

BIBLE MESSAGES OF GRACE AND GLORY

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Since the day Christ asked the question of His own nation countless millions of many nations in every generation have put the same question to their own hearts and consciences and to their fellow-men. In order to answer such a question intelligently concerning any man, it is necessary to get acquainted with him. There is a certain acquaintance with Christ which can be experienced only by those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But there is available for any man a written record of the character and achievements of the One who asked the question. Had the question been asked by any other man concerning himself, it would have suggested the spirit of self-importance or egotism on the part of the man. But to any one who has made even a hasty superficial study of the written record, the question asked by Christ seems most proper and in order. And really it behooves every individual to give to the question an answer which will be well pleasing to the One Who asked it.

The most sensible decision that any sensible person can reach so far as this Man's relation to the record is concerned is, that the historical Jesus is the Bible Christ. The record has existed for nearly nineteen hundred years. It has been discussed, criticized, hated and condemned by millions. It has been honored, cherished and defended, even unto martyrdom by other millions, just as intelligent, courageous and true as those who have been its bitterest enemies. Never since this history was written has this record been the object of such vicious and insidious assaults as at this present time, when all the forces of Satan are turned loose against it. But multitudes are still submitting the record to the test, "if any man willeth to do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." John 7:17.

No man has ever been wise enough to produce evidence to invalidate the Bible record of Jesus Christ. Some have persuaded themselves that the record is too unique to be true; and their verdict is, that the narratives were either written by enthusiastic religious men who were deceived, or they discount the record as a willful forgery. No one is more ignorant than the one who declares that the Scriptures are the imaginations or inventions of ignorant men. Moreover it must be admitted, that if the records concerning Christ be forgeries, they are the forgeries of very clever men. If the writers were deceived, were they deceived by Christ? The Pharisees accused Him of deceiving the people. "Are ye also deceived?" John 7:47. Concerning Christ, "some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay; but He deceiveth the people." 7:12. Christ did not prove His goodness by deception.

If the narratives be forgeries, then what is our conclusion concerning Christ? Was He a fictitious character? Is the Christ of orthodox Christianity unreal? Did such a man as Jesus Christ ever live on earth? If so, was He a good man or a deceiver? Without a trustworthy history to study, who knows? If the Bible narratives of Jesus Christ be the untrustworthy or untrue writings of deluded or dishonest men, to whom shall we turn for reliable information that will enable us to answer intelligently the question, "what think ye of Christ?" Some say, "we do not know what

to think.” Why not forget Him altogether and decide that the question was never asked and that the Christ who was supposed to have asked the question never existed? Impossible for any intelligent person to do this. Christ has so found His way into every avenue of human experience that any thinking person must acknowledge that He is an up-to-date living reality. If unreal, truly He has more influenced human life and thought than all the real men of all ages combined. The Jews in His day said. “And destroy Jesus”. It was impossible then. It is impossible today. No one can blot Him out of human history. But without the Bible I cannot answer the question.

Surely the Jews did their very best to get rid of Jesus Christ. They have tried to forget Him. They have tried to ignore Him. They have tried to explain Him away by every argument. And in spite of their determined efforts, behold today, every thinking rabbi, whether associated with an orthodox or a liberal congregation, is now declaring that Jesus of Nazareth was the best man who ever lived on this earth and that He has exercised more influence for good upon the human race than all other men combined. Are they deciding that He was good, because of His good influence, or because they have carefully examined His written biography? Why can they not see their utter inconsistency in either bowing to the religious authority or acknowledging the superiority of the most extraordinary Man who ever lived on this earth, while at the same time they are discrediting and condemning the only record that can truly establish His right to their respect and admiration ?

There is only one other group of men more inconsistent than the inconsistent Jews, the so-called Modernist Christians. They believe virtually what the Jews believe but they go a step further and bear the name of Christ and claim to be His disciples. They bow in His name to worship the true Deity; call Jesus Christ the fairest flower of humanity; exalt and praise Him as the highest expression of the one and only God; even claim that they believe in the Son’s revelation of the Father; and at the same time they declare that the record containing that revelation is either the work of frauds or ignorant men, writings which no intelligent man of this enlightened age can accept to be worth more than fiction. If they have learned that Jesus Christ is the noblest, truest, purest expression of the mind and heart of the true and living God, they have learned that great fact by reading narratives that are false, if not fraudulent, and if their learning and thinking have been based upon that which is false, their opinions are worthless and they know not what they think they know.

Any intelligent and satisfactory answer to the question must be based upon the Scriptural record of Christ. If on that basis, Christ is worthy of admiration, He is likewise worthy of adoration. He should be both respected and worshipped or neither respected nor worshipped.

He is mentioned by noun and pronoun about seven thousand times in the New Testament Scriptures. The same supernatural story is woven into every part of those Scriptures. After studying these twenty-seven records, we should decide that the Jews of the first century who took up stones to stone Him, “because Thou being a man makest Thyself God”, were far more consistent than are the Modernist Jews and so-called Modernist Christians of the twentieth century who join with Judas to betray Christ with a kiss. John 10:30 to 38.

Without the Scriptures I know not what I think. By the Scriptures I think that Christ is, “Wonderful” - “Counsellor” - “Mighty God” - “Everlasting Father” - “Prince of Peace” - “Man of Sorrows” - “Plant of Renown” - “The Lily of the Valley” - “The Rose of Sharon” - “A Righteous Branch” - “The Sun of Righteousness” - “The Bright and Morning Star” - “The King of Israel” - “The King of the Jews” - “Messiah” - “The Lion of the Tribe of Juda” - “The Root and Offspring of David” - “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” - “Captain of our Salvation” - “Apostle and High Priest of our Profession” - “The Lord of Glory” - “The Prince of Life” - “The

Just One” - “The Holy One of God” - “The Lamb of God” - “The Light of the World” - “The Good Shepherd” - “The True Vine” - “A Prince and a Saviour” - “Son of Man” - “The King of Glory” - “The Christ the Son of the Living God” - “The Bread of Life” - “The Lord’s Christ” - “A Great Prophet” - “The Christ of God” - “Immanuel” - “One Altogether Lovely” - “Chiefest Among Ten Thousand” - “The Lord Our Righteousness” - “The Lord Whom Ye Seek” - “Jesus Who is called Christ” - “The Son of God” - “A Friend of Publicans and Sinners” - “Christ our Passover” - “Our Peace” - “The Son of His Love” - “The King Eternal” - “Merciful and Faithful High Priest” - “Our Forerunner” - “Author of Eternal Salvation” - “Author and Finisher of our Faith” - “The Great Shepherd of the Sheep” - “The Lord that Bought Us” - “An Advocate” - “The Holy One” - “The Word of God” - “The First Begotten of the Dead” - “The Seed of the Woman” - “Shiloh” - “A Root out of Dry Ground” - “Jesus Christ the Son of David” - “The Bridegroom” - “The Stone Which the Builders Rejected” - “The Head of the Corner” - “Son of the Highest” - “The Only Begotten of the Father” - “The Word” - “A Man Approved of God” - “The I AM” - “The Resurrection” - “The Way” - “The Truth” - “The Life” - “He That Cometh from Heaven” - “Abraham’s Seed” - “Melchisedec”.

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD WHICH BEARETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.”

“I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE ENDING, SAITH THE LORD, WHICH IS AND WHICH WAS AND WHICH IS TO COME, THE ALMIGHTY.”

Now, what think ye of Christ?

“HE SHOWED UNTO THEM HIS HANDS AND HIS SIDE” John 20:20.

I wonder how the lives of present-day Christians would be affected if the risen Christ should appear today as He did to His disciples after His resurrection.

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” John 20:19 to 21.

Perhaps we are thinking that if He thus should appear in person and say, “Peace unto you.” we would never again be disturbed, no matter how many contrary winds should blow, or how much uncertainty, unrest, lawlessness and violence should surround us.

What a transformation would take place in our lives! What zeal, enthusiasm, energy, and power would take possession of us, if the glorified Christ should suddenly appear and show unto us His nail-pierced hands and feet and the wound in His side and then say, “As My Father sent me, so send I you!” “These wounds came to Me in the performance of My Father’s will; but I received them for you! These hands and this side mean redemption for you and they also mean, ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. I send you to tell others that they too may be redeemed because I, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.”

To make the individual personal application, bow your head in earnest prayer; try in your mind’s eye to see the glorious Christ standing before you, showing you His hands and His side, speaking peace to your heart and sending you out to witness for Him. See what the result will be.

The trouble is, that so few of us believe the words that He spoke to Thomas several days later: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John 20:29.

According to I John 3:1 to 3 we are going to see Christ and we are going to be like Him. Therefore, in that Epistle, John urges us not to be ashamed before Him at His coming. I John 2:28.

We are to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We shall then see His hands, His side and His glorified face; and we shall give an account of deeds done in the flesh, II Corinthians 5:10. "Therefore" . . . Therefore what? "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." II Corinthians 5:11. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." II Corinthians 5:14 and 15.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." II Corinthians 5:20.

There are so many sinners all around us. The majority of them are indifferent and unconcerned as to the truth, that Christ was wounded for our transgressions. But almost as sad is the fact, that the majority of Christians are as little concerned about getting the saving message to them.

"Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." John 20:21

Christians, will you pray definitely that God will arouse you to your privilege and responsibility in the matter of telling to sinners the story of redemption through the crucified and glorified Christ? And sinner, will you right now receive Christ?

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Romans 10:13 to 15.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE IS COMING

The Prince of Peace is coming; God has a kingdom plan.
As King and Judge He's coming; Christ the Son of man.
The whole creation's groaning; creatures strive and rage:
God's own Word assures us of the coming golden age.

The coming King of Glory will make all wars to cease.
Instead of strife and violence, He'll bring a reign of peace.
The Lord will save His Nation, restore and heal and bless,
In the time of Jacob's trouble, the time of world distress.

There'll be great signs in heaven, great sorrows here on earth;
War and tribulation and pestilence and dearth.
The man of sin deceiving with miracle and sign,
Will rule with mighty power; will be worshipped as divine

With the other beast of Satan in political control
It will be his mark, or vengeance, for every living soul.
At this time of tribulation, to this earth with all its woes.
The Lord will come in judgment and conquer all His foes.

And then the King of Glory shall begin His earthly reign;
We have the words of Jesus, "I'll go and come again".
Peace and plenty is God's promise, this reign of Christ will bring
No war, no want, no sorrow, when Jesus reigns as King.

His peace and righteous kingdom shall continue to increase,
And on the throne of David He'll reign as Prince of Peace.
But before this earthly glory, yea, before the darkest days,
The blessed Lord is coming the dead in Christ to raise.

In resurrection bodies, these with saints still here,
Shall be caught away to heaven, in glory to appear.
Death may overtake us, but our hope is not to die;
But be changed at Christ's appearing, in the twinkling of an eye.

Of that transforming moment, we're told in God's own Book
And for that hope so blessed, the redeemed should ever look.
To reign with Christ in glory, is God's promise of reward
If we suffer while we're waiting, if we suffer for the Lord.

It will mean to miss earth's sorrows in the coming day of wrath;
How blessed then believers, who chose God's righteous path!
Oh what bliss eternal for sinners saved by grace!
No death, no sin, no sickness, when we behold His face.

Above with Christ the Saviour where joy shall never cease
This the great salvation in the gospel of His peace.
Because the Lord of glory went to Calvary's tree;
Because He suffered there for sinners; died for you and me.

Christ's death is unavailing and His sacrifice for naught,
If you reject God's mercy, the redemption Christ hath wrought
Then why despise God's goodness and choose eternal grief,
Why neglect the great salvation and die in unbelief?

"More battle-ships, more fighting air-planes, more deadly explosives, more poisonous gases, and more trained men to handle these weapons of death and destruction," is the slogan and war program of the big nations of the world, including the so-called Christian nations. Some of them might truthfully say, "with us it is only a matter of self-defense, protection and preservation."

Is our present civilization hastening on to the days which the greatest of all prophets foretold in Luke 21:25 to 27?

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

What is ahead of us? As to the future of world affairs there are very few optimistic statesmen. Many of them are of the opinion that ambitious dictators are not only covetous beyond any consideration for others but that they are controlled by such an insane ego that they will send their own countrymen by the wholesale, to slaughter and to be slaughtered. With them human life means nothing. Let us remember that Satan is a murderer from the beginning and that these men are controlled by him whom Christ called, “the prince of this world.”

It was Christ, when speaking of these bloody conflicts and even worse sorrows, which are yet to come on the earth, Who said, “see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass.” Matthew 24:6.

We have often heard that the darkest hour is just before dawn; and if we want the only reliable information as to the future of world affairs, let us believe II Peter 1:19: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

In that same Epistle we read: “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” II Peter 3:7 to 9.

Let us bear in mind that Satan, the prince of this world, who is likewise called “the god of this world (age)”, is a usurper on the throne. Before the end of his reign such universal war will prevail that the Scriptures declare that peace will be taken from the earth. Revelation 6:3 and 4.

What will bring an end to Satan’s reign of terror? The coming of the Son of man. The coming of the Prince of Peace. And then what? Hear the more sure Word of prophecy

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.” Isaiah 9:6 and 7.

In this message we shall show from the Scriptures that all who have peace with God, through Jesus Christ, will not be on earth when the real dark hours just before the dawn arrive.

The only hope of peace on earth and goodwill toward men is the coming of the Prince of Peace. For God’s people these are “waiting” days; but during these “waiting” days remember the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken to His disciples who were troubled because of the outlook: “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Lest not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27.

“And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7.

The Bible has much to say about peace. The word “peace” is found 416 times in the Bible. God is called “the God of Peace.” God’s Son is called “the Prince of Peace.” God’s message by which men are now saved is called “the Gospel of peace.”

Isaiah 9:6 and 7

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.”

Hebrews 13:20 and 21.

“Now the GOD OF PEACE, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever.”

Romans 10:13 to 15.

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach us the GOSPEL OF PEACE, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Every Christmas, religious people read in the Bible the story of the shepherds who kept their flocks by night and heard heavenly messengers sing, “Peace on earth.” “Good will toward men.” But when they look at the headlines of the daily newspapers, describing the controversies and conflicts among the nations, they decide that “peace on earth” is only an empty dream. Where is the good will toward men?

Then again, as we turn from “the Peace on earth”, in Luke 2:14, to the words of “the Prince of Peace”, in Luke 12:49 to 51, we say, “What a contradiction!”

Luke 12:49 to 52.

“I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.”

The emphasis should here be placed on the word “henceforth”. There is here suggested a radical change in the Lord’s purpose and program.

Note the question of the Lord Jesus and His negative answer. “Peace on earth?” — “Nay — division.” Not even peace in the household: not in the family; to say nothing of peace in the community, city, nation, or world.

But did not the infallible “God of Peace” tell His heavenly messengers to proclaim to the shepherds that the birth of His Son in the city of David meant peace on earth? Most assuredly. But peace on earth meant Christ on the throne of David. Universal peace will prevail when Isaiah 9:6 and 7 is fulfilled.—The Prince of Peace—with the government on His shoulder, will then sit on the throne of David. Therefore, world peace will begin in the city where David’s throne once was, and where it will be again established. Therefore, God instructs men to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” Psalm 22:16.

Note carefully the lamentation of the Prince of Peace when He beheld Jerusalem after His own people had disowned Him as their Messiah and Deliverer.

Luke 19:41 to 44.

“And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, 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.”

And note again Luke 13:34 and 35.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He That cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Some day the Prince of Peace is coming back to Israel. Have you read Revelation 1:7 and, Zechariah 12:10?

Revelation 1:7.

“Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen.”

Zechariah 12:10.

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for His only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

Also read these other verses found in Zechariah.

Zechariah 8:15:

“So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.”

Zechariah 8:8:

“And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”

Thus we see that the Lord has something in store for Israel.

We learn, by reading Ezekiel 36:24 and 22, just why God will redeem and regather Israel.

Ezekiel 36:24 and 22.

“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and I will bring you into your own land.”

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.”

In Romans 11:25 to 30 we are told that God will redeem His ancient people, because His gifts and calling are without repentance, because He made an oath to Abraham, because “this is My Covenant when I shall take away their sins.”

Yes, there is to be an actual literal fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6 and 7 concerning the Prince of Peace on David’s throne.

When Gabriel announced the first Christmas, what did He say to Mary? “Fear not Mary: for thou, hath found favour with God, and behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God SHALL GIVE UNTO HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:30 to 33.

Here we have in very plain language the fact that Christ was born in the city of David, of the seed of David, to take the throne of David and to reign over the house of Israel. Not even a hint that Christ was born to remain in heaven, all of these 1900 years as Head of the Church which is His Body, which Body is the One New Man made up of Jews and Gentiles saved by grace. Ephesians 1:19 to 22. Ephesians 2:8 to 17. We quote Ephesians 2:15, to 17:

Ephesians 2:15 to 17.

“Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for TO MAKE IN HIMSELF OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN, SO MAKING PEACE; And that He might reconcile both unto God in one Body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached PEACE to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.”

God revealed to Gabriel His kingdom purpose for Israel and “peace on earth.” But this is quite different from the peace for individuals which Christ made when He died on the cross. Colossians 1:20. Christ as the Head of the Church which is His Body is quite different from Christ as Prince of Peace on David’s throne.

The Lord Jesus, after His death and resurrection, revealed His eternal purpose to make the One New Man of Ephesians 2:17. God made known the fact that Christ made peace by His death. It is one thing for Christ to be seated where He now is, far above, on the throne of God in the heavenlies, but quite another thing to be seated on David’s throne. For David’s throne Christ was born and for that throne He is yet to return. Luke 1:30. For the cross of Calvary Christ was also born. Hebrews 2:9. When He returns and occupies David’s throne there will be peace on earth. In the meantime believing sinners are at peace with God and may experience the “peace of God”, through faith in Christ who made peace on the cross.

But note in Revelation 6:4, that before the coming of the Prince of Peace something is going to happen: “And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon TO TAKE PEACE FROM THE EARTH, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”

As we take in the international situation today and get a picture of world conditions, it seems that the red horse may appear in the not-far-distant future. But he cannot come on the scene until God has finished with another “PEACE” program which He is carrying on during these days, before the King comes and ushers in the Kingdom, before the answer to that Kingdom prayer: “Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” As to when that Will be Christ Himself tells us in Luke 21. We quote

Luke 21:25, 27, 28 and 31.

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; v. 25.

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. v. 27.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. v. 28.

So likewise ye, when ye see, these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” v. 31.

We shall describe this other “peace” program presently and refer to the words of Romans 10:15: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach THE GOSPEL OF PEACE and bring glad tidings of good things.”

But just now let us note the words that God sent to the shepherds at the time they heard the heavenly messengers announce “peace on earth.”

Luke 2:10 and 11.

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I ring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, Which is Christ the Lord.”

The Greek word translated “good tidings of great joy” is “euaggelion” or “evangel”. This is a form of the same word that is translated in the Bible 74 times “gospel”. Here then we have proclaimed “the gospel of peace” that has to do with David’s throne, Israel’s kingdom and world peace. This is “the kingdom gospel of peace”. This is quite different from “the grace gospel of peace” proclaimed to the nations by Paul who said: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Romans 11:13.

So much misunderstanding and even skepticism, doubt and pessimism have resulted because Christian ministers have not rightly divided the Word of truth and distinguished between the kingdom gospel for Israel and, the grace gospel for individual Gentiles and individual Jews. How important it is to know and proclaim this difference. How many political blunders might have been avoided by statesmen, if they had only been taught God’s Word, rightly divided, by the infallible Holy Spirit, instead of following preachers who have confused and mixed God’s kingdom program with His spiritual program for the Church, which is Christ’s Body. God’s spiritual program, during this present parenthetical period, while the glorious kingdom of heaven is in abeyance, is a program of grace, a period during which the Body of Christ is being completed. Bible-taught Christians know that they are already in the Kingdom of the Son of God’s love (Colossians 1:12 to 14) and that they are not bringing in the kingdom or bringing back the King. Our citizenship is in heaven and we are waiting for the Lord of glory before He comes to be King, before the events of the darkest days preceding the setting-up of His glorious earthly kingdom.

The rulers of God’s own holy nation made their choice; they demanded the release of Barabbas, the murderer, and the blood the Son of God.

“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.” Acts 3:13 to 15.

The universal reign of peace will come when the Prince of Peace comes. Some months after He was raised from the dead, the Lord sent His messenger to Israel with this message: “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 5:31. But as the rulers of Israel, before the death of Christ, had said, “we will not have this man to reign over us”, these same rulers again rejected Him after God had raised Him from the dead. Since that time that kingdom of Christ has been in abeyance, and it still is.

We have observed that when Israel first rejected Christ as King and Messiah, according to Luke 12:49 to 53, He announced that there would be division rather than peace on earth. At that time He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be

accomplished.” Luke 12:50. Here the Lord Jesus Christ referred to His death on the cross. There is a great difference between the fulfillment of prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 and 7, which saw “The Prince of Peace” crowned as King, reigning on David’s throne, and many other prophecies, which saw the same Lord, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a tree. Isaiah 53:1 to 10. World peace will be realized when the kingdom prophecy shall be fulfilled.

But another peace was accomplished by the death of the Son of God. That peace is described in Colossians 1:20, which we quote

“And having made PEACE through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Here we have a very definite statement the Divine truth, that peace with God was actually made for man, by the God-man, when He yielded up the ghost on the cross of Calvary, crying, “finished”.

We quoted another Scripture showing that the God of peace raised from the dead the Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep. In I Corinthians 15:1 to 4, the sinner is told that the death and burial and resurrection of the Son of God is the gospel by which he is saved. This gospel, in Romans 10:15, is called “the gospel of peace.” And in that Scripture we read:

“HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THEM THAT PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE:”

The preaching of this gospel of peace will never bring world peace; but it will bring peace to every individual in the world who will hear it and believe it. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The blessedness of those who do believe “the gospel of peace” is told in Romans 5:1: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”

After the Lord had told His disciples that He was going to be rejected as King by the rulers of Israel, and that the kingdom would be postponed until they should say, “blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord”, He said to those disciples, “in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33. He also said: “My peace I leave with you, MY PEACE I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” John 14:27.

Then, after His death and resurrection, He stood in their midst when their souls were much troubled, and cried, “Peace be unto you”. Since that day many of the Lord’s saints, who have been troubled, have heard that same message; “Peace be unto you”. And even at the present time, when lawlessness and unrest abound on every hand, the true and faithful saints of the Lord are conscious of “the peace of God that passeth all understanding.”

What a privilege it is to proclaim this glorious gospel of peace, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, recorded in John 3:36, “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.” Let us not forget Romans 10:13 and 14: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

Before the child of God can be conscious of the “peace of God that passeth all understanding” he must become the child of God by faith in the crucified Saviour. Therefore being justified by faith, he can say, “I have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the midst of the turmoil strife hatred and bloodshed of a world of ungodly sinners, the believer, whose trust is in the crucified and glorified Christ, knowing that this Christ in the presence of God ever lives to make intercession for all blood-redeemed souls, may ever find rest

and peace in such a Saviour. He has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
"Casting all your cares upon Him: for he careth for you." I Peter 5:7.

Here again God's purpose during this present evil age is told to us:

Ephesians 2:15 to 17.

"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for TO MAKE IN HIMSELF OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN, so making peace;

And that He might reconcile both unto God in one Body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

And came and preached PEACE to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh!"

The next great event in God's wonderful program is the day of redemption for those who are in Christ. The members of Christ's Body are to be called to glory. Colossians 3:3 and 4. Then will come the end of the age. "The Times of the Gentiles" will be fulfilled. Luke 21:24. The Lord's enemies will be taken care of.

II Thessalonians 1:7 to 10.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power:

Then He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

Then Satan will be made a prisoner. The Prince of Peace will begin His glorious reign. The Prince of Peace is coming, and then note what God's Book declares will follow:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow into it. And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgment upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 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 an ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing . . . they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no

more.” Isaiah 2:2 and 4; Ezekiel 28:26; Micah 4:4; Zechariah 8:12; Joel 2:24; Isaiah 11:6 to 9; Isaiah 35:1 and 2; Jeremiah 31:34.

All of this glory is to be on this earth because the Prince of Peace is coming.

NOTHING TO PAY

A RELIGIOUS CHURCH MEMBER AND A WOMAN IN SIN

Before we study the very interesting story of the two persons who visited one day in the home of a self-righteous religious church member whose name was Simon, let us read what the Lord Jesus said to a group of respectable, religious sinners who belonged to Simon’s class.

Matthew 21:31 and 32.

“Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

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.”

Perhaps we have all observed how the Lord Jesus Christ never said an unkind word to any truly penitent sinner while He was on earth. “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:17. Truly Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners. But He never spared the hypocritical self-righteous man. It was a company of such men, with their rulers, who had the Son of God nailed to the tree. Present day churches and synagogues abound with self-righteous men and women, with both hypocrites and spiritual bankrupts. Publicans, harlots and sinners are still hearing the truth of God: that “where sin abounds grace doth much more abound,” and in spite of all of the religious obstacles and hindrances, and the opposition and inconsistencies of self-righteous church leaders and the preaching of the false prophets in the pulpits, with their pseudo-Christ and perverted gospel, some of them are being saved. And occasionally, here and there, some of the Simon’s among the church officials are being saved; and once in a great while a modernist preacher hears God’s true message of grace and is saved.

Now for the very interesting story of Simon, the Pharisee, the woman of sin, and the Lord Jesus recorded in Luke 7:36 to 50.

Luke 7:36 to 50:

And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon

answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou halt rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gayest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gayest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst no anoint: but this woman; hath anointed my feet with ointment. 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. And He said unto her. Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace:

We note the woman's name is not given. After all, that is not so important inasmuch as there have been millions just like her down through the ages. And today there are still millions just like her, separated by sin from all loved ones, cut off from all decent society, disgraced and wrecked beyond repair by any human power. Some of them seem to be hardened beyond any consciousness of right or wrong. Perhaps they have heard somewhere along the line this wonder message from God:

Isaiah 1:18.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord,, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

For such a poor, ruined creature, for such a pitiable social outcast, for the vilest harlot this story should be read with more than passing interest. It is a wonderful story of grace. And it should also melt the heart of the self-righteous, self-centered, religious church member. But Alas! Their hearts are so filled with pride that their hearts are just as much hardened against Christ and God's grace message as are the hearts of the publicans and harlots. “That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” Mark 7:20 to 23.

We could find many sermons in this very interesting account of the visit in Simon's home. It is interesting to contrast the attitude of the religious man toward the poor sinful woman with that of the One Who was called the Friend of publicans and sinners. There is not the slightest suggestion that the woman was for a moment conscious of the presence of the Pharisee until the Lord directed His messages to him. She was too much occupied with the Saviour.

Note the Lord's statement: (in Luke 7:41), “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the, other fifty.” Here God is the Creditor. The sinful woman owed five hundred pence and the religious Pharisee owed fifty pence. It seems that the Lord was suggesting that the woman was ten times ‘as sinful as the man. But it is quite doubtful if the Lord actually believed that; for He well knew the great sin of self-righteousness and religious pride in Simon's heart. It is also quite doubtful if Simon felt that he owed even the fifty pence. Self-righteous religious people generally keep all their debts paid, in their own estimation. Some of them think God is indebted to them for being so religiously good. On the other hand, the sinful woman would not have been offended if the Lord had fixed her indebtedness at five million pence; but rather would have agreed with Him. Simon undoubtedly would have fixed it even higher than that figure. The poor sinful woman knew that she was a bankrupt, so far as her Divine Creditor was concerned; that she had “nothing to pay”. She was

seeking a gracious Saviour and she found the One Who was able to cancel her obligation. She found Him not only abundantly able, but altogether willing.

The Lord Jesus read Simon's heart. There was no oral confession from the Pharisee. How his religious pride must have been wounded when the Lord included him with the woman, when He said, "they had nothing to pay". It perhaps had never occurred to Simon that he had "nothing to pay", that he too was a spiritual bankrupt. Not for one moment was he asking for cancellation of indebtedness or seeking for any grace. There are multitudes of religious people today who are trying to pay God with their religious deeds instead of accepting God's grace. Not for one moment would they say with Paul, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Romans 7:18.

Note these words of Christ in the story: "He frankly forgave them both". (Luke 7:42) Is the Lord actually teaching that no matter how much or how long a man or woman has sinned against Him that He will frankly forgive them all, if they come as did this sinful woman? Surely, if He does not forgive ALL, but just reduces the indebtedness, that will not help one whit. God does not take away sin on the installment plan. Hear the good news: "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:39.

The Lord was telling Simon and the sinful woman, as well as you and me, the truth of Isaiah 1:18 and Romans 5:20: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Let us again note this gracious truth as it is recorded in Colossians 2:13 and in Hebrews 10:17 to 19: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses. Colossians 2:13. "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Hebrews 10:17 to 19.

Christ talked to Simon; but He looked at the woman. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh into the heart. "But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, And needeth not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man." John 2:24 and 25. Just think of what Christ saw in that sinful woman's heart and life! Just think of what He has seen in mine and yours! Did Christ condemn that poor penitent sinner? "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:17.

What did Christ do,? He said first, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven". And then, to her, He said, "here is a receipt for the five hundred pence that you owe." "Thy sins are forgiven." "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Christ did not ask the woman how many times she had sinned, how many years she had been sinning, or how many different kinds of sins she had committed. He spoke of her sins as many; but they were forgiven. No matter how many sins any sinner has committed, the lord has full pardon and justification for the penitent who will trust Him To a penitent adulterous woman caught in her sin, Christ said, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more". John 8:11. To the sinful woman of our story He said, "thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Think of the marvelous transformation! Such infinite grace and Divine power! One moment she was a poor, condemned, guilty, spiritual bankrupt, "with nothing to pay", and the

next moment everything blotted out and the account settled. The woman left with pardon and peace instead of an accusing, defiled conscience! Such is the transforming work of the wonderful gospel of the grace of God!

Have you believed this gospel? Have you received forgiveness through Christ the Redeemer?

We may be sure that the conduct of that woman was entirely different after Christ spoke pardon and peace to her soul. Good behaviour, acceptable to our Heavenly Father, is always the fruit of salvation and not a factor in salvation. We can never be saved “by good works”; but we are saved “unto good works”. Ephesians 2:10.

“They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:8. Christ have Himself for us, “that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:14.

“Nothing to pay” can be interpreted two ways. Every member of the human race is a spiritual bankrupt in Adam and has nothing to pay for eternal life. But it is also true that nothing needs to be paid, because Christ has already paid in full.

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Romans 4:8.

That blessed or happy man is the man who has been by faith to Calvary and had his guilty soul washed by the blood of the spotless Lamb of God.

NOTHING TO PAY

Nothing to pay! Yes, this is true,
There is nothing left for the sinner to do.
There's nothing to pay to earn God's love;
There's nothing to pay for a home above.
The sinner has nothing good within;
The sinner has nothing to pay for sin.
No human can keep God's holy law
None can remove a single flaw.
God's debtors we are in our bankrupt state;
How can we pay our debt so great?
Apart from grace, though doing our best,
We find no pardon, peace or rest.
Christ came from Heaven to die on the tree.
Eternal life! God's gift, is free;
For God hath accepted the work of His Son,
He saves guilty sinners by the work He has done.
God saves by grace, without good deeds;
Christ is all that the sinner needs
This is the gospel so often we've heard
The message of grace in God's own Word.
Why should a sinner think he can aid?
Why should he pay what Christ has paid?
No value is there in a human plan;
But Christ tasted death for every man.
No payment more will God require,

What more than Christ should man desire?
Complete in Christ and justified,
Forgiven, cleansed and sanctified.
Let us thank God for His infinite grace;
And the Saviour Who was willing to die in our place,
To die on the cross to put sin away,
Rejoicing to know there's nothing to pay.
The work of our Saviour we'll never forget;
Forever we'll praise Him for paying our debt.
We'll honor and praise Him, looking above,
Seeking each day to (be filled with His love.
Yes, looking to Jesus, we'll run well the race,
Depending each 'day on God's wonderful grace.
God's Word is true; we're sure of reward
For all that is done in the name of the Lord.

WHO COMMITTED THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?

When? How? Where? Why?

I wonder how many, or rather how few, Christians begin to comprehend the statement of Romans 5:20: "Where sin abounded grace did much MORE (over) abound. Much more Super-abound. 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). Ephesians 2:4 to 6.

Some years ago I was called to the bedside of a dying saint. A dying saint seventy-two years of age. He had been a saint for two years. He became a saint at the age of seventy. I shall never forget that scene. What an expression of peace and joy was in his eyes! But mingled with that look of joy were tears. His face was wet with tears. As he gripped my hand in his he cried, "O, the love of God, O, the matchless grace of my Saviour." "Just to think", he continued, "God spared the life of this blaspheming, profane, wicked infidel until one night two years ago He wonderfully saved me by the precious blood of the lord Jesus Christ when I was seventy years of age." He had learned by experience the truth of Romans 5:10: "For if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

That man had blasphemed the Holy Spirit, the Holy Son, the Holy Father, the Holy Book, the Holy Church and everything else holy, not only once, but time and again, and yet he was gloriously saved. None of his sins were unpardonable, for they were all pardoned. According to Acts 13:39, when he believed, he was justified from all things. According to Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:11, Romans 3:24, God forgave that wicked man all of his sins for Christ's sake. God forgave him all his trespasses; and without a cause, by His grace, through the redemptive work of Christ, God declared that believing sinner a righteous man, fit for His presence in heaven.

If that sinful man had died at the age of seventy or seventy-two, still rejecting the gospel of grace, without faith in what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross of Calvary, all of his sins would have been unpardoned; but not one of them unpardonable. They were all pardoned when he believed.

Christ committed to the Apostle Paul “the dispensation of the grace of God”. Ephesians 3:1 and 2. Under the reign of grace many condemned sinners have gone to their graves despising the grace of God, refusing to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, failing to receive Christ as Saviour. They have, therefore, left this world with all of their sins unpardoned; but not one of them unpardonable, if they had accepted the pardon.

The sin of unbelief is no more unpardonable than is the sin of adultery, murder, or any other sin. There is no unpardonable sin in this day of grace. Christ said: I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins.” John 8:24.

But now to our question: “Who committed the unpardonable sin?” “When?” “Where?” “How?” “Why?”

First, we dogmatically affirm that it was Israel who committed the unpardonable sin. It was the “why” of the unpardonable sin that caused Paul to write the words of Romans 11:33:

“O the depth of the riches both of the knowledge and wisdom of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

Perhaps after reading the words of the Lord Jesus concerning Israel, in John 12:37 to 41, you too have cried out: “O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

Let us read again John 12:37 to 41: “But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the of Esaias the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hear, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spake of Him.”

If we cry out Romans 11:33, after reading these verses, we will say it again after reading Acts 28:25 to 28, where the language of John 12:39 and 40 is found.

Note the language of John 12:39: “Therefore they could not believe because Esaias said again.” “They could not believe.” Why? Because the unsearchable riches of Christ for Gentiles had to be committed to Paul before all Israel could be saved. Because the reconciling of the world depended upon the blindness and casting away of Israel. Christ had to be rejected, crucified, buried and raised from the dead. The “past-finding-out” ways of God meant that Israel had to commit the unpardonable sin so that the dispensation of grace for Gentile could be committed unto Paul.

The Bible student, who begins the dispensation of the grace of God, or the reconciling of the Gentiles, before Israel was cast away, before Israel committed the unpardonable sin, doth greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures.

What then is the unpardonable sin, and when did Israel commit it? All Bible teachers, when speaking on the subject of “the unpardonable sin” read Matthew 12:31 and 32. Let us read these two verses:

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever

speaketh a word against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

In connection with these verses concerning Israel’s pardonable sin and Israel’s unpardonable sin, let us study the Parable of the Vineyard, in Matthew 21:33 to 46, especially verses 35, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 45, and the words of Stephen, recorded in Acts 7:51, 52, 55 and 56.

“And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them.” Matthew 21:35, 37 to 40 and 45.

“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always RESIST THE HOLY SPIRIT: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which chewed before of the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly 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 7:51, 52, 55 and 56

In Acts 7 we learn that Stephen recited Israel’s history from Abraham to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He was addressing Israel. No doubt they thought again of the Parable of the Vineyard spoken against them by Christ on earth. Although Christ, on earth, many times referred to Himself as “the Son of man”, Stephen was the first man to call Him the Son of man (except John 12:34). Israel had betrayed and murdered the Son of man. Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. Now Israel was sinning against the Holy Spirit. Israel was committing the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:33. Let us quote again Matthew 12:31 and 32: “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit 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 Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world (age) neither in the world (age) to come.”

Israel’s pardonable sin was their sin against “the Son of man”. They were His betrayers and murderers. But Christ said, “The Son of man must be lifted up.” John 3:14. “The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him,” Matthew 26:24 “As it is written of Him.” What happened when Israel and Pilate put the Son of man to death on the tree? “For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” The Son of man had to go just when He did and just as He did. 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.

This then is why Israel’s sin against “the Son of man” was pardonable. This is why those tender words of Acts 3:14 to 18 and 26: “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. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before hath shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.” “Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

Knowing the Father’s plan and purpose, Christ on the cross prayed “Father forgive them: for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34.

The Son of man went to Calvary and then, through the open heavens, Stephen saw Him standing at God's right hand. That was a reminder of Israel's great sin. What a sin! But it was pardonable. Israel had only to receive the pardon. The rulers refused the pardon in the holy land. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. Many Israelites repented and received the Holy Spirit. More of them, including the high priest and rulers, resisted the Holy Spirit and blasphemed. They committed the unpardonable sin.

It is interesting to compare Matthew 12:14 and Acts 5:35: "Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him, how they might betray Him."—"When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them."

The first was at the time the Lord told of Israel's unpardonable sin; the second was when Israel's rulers were committing the unpardonable sin. We shall presently quote the verses immediately preceding Acts 5:33. But let us remember that God from Matthew 1 to Acts 7 was dealing with a Nation as well as with individuals.

The question as to when Israel committed the unpardonable sin is a very important one. The correct answer will save us from the common blunder of so many spiritual Bible-teachers, who have the ministry of reconciliation, the dispensation of the grace of God and the dispensation of the mystery begin on the day of Pentecost. No dispensation of grace, no reconciling of the world until the casting-away of Israel.

Surely we are quite stupid, if we have carefully read Acts 3:14 to 26 and teach that Israel had been cast away at that time. Now carefully study

Acts 5:30 to 33.

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 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.

And we are His witnesses of these things: and SO IS ALSO THE HOLY SPIRIT, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him.

When they heard that they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay him."

Note several facts here: Christ raised up. For whom? Remember His words in Matthew 15:24: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Christ exalted! For whom and for what purpose? "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 5:31. What was the Holy Spirit doing? Witnessing the fact that the Son of man, Whom Israel had sinned against, was Israel's Prince and Saviour, to give Israel repentance and forgiveness. The commission of Matthew 10:5 to 8 was still binding: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles;" "go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Nothing for Gentiles in Acts 5:30 to 32. No reconciling of the world yet. No casting-away of Israel yet. No sending salvation to Gentiles because of Israel's fall at the time of Acts 5:30 to 33.

God wanted all Israel to know that the Jesus Whom they had slain was both Lord and Christ. Acts 2:36. The Holy Spirit was bearing witness of that fact. Israel now had the opportunity to sin against the Holy Spirit and commit the unpardonable sin. Stephen's message, in Acts 7, shows us that Israel had not yet been cast away; In that chapter we learn how Israel was committing the unpardonable sin.

We should be interested to compare Christ's prayer for Israel in the hour of His death, with Stephen's prayer for Israel in the hour of his death. "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:60.

Just what did Stephen's prayer accomplish for Israel? It is interesting to note that shortly after this prayer, Philip went down to Samaria. It is equally interesting to note another fact, namely, that for some time after Stephen's prayer, the disciples preached to none but Jews only. Acts 11:19. Another interesting fact: "And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles:" Acts 8:1. And still another interesting fact: It was several years after Stephen's prayer before the first company of Gentiles received the message of salvation from any of The Twelve. Even then salvation was not sent to Cornelius to provoke Israel to jealousy, for the dispensation of the grace of God had not yet been committed to Paul, No one then had the ministry of reconciliation in accordance with Romans 11:15—Israel had not yet been cast away.

It is after the death of one of the Twelve and the commission of Acts 13:2, that the Scriptures tell us of the new program given to the Apostle to the Gentiles. We are introduced to this new program by the experience of three men, "Bar-Jesus", "Sergius Paulus", and "Saul" who became "Paulus."

We quote first
Acts 12:1 and 2.

"Now about that time Herod the King stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.

Acts 13:2.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Acts 13:6 to 12.

"And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the Word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing; the sun for a season. And immediately there fall on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord:"

The student of the Word who misses this dispensational miracle, which gives us the key to the mystery of Romans 11, the blindness and casting away of Israel, and the reconciling of the Gentiles, misses a very important lesson.

The fall of Israel is indicated first by the death of one of the Twelve and then by the dispensational miraculous judgment upon "Barjesus", that is, blindness upon the child of Jehovah-Saviour. Israel is the child of Jehovah-Saviour. "Israel is My son." Exodus 4:22.

Concerning the death of James, one of the Twelve, we might ask two important questions. First, why was a successor chosen to Judas to keep the number twelve, whereas no successor was chosen to take the place of James? It was necessary to have twelve from Acts 1 to Acts 11. Twelve Apostles—Twelve Tribes. Second, why does the Holy Spirit after Acts 13:2 cease to record the spiritual activities of any of the Twelve in the Book of Acts except as they have dealings with Paul?

Now as to the dispensational miraculous judgment. Bar-Jesus blind for a season. What happened to the Gentile Paulus? “When he saw what was done, believed” “He was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” Here is another appropriate place for Romans 11:32. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

Bar-Jesus—“the child or son of Jehovah Saviour”—blind for a season. This is the mystery of Romans 11 in miracle. Israel’s blindness for a season the doctrine of God so that Gentiles might be reconciled as well as astonished. Saul became Paul and then follows Romans 11:13, “I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.”

Today most Bible teachers delight to minimize Paul’s office and count his office the same as Peter’s. Perhaps they have failed to study Galatians 2:7 to 9; Ephesians 3:8; I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 1:11; Romans 15:16 to 20 and I Corinthians. 3:10.

In our study, Romans 11:15 is a very important verse.

“For if the CASTING AWAY OF THEM BE THE RECONCILING OF THE WORLD what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”

The casting away of Israel meant the reconciling of the world. When did the reconciling of the world begin? When did Israel commit the unpardonable sin? Surely the eleventh chapter of Romans is a dispensational chapter. showing that Israel has been set aside, in blindness, until God accomplishes another purpose in this age of grace. Of this mystery God would have no one ignorant. Some dispensational Bible teachers teach that Israel was set aside with the judgment pronounced by Christ on earth, recorded in Matthew 23:33 and Matthew 23:37 to 39:

“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. BEHOLD, YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT UNTO YOU DESOLATE. 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.”

They declare that was the end of Israel as a nation until the second coming of Christ. Then and there Israel, the serpents and generation of vipers, were set aside. “Your house is left unto you desolate.”

But it is strange that these men of God have not studied, with Matthew 23:33 to 39, such other Scriptures as Luke 21:20, Matthew 22:7 and Acts 3:15 to 26. We quote

Luke 21:20

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.”

Matthew 22:7

“But when the King heard thereof He was wroth: and He sent forth His armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

Acts 3:17 and 25

“And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.”

Why were the same serpents and generation of vipers tenderly addressed as children of the covenant and offered the return of Messiah and His Kingdom? Why was their crime of

killing the Prince of Life to be forgiven on the grounds of ignorance? Because of the prayer of the Son of man on the cross: "Forgive . . . they know not."

According to Luke 21:20 and Matthew 22:7 the execution of the Divine judgment pronounced in Matthew 23:33 to 39, which would bring desolation to Israel and Jerusalem, would not take place until armies were surrounding Jerusalem. Surely this did not take place before or on the day of Pentecost. Neither did it take place at any time during the thirty years covered by the Book of Acts.

At the time the Son of man warned Israel of the unpardonable sin, at the time He pronounced the judgment of Matthew 23:33 to 39, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. John 7:39. Therefore Israel could not have committed the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:31, against the Holy Spirit, before the day of Pentecost. Moreover, Israel never enjoyed the favor and protection of Rome more than they did during the thirty years covered by the Book of Acts.

During these thirty years not only did the city of Jerusalem continue to stand in peace; but the temple stood, and both saved and unsaved Israelites had access to it. More than twenty-five years after the pronouncement of Christ, in Matthew 23:33 to 39, Paul hurried to get to Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Acts 20:16. After that James, the Lord's brother, had access to the temple in Jerusalem. Acts 21:18 to 25. Even after that, note Paul's apology to Israel's highpriest: "And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shall not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Acts 23:4 and 5.

There is no record in Acts that Peter, or any other servant of God, preached reconciliation to Gentiles during the first nine chapters, or for some seven or eight years after Pentecost. Certainly the words of Peter in Acts 5:29 to 33, prove that Israel at that time had not committed the unpardonable sin. Israel had not been cast away at that time.

Perhaps you have also observed that about six years elapsed between the day Saul of Tarsus was converted (chapter 9) and the day repentance unto life was granted unto the first Gentiles. Acts 11:18.

Then remember that at the time the Holy Spirit, in Acts 13:2, said, "separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work", Saul had been saved for about ten years and had been preaching the faith which once he destroyed. Galatians 1:23. The faith which Saul once destroyed was quite different from the message and ministry mentioned in II Corinthians 5:16 to 21: "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:18) ; "hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation". (II Corinthians 5:19). When was that committed? Not when Saul was first preaching the faith which he once destroyed, for at that time the reconciling of the world had not begun; because Israel had not yet been cast away. Israel had not yet committed the unpardonable sin. Those who committed the unpardonable sin were blinded. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Romans 11:7.

Thus we can see the absolute folly of beginning the reconciling of the Gentiles with the judgment of Matthew 23 or on the day of Pentecost or before Paul received his "grace" revelation from Christ. Galatians 1:11 to 21.

Concerning Israel's unpardonable sin, let us note in Romans 11 some of the facts that preceded Paul's declaration of God's ways "past finding out". Note Romans 11:11, 12, 15, 19, 25 and 30: that the Gentiles obtained mercy and salvation, the Gentiles were reconciled; because Israel fell, because Israel was diminished, because Israel was cast away, because Israel was broken off, because of Israel's blindness and unbelief: "For I would not brethren that ye should

be ignorant of the mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Romans 11:25.

The reconciling of the world began with the pasting away of Israel. When was Israel cast away? Salvation was sent to the Gentiles because of Israel’s fall. Romans 11:11. In other words, Christ in heaven gave to Paul, for Gentiles, “the dispensation of the grace of God” because, and when, Israel committed the unpardonable sin. “For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to youward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words).”

Note the significant words in the ministry of Paul about 46 A.D. recorded in Acts 13:45 and 46: “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Acts 13:45 and 46. Again, about 54 A.D., in Acts 18:6: “And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.”

We note in these Scriptures why the Lord turned Paul to the Gentiles: because the Jews blasphemed.

During the “Acts” period Paul declared that the gospel was, to the Jew first. Romans 1:16; Acts 13:46. In Matthew 23:33 Christ called the Jews “serpents:” Why should serpents have the preference? What transformed the serpents of Matthew 23:33 into the children of Acts 3:24? Surely it was the prayer of Luke 23:34 explained in Acts 3:16 to 18. After the prayer of Christ on the cross, God began again a kingdom program with Israel on the day of Pentecost.

Some teachers say, “yes, the Lord did give Israel a second chance in the early chapters of Acts, but God knew that they were not going to repent; so He began the dispensation of grace on that Israelitish feastday and there the Body of Christ had its historic beginning.” “God was doing two things at the same time, offering the kingdom to Israel and baptizing individual Israelites into the Body of Christ.”

We might offer several objections to this exegesis. But we merely state this one. We know that the blessing in the Body of Christ is much more desirable than the blessing in the earthly kingdom promised to Israel. We cannot believe that Peter became a member of the Body of Christ in Acts 2 and offered other Israelites a place in the kingdom in Acts 3. He would have advised all of them to reject the kingdom offer and get into the Body with him.

No sound Scriptural argument can be advanced to prove that the reconciling of the world began before Acts 13.

Now let us consider the other extreme; that is, that the fall of Israel took place with Acts 28:25 to 28. The careful student of the Scriptures must admit that something happened to Israel with the close of “Acts” that had not happened on the day of Pentecost. Paul wrote to Titus, a full Gentile, after the close of “Acts”, to ordain elders for the Body of Christ. According to Acts 10:28, it was unlawful for The Twelve to associate, or preach to Gentiles, some seven years after Pentecost.

Quite a revolutionary change between the year of Acts 10:28 and the year that Paul wrote to Titus.

In studying Romans 11:11 to 30, we should study with them, Acts 13:46, Acts 18:6 and Acts 28:25 to 28. But let us keep in mind Romans 11:15, which we again quote: “For if the

casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

The reconciling of the world began with the casting away of Israel, when Israel committed the unpardonable sin. Certainly Paul wrote II Corinthians before Acts 28:25 to 28 and it is in that Epistle that he wrote of the same reconciling of the world that he mentioned in Colossians 1:20 to 23. The world was being reconciled to God before the year Paul wrote II Corinthians. Therefore, Israel had, in a sense, been cast away before that year. Israel had committed the unpardonable sin.

Even at the time of Acts 28:31, the armies of the Lord, mentioned by Christ in Luke 21:20, and in Matthew 22:7, had not surrounded Jerusalem, killed the murderers of Christ, and burned up their city. That was when their desolation was to take place. The teacher who moves the fall of Israeli from Matthew 23:30 to 39 to Acts 28:25 to 28 should move it to the year 70, when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and Israel. That was two or three years after Paul had written his last Prison Epistle and had died.

With the words of Acts 28:28: "Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it", and the close of the "Acts" period, certainly God's spiritual program began to change. Surely then the administration of God's spiritual program began to pass into the hands of the Gentiles. As the times of the Gentiles politically began with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem, about 600 B.C., so the times of the Gentiles spiritually began after Acts 28:31, about 63 A.D. The absence of Israelitish terminology and Jewish signs in Paul's Epistles, written after Acts 28:31, is significant,

So in conclusion, as we again read Matthew 12:13 to 18 and John 12:39: "Therefore they could not believe", we learn that Israel could not believe but had to sin against the Son of man so that He might be rejected and go to the cross to be the Saviour of the world' (Acts 3:18 and Acts 4:27 and 28). And as we read again Romans 11:30, that Israel had to fall through unbelief so that the Gentiles might be reconciled, we again say with Paul, Romans 11:33: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Now the Greek word translated here "past-finding-out", is translated "unsearchable" in Ephesians 3:8.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ." Ephesians 3:8 and 9.

STAND FAST AND STEADFAST

Galatians 5:1.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

I Corinthians 15:58.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Every true and faithful servant of God is man's most valuable friend and benefactor. The most faithful servant of God, who has lived on earth since the days of the Lord Jesus on earth, was the Apostle Paul. Many thousands were blessed beyond measure by his oral and written

ministry when he was here among men, and millions have received rich spiritual blessings through his written messages since he suffered martyrdom, about 67 A.D., for his loyalty to his Lord and the Word of His grace. Something of the courageous, uncompromising devotion of this greatest of all Christians is told in his words recorded in Galatians 1:10 and in his words uttered shortly before he laid down his life for his faithful testimony. "For if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." II Timothy 4:7.

This great victory meant great suffering. We have said that Paul suffered martyrdom for Christ's sake. But is "suffered" the right word? Let us carefully note Paul's language in Acts 21:13: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Concerning this mission, and the hazard connected with it, note again Paul's words in Acts 20:24: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course WITH JOY, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

In the face of suffering even unto death, he spoke of finishing his course with joy. He had received his ministry from the Lord Jesus and his course was "to testify" the gospel of the grace of God." Paul, as a faithful shepherd, had to feed God's flock, and he also had to keep away the religious wolves that would not spare the flock. Acts 20:29 and 30.

Since the days of Paul, the religious wolves have multiplied, until today they are without number. In any way and every way possible they beguile and bewitch sinners and saints with a religious message which they declare to be God's message. With their religious mixture they pervert God's "grace" message of salvation. They frustrate the grace of God and thereby preach another gospel, which is not another. Galatians 1:6 to 10. Galatians 2:21. In Paul's day these religious prophets not only subverted the souls of sinners, but they used every endeavor to turn the hearts of Paul's spiritual children against him, and frequently with great success. Then Paul would write them a message of grace and do his utmost to bring them back to the grace of Christ. In one such message he wrote: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" Galatians 3:1. They had really been bewitched by receiving a religious program to supplement the "grace" salvation message. When Paul found them as unsaved heathen, and preached to them, "declared righteous without a cause by God's grace through the redemption that was in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24), they were gloriously saved and they greatly rejoiced. But then went forth the false brethren, preaching, "except ye be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved" Acts 15:5 and 24. Those who received this perverted gospel became Paul's enemies. The grievous wolves did not spare the flock.

As some preacher in England wrote some years ago, if Paul had not taken an uncompromising stand against these teachers, who, in the first century, were determined to corrupt Paul's gospel of grace by adding to it the religious program of the Jews which they brought over from the reign of law, humanly speaking, the "grace" message would have been lost before the apostle died. But later on it was so completely covered up with the corruption of Christendom for many centuries that it was lost so far as the great majority of people were concerned, especially during the many years when they had no Bibles. And to the majority of church-members today it is still lost.

Not only did false brethren succeed in taking from many believers their liberty so that they were again entangled with the yoke of bondage, but other false prophets followed Paul to Corinth and other cities, and taught the new converts that there would be no resurrection of the dead; that is, that the bodies of believers would not be raised. To them Paul wrote that if

believer's bodies were not to be raised, then Christ's body was not raised. And if so, what? All the apostles were false witnesses. All saints who had died had perished. All the sacrifices and sufferings of saints were worse than folly. All the preaching of a hope beyond-the grave was vain. The preaching was vain, the hope vain, and all the works of saints in vain. This is the message of the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians. But this is not all that is contained in that wonderful chapter.

At the present time, preachers among Christians who preach salvation by religion or by doing, and who deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, call themselves "Liberals" or "Modernists". But in Paul's day they were called "grievous wolves", "false brethren", and "servants of Satan transformed into an angel of light." II Corinthians 11:13 to 15.

But at this present time there are many false prophets who believe and teach the eternal Deity of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace, faith in the shed blood of Christ plus something else; and who believe and teach the bodily resurrection. Remember some of the Galatians, who were Fundamentalist, were heretics.

Note Paul's short but full answer to the religious teachers who teach salvation either by works wholly or in part. "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Galatians 2:21. He wrote the Corinthian saints that their labour in Christ was not in vain, because Christ was raised and saints are to be raised at His coming.

Will a Christian make the death of Christ vain? Think of the ignorance, or presumption, the spiritual crime of trying to make the great sacrifice of the Son of God vain! God spared not His only Son. Romans 8:32. Think of that hour of darkness when the holy Son of God hanging on that cross of shame had cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. "God is love." I John 4:8. What is the measure of God's love? How much did God love the world? The Lord of Glory on the cross, is the answer. What does God say that Christ did on that cross? He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Hebrews 9:26. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead in sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." I Peter 2:24. "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. I Peter 3:18. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Hebrews 9:12. This is what Christ did with sin by His death and resurrection.

Yes, He hath obtained redemption for us. What kind of redemption? Eternal redemption.

What did He do with religion and the law?

Colossians 2:13 to 16.

"And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 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; And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days."

If righteousness came by the law (by religion), Christ died in vain. If the poor sinner turns away from the grace of God, from Christ and Calvary, and the open sepulchre, where will he turn? There is only one other place to turn, and that is to Mount Sinai with its "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not"; with its ordinances, ceremonies, and the blood of animals that could never take away sin. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is

the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:20. Therefore the question of Acts 15:10: “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”

“(For they could not endure that which was commanded.) Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you is justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him Who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 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.” Hebrews 12:20; Romans 4:15; Galatians 5:4; Romans 7:4; Galatians 3:13.

To turn to Christ’s Sermon on the Mount or His Golden Rule for salvation is to find death instead of life. There is no salvation or justification in the ethical philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth. Man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins. He is in the flesh. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:8. The penalty for sin is death. Christ died for our sins. The sinner is in bondage to sin. To put him again under the law means “bondage again”; for he is obligated to keep the whole law and not offend in one point or be guilty of all. By faith in the redemptive work of Christ, His death and resurrection, the believing sinner is free from the law of sin and death and he is free from the law of Sinai. Romans 8:2 and Romans 7:3 to 6. And then what?

“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.

Before the believer can walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called, walk well pleasing unto the Lord, before he can serve the Lord acceptably, he must obey Galatians 5:1. He must stand in grace having a sure foundation.

Stand fast in the liberty. “Ye have not received the spirit of, bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Romans 8:15.

Are you a child of God? If so, what made you a child of God? Who made you a child of God? What did you have to do with it? Was there any doing? What did you do? Did Christ obtain eternal redemption for us? Hebrews 9:12. Did Christ do a perfect work of redemption? What work does God want a sinner to add to the perfect work of His perfect Son that that sinner might be redeemed? Who set the believer free? Whom the Son sets free, shall be free indeed. John 8:36.

If Christ has set us free, we do not have to do anything to set ourselves free. The sum total of our doing is to believe and receive Christ and His doing. Then stand fast in the liberty. Beware of religion. Beware of any and every message of salvation by character, or religious doing. Stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ has set us free. Christ has set us free? Who? Christ. Believe it and stand!

Stand fast in the liberty. Liberty means, no longer the slave of sin, headed for the wrath of God and judgment after death. Inasmuch as religion could never liberate a sinner, why become a slave to religion? “Be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage.”

The only religion which God ever gave to man was the religion He gave to Israel, through Moses. That was imposed until the time of reformation. Hebrews 9:10. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Romans 10:4. The kingdom of God is no longer meats and drink, but righteousness. Romans 14:17. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Romans 10:10. Righteousness is the believer’s passport to glory. Religion is not

righteousness. God's sons today have Christ and Christ is the believer's righteousness and life. God's people, under their religion, received the spirit of bondage unto fear. Romans 8:15. They did not receive the Spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father. During the present reign of grace there is no such thing as the Christian religion. Believers have eternal life. Believers are in Christ. Christ is in believers. Believers are accepted in Christ; without condemnation in Christ; and complete in Christ. Ephesians 1:6; Romans 8:1; Colossians 2:10.

God says, "Keep out of religious entanglements." All religious people are entangled. Religion that is not God-given is Satanic. The only religion that God gave was abolished by the death and resurrection of Christ. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Galatians 5:4.

It is not the immoral, irreligious sinner, who once claimed to be a Christian, who is fallen from grace. The one who is fallen from grace is the moral, religious man who professes to be a Christian but who is depending for his righteousness upon his religious activities in addition to "the perfect work of Christ." To turn from Calvary, where Christ cried "finished", to Sinai, the ministration of death and condemnation (II Corinthians 3:7 and 9), is to fall from grace.

The sinner who turns to religion, without receiving eternal life through Christ, is twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Beware of any kind of legalistic religious entanglement.

Romans 11:6.

"And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work."

Romans 4:3 and 4.

"For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

HOW ABOUT GOOD WORKS?—BE STEADFAST

But do not stand idle if you are sure your trust is in God's grace and the redemption that is in Christ. Get busy! waste no time! Be steadfast!

I Corinthians 15:58.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The Lord Jesus Christ died not only to save us from the penalty of sin, but, "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 2:14. Note, "to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The Lord's redeemed ones are to prove that they are a peculiar people by their good works. No proof is necessary so far as God is concerned: "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." II Timothy 2:19. But note the rest of this verse in II Timothy, "And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Departing from iniquity is included in the good works. The world says, "show me your faith by your works."

The Lord's peculiar people are in the world but not of the world. They are dead to sin. The unsaved people are dead in sin: they are in sin; in the flesh; in Adam. The Lord's people are new creatures in Christ. They are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10. God's order is; first, God's workmanship and then God's workmen.

God is not a taskmaster over His redeemed people. They are not servants as the Israelites were under the law. Neither must God's people work to be redeemed. But God says to His redeemed ones, "ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." They love, the Lord because He first loved them. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." II Corinthians 5:14 and 15.

Moreover, God reminds His people that He is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love. Hebrews 6:10. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 3:11. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." I Corinthians 3:14. No believer will ever serve God for nought. He shall receive a reward. We may be sure that God's rewards are worth striving for. Our labours in the Lord are not in vain. Remember, "labours in the Lord". One must not only be "in the Lord", but all of one's labour must be "in the Lord". Hear this most important instruction as to how to serve God if you expect a reward.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Colossians 3:17.

Also note carefully Hebrews 12:1 and 2: "Wherefore seeing ye 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, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. 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."

Here we note that we cannot depend upon our own ability or genius, no matter how wise or clever we may be. And while the Lord's redeemed ones should always help one another to run a good race, to fight the good fight of faith, we know how miserably they fail in this; and if we look unto man, or if we get our eyes fixed upon circumstances, conditions, failures, or human patterns, we'll not be steadfast and unmoveable.

It means much to be steadfast and unmoveable. Paul practiced what he preached. He was steadfast and unmoveable. Note his words in I Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than, they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He presents himself as a pattern, for believers in Christ.

"Brethren, be followers together of me." Philippians 3:17. "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of "Christ." I Corinthians 11:1. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy; that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to fife everlasting." I Timothy 1:16.

Note what is said about Moses' incentive to faithful service: "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." Hebrews 11:26. He had respect unto the recompense of reward. Note Christ's words: "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke 14:14. Because our labour is not in vain in the Lord we should always abound in the work of the Lord. We would emphasize the two words "always" and "abounding".

Always. Abounding. Something more than Sunday church services. Faithful service every day in the week.—Always—"Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." There is so much to be done for God and for man.

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.” John 4:35 and 36.

AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION

In Great Britain, France, Mexico and other countries, the United States maintain ambassadors; that is, this great nation is represented by ambassadors. Such a representative of the United States is called “minister plenipotentiary and ambassador extraordinary.” As a servant of this country he is a servant full of power or authority, and, being the personal spokesman for more than 120 million people, with the President, the cabinet, the congress, the army and the navy behind him, he is truly a representative extraordinary.

Of course, the man selected for such an important ministry should be fully qualified for the position. In order that he may honorably and uncompromisingly protect the interests of his nation and people at the foreign court he must be exceedingly careful about receiving personal favours, concessions and gifts from official representatives of that foreign nation.

In the important act of establishing treaties and agreements between his own government and the foreign nation that has received him as United States representative, this ambassador is forwarded a government document from Washington, bearing the seal of the United States of America, signed by the President and the Secretary of State. In dignity, accompanied by his official attendants, the ambassador presents the document to the foreign court for the signature of the Ruler and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Thus treaties of possession, commerce and peace are made.

It is deplorable when such a representative is chosen, not because he is qualified for the post but to pay a political debt.

Surely it is a great privilege and a great honor to be an ambassador representing the United States.

It is not an easy task to persuade people that it is a greater honor and a greater privilege to be an ambassador for Christ, and the Kingdom of God. Note the statement of the Apostle Paul, recorded in II Corinthians 5:20. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

This same apostle, in Philippians 3:20, says: “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “conversation” here could be translated “citizenship” or even “politics”. There is a sense, then, in which the citizenship and politics of every representative of Christ is in heaven. But while here on earth, as ambassadors for Jesus Christ, those who belong to Christ have the very difficult task of trying to be pleasant among sinners, while at the same time being governed by Galatians 1:10; “for do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

In His wonderful prayer, recorded in John 17:16 the Lord Jesus said concerning His disciples: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” The qualification for an ambassador is set forth in Colossians 1:12 to 15: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; In Whom we

have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” In verse 12 the expression “hath made us meet” could be translated “hath qualified us”. In other words, before we can acceptably represent Christ we must qualify. We must be delivered; we must be redeemed. In Colossians 1:20 we are told how this is accomplished. It is through the blood of His cross. Here we note that by the blood of the cross of Christ the believer is reconciled and is at peace with God. We quote Colossians 1:20 to 22:

“And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.”

Here we note that alienated enemies are made wholly unblamable and unprovable because of what Christ did through death.

Peace and reconciliation by the blood of His cross. What a wonderful message God’s ministers have to proclaim to lost sinners. And what glorious good news the sinner may receive and be saved for time and eternity.

We go back now to the last five verses of the fifth chapter of II Corinthians:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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:”

Here we note that the ambassador for Christ is a new creature. According to Ephesians 2:10 he is God’s workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. Man by nature belongs to the old creation. He is identified with Adam, the sinner. The most important transformation that can come to any man is to get out of Adam and in Christ; that is to be identified with “The Last Adam” Who is now the glorified Man in heaven. All who are in Adam are in sin, in the flesh, and under condemnation. If any man be in Christ there is a new creation. The new creature is no longer dead in sin. He is dead to sin. The believer’s old man has been crucified with Christ. He is in the Spirit. He is made accepted in Christ, the Beloved. He is complete in Christ. He is waiting to appear with Christ in glory. His citizenship is in heaven. He is in the world, but not of the world. And now he has a new responsibility. For unto him is committed the word of reconciliation. To him is given the ministry of reconciliation.

In these closing verses of the fifth chapter of II Corinthians we observe that it is not the sinner seeking God; but God, through ambassadors of Christ, seeking the sinner, and beseeching the sinner, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God.

There is no more definite statement of the gospel, no clearer announcement of saving truth than we find in the twenty-first verse: “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:”

When the Lord Jesus Christ cried “finished”, and yielded up the Ghost on the cross, He was crowned with a crown of thorns, the emblem of the curse. He was made sin, although He knew no sin. The God of all grace ordained and permitted the cruel death of the sinless Christ,

yea, offered up His well-beloved Son, so that poor unrighteous men might, by His infinite grace, through faith, be made the righteousness of God in Christ. Man's only place of security and Divine blessing is in Christ.

This ministry of reconciliation is distinctively a Pauline ministry. More than a dozen times that great apostle emphasized the fact that he was the apostle, the preacher, and the teacher of the Gentiles; that unto Him the risen Christ committed the "dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles"; the "unsearchable riches of Christ for Gentiles"; "the mystery among the Gentiles"; and the "dispensation of the mystery." Romans 11:13; Ephesians 3:1 to 3; Ephesians 3:8 and 9; Colossians 1:24 to 27.

According to Galatians 2:8, God was mighty in Peter in the apostleship of the circumcision. Peter received from Christ the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the so-called "great commission." In his ministry, recorded in the early chapters of Acts, Peter preached unto Israel repentance and restitution; the gospel of the kingdom; the promises, and blessings of the covenants which God made concerning Israel; but never once did he preach reconciliation to Gentiles. He did not refer to Adam. Never once did Peter preach to Israel, in those chapters, concerning the "old man" and the "new man"; concerning the "old creation" and the "new creation". Peter did not preach concerning the believer's identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection; blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. Peter had no authority from Christ to even refer to uncircumcised Abram from whence came Paul's gospel of the uncircumcision. It was unto Paul that the risen Lord committed the gospel of the uncircumcision, (Galatians 2:7; Galatians 3:8) the ministry of reconciliation and the mystery concerning the Body of Christ. Invariably when we have the ministry of reconciliation we find linked with it the ministry of the new creation and the truth of the believer's identification; out of Adam, into Christ. The word "atonement" in Romans 5:11 is a mis-translation. It should read "reconciliation". Then follows the story of Adam and Christ, the old creation and the new creation, and the new creature's identification with Christ. Romans 5:12 to 6:12.

Our mission today is to beseech sinners to believe the word of reconciliation; to believe that the document has been signed and sealed; that the Lord Jesus Christ provided this reconciliation and made peace by the blood of His cross. Truly with such a ministry we should know that we are ambassadors extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary. How willing and eager sinners should be to accept this glorious gospel message, be at peace with God, reconciled to God, and be redeemed for time and eternity.

If you are troubled to know under which one of the Lord's commissions you are to labour, remember these words of Paul, "the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me (Paul) as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter." Galatians 2:7. And again Paul's words in II Timothy 2:2. "And the things that thou hast heard of me (Paul) among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Again in Ephesians 3:1 and 2, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles". . . "the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward". Again, "the gospel which was preached of me is not after man . . . taught it by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Galatians 1:12.

"That I (Paul) should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles—I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." Romans 15:16 and 20.

Note what Paul says concerning himself, in I Corinthians 3:10: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me (Paul), as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation."

When the risen Christ gave the so-called great commission, in Matthew 28:19 and 20, to Peter and his associates, he never hinted at the gospel of uncircumcision, the dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles, or the ministry of reconciliation which some years later He committed, by revelation, to Paul who then declared, “I am the apostle of the Gentiles; I magnify mine office.” Romans 11:13.

The pity is that the Lord’s ambassadors today minimize Paul’s office instead of magnify it.

Well, fellow-Christians, our commission and message today is the word of reconciliation. That reconciliation message was not the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20, because Israel had not yet been cast away and God’s word instructs us in Romans 11:15, “the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world.” After Christ had been raised from the dead Peter declared that He was raised from the dead to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel. Acts 5:30 and 31. Christ raised from the dead to give Israel repentance is quite different from the reconciling of the world because Israel was cast away.

Now here is sufficient Divine authority for our ministry for the Lord, “hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” II Corinthians 5:19, “Hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation.” II Corinthians 5:18.

In the context note our identification with Christ-verse 15—And also note why we labour as ambassadors of reconciliation: “the love of Christ constraineth us”; “Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.” II Corinthians 5:14 and 11.

Let us not be guilty of the spiritual crime of perverting the glorious Divine message of grace. Let us not tell sinners to get on their knees and beg God for salvation. In the message of reconciliation sinners are not to beg God to be reconciled to them and save them. Carefully note verse 20: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

God beseeches the sinner. We pray the sinner.. This is not the sinner seeking God and salvation. This is God beseeching the sinner to accept the perfect work of redemption accomplished by Christ. When He was made sin on the cross, God was reconciled. The reconciliation becomes mutual the moment the sinner believes God and receives Christ. We have a blessed ministry, a great responsibility, and a glorious privilege as ambassadors of reconciliation.

“SO RUN THAT YE MAY OBTAIN”

WHO MAY OBTAIN WHAT?

In Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 9:24) the Lord instructs His people in this language, “so run that ye may obtain.” This Epistle is addressed to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord: It is addressed to saved people. I Corinthians 1:2. The Lord’s redeemed people are to run in a race. They are to strive and be temperate that they might win an incorruptible crown. I Corinthians 9:25. The Lord offers a prize for the Christian who runs well.

The Lord would not have any one be troubled or confused as to the difference between running and striving for a prize, and receiving eternal life as a free gift. Sometimes critics of the Bible state that there are contradictory statements in this Book of God. But the contradictions are

not in the Bible when properly understood. They are in the confused mind of the person who is not spiritually, diligently and carefully examining the Scriptures. We read in I Corinthians 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion. We read in Romans 6:23 that “the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Most assuredly, no individual need strive or run for that which God declares to be His free gift. In the Scripture quoted, God does not instruct an unbeliever to be temperate in all things. The unbeliever, in the Bible, is called the natural man. And in Romans 8:7 and 8 God’s Word clearly states that the natural man can neither please God nor be subject to the law of God, because by nature he is at enmity with God.

It is useless for an unsaved man to try to conduct himself in obedience to God’s instructions given to those who have become His children by faith in His Son. In Romans 3:24 God’s Book clearly states that a believing sinner is justified without a cause, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. According to Romans 3:28 the believer is declared righteous without any endeavor on his part.

Inasmuch as the Bible does not contradict itself, the Lord wants every person to know the difference between being made righteous without striving, and then striving for the mastery in a sincere endeavor to live a righteous life. Let us compare I Corinthians 9:24 with Hebrews 9:12:

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” I Corinthians 9:24.

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He (Christ) entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Hebrews 9:12.

What utter confusion must be in the mind of the individual who thinks he is running a race to obtain eternal redemption when this eternal redemption has already been obtained by the omnipotent sinless Son of God Who suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. I Peter 3:18.

Thus we see when the Lord said, “So run that ye may obtain”, He was speaking of the incorruptible crown which will be the reward of the faithful saint who runs well the race that is set before him. This he will do by looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.

We cannot save ourselves. We cannot keep ourselves. None of our good works or earnest endeavors to be good will in any way help us to get to heaven. But surely they will be much to our credit when we arrive there as sinners saved by grace.

So let us, as believers, run, strive and be temperate. Let us labor for the prize.

From heaven’s glory Christ came down to sinful men on earth.

We’ve reached another Christmas day to celebrate His birth:

Eternal God in human form, the Virgin’s holy Child:

The One of whom the prophets wrote, the seed of woman—undefiled.

Gabriel came to Mary’s home God’s message to proclaim,

To tell her of the Saviour’s birth; to give to her His name:

“Call Him Jesus”, God’s command; on David’s throne He’ll reign;

He’ll save His people from their sin and Israel’s rights regain.

In Bethlehem’s manger He came forth—Israel’s glorious King.

The shepherds kept their flock by night and heard the angels sing:

“Peace on earth! Good will to men! Christ is born today!”

The wise men came. to see the King; God’s star had led the way.

And there was born the Son of God Who lived in Israel's land,
Who came to earth to do God's will—all that God had planned.
Christ came to set the captive free; give Satan's slaves release;
He spake the Word of God, to men, brought comfort, health and peace.

By word and work Christ proved His claim; Has right to David's throne.
But Israel said, "He shall not reign"—rejected they the Stone,
In the garden Christ was found, and by Judas there betrayed.
Before the rulers He was led, in purple robe arrayed.

Crowned with thorns they hailed Him king, in derision and disgrace
They hated Him without a cause; they spat upon His face.
Pilate found no fault in Him, desired to set Him free:
His rulers cried, "We'll take the blame! nail Him to the tree".

So the Lord of glory died; but He suffered not in vain.
Not only was His death foretold; but He must rise again.
No other way could God be just and sinful men forgive;
The penalty by Christ was paid! By faith the just shall live!

Eternal life is God's free gift through Jesus Christ our Lord.
And when we're saved, God gives us work with promise of reward.
And as we worship, serve and wait until we hear the call
We know our labor's not in vain; for God remembers all.

He gives us grace for every day to serve by word and deed;
He keeps us by his power Divine; supplies our every need.
The riches of our blessed Lord are enjoyed by every one
Who will obey the word of God and abide in Christ His Son.

By His Spirit we are sealed until redemption day.
Then the Lord Himself shall come and take His saints away.
In heaven we shall then appear, in bodies glorified;
All living saints who still remain and all the saints who've died.

We'll sing anew redemption song when we reach that happy place;
Ever with our Lord we'll be, as sinners saved by grace.
Tears and crying will all be o'er; no death and never night;
Eternal day for God's redeemed; forever pure delight.

It this Christmas season then, as we give to those we love,
Let our hearts be fixed on Him Who lives for us above.
If this message reaches one, who's not yet saved from sin,
why not take God's Christmas Gift and let the Saviour in?

FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

WHAT CHRIST WAS MADE

“But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, MADE of a woman, MADE under the law. Galatians 4:4.

“And the Word was MADE flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.” John 1:14.

“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.

“Who is MADE, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.” Hebrews 7:16.

“Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be MADE like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation, for the sins of the people:” Hebrews 2:17.

“Concerning His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was MADE of the seed of David according to the flesh:” Romans 1:3.

“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.” II Corinthians 5:21.

FROM INSIDE BACK COVER

WHAT BELIEVERS ARE MADE IN CHRIST

“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.” II Corinthians 5:21.

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be MADE righteous.” Romans 5:19.

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is MADE unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” I Corinthians 1:30.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath MADE me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:2.

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are MADE nigh by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13.

“Giving thanks unto the Father, Which hath MADE us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints.” Colossians 1:12.

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath MADE us acceptable in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:6.

“For now being MADE free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Romans 6:22.

“And hath raised us up together, and MADE us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:6.