truth. 'Yes, my friend,' he would often say to me, 'you are the only one who has given me good advice. Had I but followed it I would not be in the horrible condition in which I now am. I have swallowed nothing but smoke. I have intoxicated myself with the incense that turned my head. You can do nothing for me. Send me a mad doctor! Have compassion on me—I am mad!'" The physician goes on to say:

"I cannot think of it without shuddering. As soon as he saw that all the means he had employed to increase his strength had just the opposite effect, death was constantly before his eyes. From this moment, madness took possession of his soul. He expired under the torments of the furies." At another time his doctor quoted Voltaire as saying:

"I am abandoned by God and man! I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months' life. Then I shall go to hell; and you will go with me. O Christ! O Jesus Christ!"

Charles IX: This cruel wretch, urged on by his inhumane mother, gave the order for the massacre of the Huguenots in which 15,000 souls were slaughtered in Paris alone, and 100,000 in other sections of France, for no other reason than that they owned Christ, and not the Pope, as their master. The guilty King died bathed in blood bursting from his own veins. To his physicians he said in his last hours: "Asleep or awake, I see the mangled forms of the Huguenots passing before me. They drip with blood. They point at their open wounds. Oh! that I had spared at least the little infants at the breast! What blood! I know not where I am. How will all this end? What shall I do? I am lost forever! I know it. Oh, I have done wrong. God pardon me!"

David Strauss: Outstanding representative of German rationalism, after spending years of his life trying to dispense with God: "My philosophy leaves me utterly forlorn! I feel like one caught in the merciless jaws of an automatic machine, not knowing at what time one of its great hammers may crush me!"

Sir Thomas Scott: "Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty."

M. P. Rich (an atheist): "I would rather lie on a stove and broil for a million years than go into eternity with eternal horrors that hang over my soul! I have given my immortality for gold; and its weight sinks me into an endless, hopeless, helpless hell."

B. Believers

Here is the contrast. Here are believers who have accepted the grace of God for salvation and have received all of the immediate benefits as well as all of the myriad of subsequent ones. "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?" (Romans 8:32). God has given us all things, and one of His provisions to us is dying grace.

Jordan Antie: "The chariot has come, and I am ready to step in."

Margaret Prior: "Eternity rolls up before me like a sea of glory."

Martha McCrackin: "How bright the room! How full of angels!"

Dr. Cullen: "I wish I had the power of writing; I would describe how pleasant it is to die."

B. S. Bangs: "The sun is setting: mine is rising. I go from this bed to a crown. Farewell."

John Arthur Lyth: "Can this be death? Why, it is better than living! Tell them I die happy in Jesus."

Trotter: "I am in perfect peace, resting alone on the blood of Christ. I find this amply sufficient with which to enter the presence of God."

Mrs. Mary Frances: "Oh, that I could tell you what joy I possess! I am full of rapture. The Lord doth shine with such power upon my soul. He is come! He is come!"

Philip Heck: "How beautiful! The opening heavens around me shine!"

Sir David Brewster (inventor of the kaleidoscope): "I will see Jesus: I shall see Him as He is. I have had the light for many years. Oh, how bright it is! I feel so safe and satisfied!"

Charles Wesley (author of over 4,000 published hymns): "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness. Satisfied!"

John Wesley: "The best of all, is, God is with us."

Abbott: "Glory to God! I see heaven sweetly opened before me."

Augustus Toplady (author of "Rock of Ages"): "The consolations of God to such an unworthy wretch are so abundant that He leaves me nothing to pray for but a continuance of them. I enjoy heaven already in my soul."

John Quincy Adams: When John Quincy Adams was eighty years of age a friend said to him, "Well, how is John Quincy Adams?" "Thank you," he said, "John Quincy Adams is quite well. But the house where he lives is becoming dilapidated. It is tottering. Time and the seasons have nearly destroyed it, and it is becoming quite uninhabitable. I shall have to move out soon. But John Quincy Adams is quite well, thank you." At death he said: "This is the last of earth. I am content."

Mrs. Catharine Booth (wife of the general of the Salvation Army): "The waters are rising, but so am I. I am not going under, but over. Do not be concerned about dying; go on living well, the dying will be right."

Elizabeth B. Browning: an English poetess who had said: "We want the touch of Christ's hand upon our literature." At death's door, she said: "It is beautiful!"

John Bunyan (author of "Pilgrim's Progress"): "Weep not for me, but for yourselves. I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will, through the mediation of His blessed Son, receive me, though a sinner, where I hope we shall meet to sing the new song, and remain everlastingly happy, world without end."

John Calvin (the French Protestant Reformer at Geneva): "Thou, Lord, bruise me, but I am abundantly satisfied, since it is from Thy hand."

Adoniram Judson (American missionary to Burma). He wrote: "Come, Holy Spirit, Dove Divine," and other hymns. He died at sea and his body was committed to the great deep. He said: "I go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school. I feel so strong in Christ."

A. J. Gordon: As he lay in the chamber in West Brookline Street, Boston, looked up and with one radiant burst of joy cried: "Victory! Victory!" and so he went home.

Dr. William Anderson (of Dallas, Texas): He seemed better though still very ill. His mother was sitting in the room with him. He gently called to her, "Come over here a minute." As she approached his bed he said, "I want to tell you something. I am going to beat you to heaven." And with a smile he shut his eyes and was gone.

Dr. Sewall (an old Methodist): When dying he shouted aloud the praises of God. His friends said, "Dr. Sewall, do not exert yourself; whisper, doctor, whisper." "Let angels whisper," said he, "but the soul cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ, a soul redeemed from death and hell, just on the threshold of eternal glory—oh, if I had a voice that would reach from pole to pole, I would proclaim it to all the world: Victory! Victory! through the blood of the Lamb!" From Spurgeon's sermons: A Welsh lady, when she lay dying, was visited by her minister. He said to her, "Sister, are you

sinking?” She answered him not a word, but looked at him with incredulous eye. He repeated the question, “Sister, are you sinking?” She looked at him again, as if she could not believe he would ask such a question. At last, rising a little in her bed, she said, “Sinking! Sinking! Did you ever know a sinner to sink through a Rock? If I had been standing on the sand, I might sink; but, thank God, I am on the Rock of Ages, and there is no sinking there.”

Samuel Rutherford: When he was dying said: “I am in the happiest pass to which man ever came. Christ is mine, and I am His; and there is nothing now between me and resurrection, except—Paradise.” A Moslem said: “What did you do to our daughter?” This Moslem woman’s child had died at sixteen years of age. “We did nothing,” answered the missionary. “Oh, yes, you did,” persisted the mother. “She died smiling. Our people do not die like that.” The girl had found Christ and believed on Him a few months before. Fear of death had gone. Hope, giving birth to joy, had replaced it.

Tom Roth was a member for a number of years of Reinhardt Bible Church in Dallas, Texas. My wife and I knew him and his family well. He died after an extended illness with cancer, having moved to Orange, California. The following letter was written by him three days before his death to Lowell Wendt, Pastor at Reinhardt.

Dear Brother Lowell:

Greetings in our Savior’s Name! Thank you for your fine letter received yesterday. Since I am not sure you have the most recent information concerning me, the gist of the matter is that the doctor concedes my condition very grave, and humanly speaking, he does not consider recovery possible. For that reason we have made arrangements for a funeral service to be held here at Orange Villa Bible Church with Dr. Feinberg and Dr. Bach as speakers. My main desire is that the service be a triumphant one, with hymns that will bring honor and praise to our wonderful Lord. We are asking the pastor to announce that no flowers be given, that those who would like to make a spiritual investment to the Lord donate money to the local building fund.

Therefore, we are asking any of our friends at Reinhardt who are like-minded, should give their money gift to the missionary program of Reinhardt Bible Church.

You will be notified as to my GLORY GRADUATION which seems to be immanent. See you up there one day!

Sincerely, your brother in Christ, Tom

What is heaven like? I do not know, and, furthermore, I do not care. The New Testament in speaking of the death of saints not once mentions the thought of their going to heaven. It only speaks of their going to be with a person. Where that person is, is incidental.

“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:13).

“Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ” (Php 1:23).

“Absent from the body, present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

“The time of my departure is at hand ... There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also

that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6, 2 Timothy 4:8). The reference here to those “that love His appearing” is not a reference in context to the Lord’s second coming, but to the believer being welcomed home by the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of death (cf. Acts 7:56). Not one of us knows when we will be called upon to depart to be with Christ by death rather than by the rapture. It could be this year, yet “our times are in His hands.” It is our business to occupy until He comes. If He does call us to Himself, He will give us dying grace.

There may be someone reading this who is not ready to die. If you are not ready to die, you are not prepared to live. The Lord Jesus Christ came that men might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). The grace of God is extended to you today in the person of Jesus Christ.

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