

# EDITORIAL

## "TELESCOPES AND MICROSCOPES."

**On a recent television program** we were shown the death of a star. This was possible because of the very powerful telescopes now available to astronomers. The documentray showed how the star changed from its original colour, became brighter, then exploded, leaving no trace visible by telescope. There was informed commentary for those such as myself, who are ignorant of these matters. Though the program was watched with interest, much of the matter has now been forgotten by me. One remark has been retained: the explosion watched by myself and others took place many centuries ago, and only now has the light from that star become visible through telescopes.

Both the telescope and microscope were opposed by the ecclesiastical authorities when they first appeared. The telescope allowed objects at great distances to be viewed, and often proved that current thought was mistaken. The microscope allowed everyday objects to be viewed in great detail, and again current belief was upset.

It is sometimes said that when studying the inspired word of God we can take a telescopic view, or a microscopic view. We can study a large portion, such as an entire book, or we can examine a verse in great detail. Let us now take our example further. A telescope will allow us to see rare Alpine flowers on a far off mountain. Having located them we can examine them under the microscope. First the telescope, then the microscope. In examining God's word we must *first* take a telescopic view, *then* a microscopic view. Many dear saints put an isolated verse under intense scrutiny, in an endeavour to extract teaching which forms no part of the larger context. Just as a telescope would have saved us making a fruitless journey to a distant hillside, so a knowledge of the contexts of scripture will tell us where to find, and where not to find a subject. ***If we are to make serious progress in our studies, it is vital that we learn what is in each book of God's revelation, before moving on to study the detail.***

# Growing into Him

By Alan Reid

*"Being true, in love we should be making all grow into Him Who is the Head."*

In the present administration of the Grace of God, the secrets of the 'prison' epistles form the related dispensation. Through the evangel God has called into this unique and wonderful faith of ours in the Lord Jesus, those whom He blesses with every spiritual blessing among the celestials in Christ. In accordance with this blessing, He chooses in Christ **before** the disruption of the world, those whom He is designating beforehand for the place of a Son for Himself in Christ Jesus.

The evangel is "The evangel of God—concerning His Son, Who is designated Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" —that is, "of dead ones" and that is His own resurrection from the death on the cross, through the glory of the Father.

Our Saviour, the Lord Jesus, is the "Resurrection and the Life"—the Inaugurator of Life"—a "vivifying spirit,"—the One in Whom **all** shall be vivified, and, although crucified out of weakness, nevertheless He is living by the power of God. This is a beautiful thought, is it not ?

The evangel is God's power for salvation to everyone who is believing. In the evangel, God's righteousness is revealed out of faith, for faith. **To this salvation, the believer can contribute nothing.** It is provided for us all in all the fullness of its perfection and completeness. It is fully comprehensive and embraces all that God has made us to be in Christ. The evangel is absolutely comprehensive. There is nothing left for us to do.

On three occasions in his epistles the beloved apostle Paul terms the evangel "my evangel," thereby stressing to all, and for all time, his complete and inseverable identification with the evangel which is at once—the evangel of the grace of God—the evangel of the happy God—and the evangel of the glory of Christ.

The foundation upon which the evangel immovably and inviolably rests is defined by Paul in 1st Corinthians, chapter 15.—"For I give over to you among the first what I accepted also, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was entombed, and that He has been roused again, the third day according to the scriptures."

How infinitely glorious is the evangel of God ! How secure its foundations ! To be sure, other foundation can no man lay beside that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. On Him and all concerning Him rests the power and wonder of the evangel of God.

**Paul's ministry was progressive.** It moved from glory to glory, following "a path suited to transcendence." That pathway leads us by the way of the three *abiding* graces—faith, expectation and love. It leads us from the era of minority to the mature truth of the perfection epistles—Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. But in that progression, none of the truths basic to the evangel of God ( those made known in the Romans group of epistles) were discarded. Rather are these truths shown to be essential and integral to the later revelations of the Perfection (the Prison) epistles and are therein developed and matured.

In saying this, I am not unmindful of the lapsing and discarding of the spiritual endowments which served the intended but temporary purpose in the earlier era. The transcendent revelations of the Perfection epistles require and rest upon the foundational glories of the preparatory writings.

Adolph Sapphir, the well known Hebrew Christian who lived in the nineteenth century—he was born in Germany, but came to know the truth and power of His Saviour in Perth, Scotland—says in his wonderful book "Christ and the scriptures," "The gospel narrative is like a high table-land but we cannot be spared the ascent from Genesis to Malachi."

Now if you will permit a variation on this theme, might I say that the truth of **Paul's Prison epistles are the high summit of divine revelation** —but we cannot avoid the long journey to them through the apostles earlier writings. But then, who among us would want to avoid that long journey through Romans, the Corinthians, and Galatians—not I for one, for it is a glorious journey and let us make it often. Yes, by all means dwell on the Prison epistles, but let us not neglect Paul's earlier writings.

One of the many blessings which the evangel of God holds for us and brings to us, is the gift of sonship. In Paul's earlier writings, the saints are referred to on several occasions as sons—

"For whoever are being led by God's spirit, these are sons of God"

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

"Now, seeing that you are sons, God delegates the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying "Abba Father" so that you are no longer a slave but a son."

Every believer is a son of God, and the phrase, "a son of God" is the significant and deeply spiritual term used in the Scriptures of those whose heart the Lord has opened —and salvation is primarily a matter of God opening our hearts. To those whose heart God has opened to the saving power of Christ through the evangel heralded by Paul, it speaks eloquently of the freedom from the bondage of minority, for we are no longer slaves, but sons. It implies the

dignity, honour and maturity which the Scriptures so closely associate with sonship.

Two occurrences of the word "sonship" appear within a few verses of each other in the eighth chapter of Romans.

"For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again but you got the spirit of sonship in which we are crying "Abba Father." The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that we are sons of God."

And again in verse 23 "We ourselves also who have the first fruit of the spirit. . . are groaning in ourselves, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body."

***For this high honour of the place of a son, this vital, close and filial relationship with Him, God is designating us beforehand. There is no hint here of any afterthought. Fortuity is completely ruled out. Behind our pre-designation for the place of a son lies the surety of the Purpose of God and the immutability of His counsel.***

In Eph. 4:13, we have the only occurrence of the phrase - "the Son of God" in the Prison epistles "Unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the realisation of 'the son of God,' to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors."

In many versions of the Scriptures, the word "son" is given with a capital 'S' but in an investigation, we find that the Concordant Version and the Diaglot are apparently the only two who use the small 's.'

So the question naturally arises as to whom this phrase applies or refers—is it to our Saviour, God's beloved Son ? Or does it apply to individual believers each of whom is called a son of God ?

An examination by the earnest seeker after truth would lead him or her into the understanding that the phrase is in reference to the individual believer's realisation of his or her sonship.

However, we can take a quick glance backward to the previous verses in Ephesians Chap. 4, for what is written therein has a definite bearing on the subject we are considering. The first five verses record the earnest entreaty of the apostle to the saints, to walk worthily of their calling, and to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of peace. We are not asked to create the unity of the spirit but to keep it, for God has provided for us all of the seven features that combine to form that unity. Then, in verses 9-13, we find that the evangelists, pastors and teachers are provided for the adjusting and up building of the saints, in order that all should attain to the unity of the faith. There again, we are not asked to create the unity of

the faith, but to attain to it. *We are not asked to create the unity of the spirit but to keep it, and we are not asked to create the unity of the faith but to attain to it.*

An attainment to the unity of the one faith is by the assimilation of the truth of Ephesians. By the recognition and appreciation of the glories of these revelations, we realise that adjustment in understanding from knowing in part to the full growth of maturity is absolutely necessary.

The believer has no hand in bringing into being the unity of the spirit or the unity of the faith. These unities exist. By the grace and in the tender mercy of our Lord and Father, we are enjoined to keep the former and attain to the latter. The former we keep with the tie of peace.

But what of the phrase "and of the realisation of the Son of God." The term "son of God" is descriptive of the vital relationship of each believer to God, and that is a precious and integral part of our salvation. As with our salvation, we cannot by self effort merit or attain to the actual place of a son, for sonship is entirely and graciously granted to us by our God and Father..

What is really in view here is the "attaining" to the *realisation* of the son of God—the force of the earlier "we should all attain to"—concerning the unity of the faith—is carried forward under its own impetus, to apply itself to the statement of "the realisation of the son of God."

The "realisation" is first of all the fact of our sonship, then the inherent glory of the sonship for which we were designated beforehand by God, our lot being cast in Christ also: thereafter, what sonship means to us and involves for us.

Realisation is stronger than knowledge. We may know that believers are sons of God, but it is only within our hearts and spirits that the preciousness and significance of this high honour can be realised. Yes, realisation is stronger than knowledge. That which is spiritual can only be realised within the spirit.

To attain to the unity of the faith and to the realisation of the son of God means that the saint is no longer a minor but has reached the full spiritual growth of mature manhood and the measure of the stature of Christ.

It is often a cause for the realisation that the alone the attainment of the sonship, and our complement of the Christ. we can never attain in the understanding—but then, inadequate resources! The points us to the One from

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wonder if we can ever come to scriptures enjoin of us, let actual stature called for by participation as sons in the We would despair at times for strength of our own we are not left to our own apostle Paul as he proceeds Whom flows the inexhaustible

supply for the spiritual growth of the believer. Paul points us to Christ Who is our Head—"growing into Him Who is the Head—Christ"

In these verses we are left in no doubt as to Who is the Head and into Whom we should be making all grow. He is the Head of the body—the ecclesia—and He is also head over all. And it is as Head over all that He is given by God to the ecclesia which is His body and the complement by which all in all is being completed.

This is a Pauline injunction which I feel is not given the attention generally given to his other entreaties. Any consideration we can give to the apostle's appeal will bring its own reward. The skilful use by Paul of the analogy of the human body to figure the body of the ecclesia will be readily apparent to all.

In order that we should be making all grow into Him Who is the Head, there must be a sustained contact with the Head, Christ, from Whom alone comes the required and vital impulse for growth. This contact can be called "holding the Head" and we learn of holding the Head in a negative way. The apostle Paul in the epistle to the Colossians seeks to arrest certain deviations from the pathway of truth, and these deviations he attributes to NOT holding the Head, so we can take the positive from that and equate it with growing into Him Who is the Head.

There can be no growth when the Head is not held, for growth can only ensue from contact with the supply which maintains that growth. The supply in our case is the truth provided through the ministry of the apostle Paul, especially the mature truth of the prison epistles.

Growing into Him Who is the Head is the growth into Christ—Whose delight has always been and ever will be in the achieving of His Father's will—and not only this but also into the glories of Christ as the universal Head. Our growth is into subjection to Him and thus also into subjection to His God and Father, who is our God and Father also.

Growth deriving from our holding the Head and growing into the Head, will lead us into the attaining of a realisation of the son of God, and a maturing of sonship which will accord with the measure of the stature of the complement of Christ.

As believers and as members of His body, we are His complement. In Him the entire complement of the Deity dwells bodily. Yet, wonder of wonders and glory of glories, we as believers, are members of that ecclesia which the complement of Christ and so Paul can say that we are being completed for the entire complement of God.

Having been united through the assimilation of the supply with the Head, Christ, in accord with the operation in measure of each one's part, we will not only have growth into Him, but also in the growth of God.

It is only as we realise our sonship, hold the Head, and grow into the Head, that we do grow in the growth of God.

And as we by grace seek to be holding the Head, I sometimes think that it is not we who are holding the Head, but the Head who is holding us.

# ***"He Remains Faithful."***

(2 Tim.2:11-13)

**Essay No. 11 by E.H. Clayton.**

***"Faithful is the saying: "For if we died together, we shall be living together also—if we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also: if we are disowning, He also will be disowning us: if we are disbelieving, He is remaining faithful—He cannot disown Himself."***

Surely from the words of verse thirteen of second Timothy chapter two, we should **not** conclude that any believer, who is a member of the ecclesia which is His body, **will not reign with Christ**. Is it not rather that this verse is expressing the same truth as does Romans 3:3:

***"For what if some of them disbelieve ? Will not their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God ?***

***(4) May it not be coming to that. . . "***

which verse speaks in reference to matters concerning the effect of the unbelief of Israel upon God ? So also, the unbelief of the nations, producing feigned or sham faith and consequent apostasy, it does not nullify the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

In the present administration of grace, there is only ONE allotment. It is the allotment which God allots to Christ. It is this allotment that we come to enjoy. All must reign with Him in that allotment. *No saint can be in a different allotment* to that of any other saint of His body. In the matter of sound words, the plural, allotments, should not be used in such a connection. Any plural has regard to the number of enjoyers, and this encompasses all believers in the present administration, for all are of His body, the ecclesia.

Our expectation is not a matter which depends upon our attainments, either in respect of knowledge or of service. True it is that wreaths may now be in the making, but they must not diminish, in any sense or degree, that God is our All. All satisfaction from the wreath will consist in the reality of the spiritual import that God has glorified Himself in us. Participation in the evangel is the using of God's righteousness which the evangel bestows: this is its own prize, and will become especially so in the eonian glory which every believer will enjoy, when spots and wrinkles no longer persist in and amongst the saints. Then will He truly have presented to Himself a glorified ecclesia. What is true of our expectation, is true also of our enjoyment of the allotment. Any seeming qualification gives no advantage, and mature understanding is rejoicing that this is so. The mature one finds joy in

thanking his God and Father for the privilege to share spiritual values with all fellow believers. The reality of the joy consists in the realisation that God is glorified in such participating. To think or teach otherwise is subversive of the gracious basis of salvation in this economy. That basis admits of no regulation in respect of that for which we are saved, for the believer is blessed with the glory of the glorious outlook of God's consummation.

The context of the faithful saying is "my evangel" (v. 8). We require to take into consideration from verse eight to verse thirteen. Paul here shows that his evangel is not overcome by apostasy. That is, indeed, even as in the case of Israel's unbelief. God is faithful and will achieve in Israel (Romans 3:3). It is not proper to refer the "disbelieve" of verse thirteen to the matter of Ephesians 1:17.

". . . that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him . . ."

The context in Timothy does not allow that. The faithful saying is related to the fact that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, has been roused. To this fact is related the "disbelieving." The rousing of Jesus Christ contains the fact that the believer is "living together" with Him, for we "died together" with Him. Involved in this is the present enduring and then the future reigning. Jesus Christ remains faithful to all the details to which His Own faith led Him. To disown Him signifies to deny these facts around Him. This is disbelieving and such have no part in Him in the present administration.

The skeleton of 2 Timothy 2:8-13 will confirm these relationships, and will thus contribute to make clear what is the outlook in this epistle to Timothy: in fact, that in both epistles, the apostle is concerned with the continuance of his ministry. The first epistle concludes Paul's itinerant ministry, and is immediate to his apprehension in Jerusalem. The second epistle is the final stage, for his course is finished.

In this second epistle, the ecclesia is designated as a great house. The first epistle showed that as God's house, it should be distinguished by that devoutness which the evangel created in the spirit of those called out by it (see 1 Tim. 3:15). In its fidelity to that character which flows only from the evangel as it is unfeignedly believed, the ecclesia has the ideal distinction of being the pillar and base of the truth of God's present administering and dispensing (see 1 Tim. 3:16).

Insofar as the ecclesia lacks that most serious spiritual regard and expression which corresponds to the concerns of God, indicated in His evangel, heralded through Paul's commission, then the ecclesia is a great house, with utensils for honour and dishonour. (see 2 Tim, 2:19-21). These details signify that God's House is, in large measure, lacking both the

understanding of the secret of devoutness and its display. The term 'ecclesia' makes clear God's intention amidst the unbelief which exists amongst the nations. In large measure, the nations are apostate from God's evangel. So, too, in God's House are feigned believers. This is why apostasy can be, and it is also the warning enshrined in this "faithful saying." God's House is not necessarily the exact equivalent of His body. God's House is the outward aspect, covering all, feigned or unfeigned, but His body figures the spiritual unity of those chosen for His glory, and this is defined in the term 'ecclesia,' or 'out-called.'

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## From the Concordant Hebrew Version

Psalm 103:13-18.

**As a father shows compassion over his sons,  
So Yaweh shows compassion over those fearing Him.  
For He knows our formation,  
Remembering that we are soil.  
As for mortal man, his days are like grass,  
Like a blossom of the field so is he blossoming:  
For the wind, it passes over him, and he is no more,  
And his place shall not recognise him any longer.  
Yet the benignity of Yaweh is from eon unto eon,  
over those fearing Him,  
And His righteousness continues for the sons of sons.**

# In The Beginning

By John Essex

## No. 30.

### "This Secret is Great"

In our last study, we discussed the making of Woman, and compared the relationship between man and woman with that between Christ and the ecclesia which is His body. In these two relationships, we see a striking parallel, for both illustrate the principle of the complement.

In the former, man was put into a stupor; that which needed to form the woman was taken out of him, and the complete woman was subsequently presented to him, and he immediately recognised her, and acknowledged her to be part of himself ("bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"— Gen. 2:23). It was for this reason that she was called "woman" (Heb. 'Isha,' because she was taken out of man, ("Ish"))

But now let us see how the analogy is carried through. Prior to the stupor falling upon Adam, that which was to form the woman lay latent within him, unseen and unknown except to God Who had created humanity, and Who (in the day when they were created) had called their name, Adam. Similarly, prior to the time when the stupor of death fell upon Christ, that which was to form the ecclesia lay (figuratively) concealed within Him. (The ecclesia was chosen in Him before the disruption of the world—Eph. 1:4, and was presented with the gift of grace in Christ Jesus even before the eons began—2 Tim. 1:9) In effect, God was calling their name, "the Christ." But after our Lord's resurrection from the dead, the ecclesia begins a separate existence, beginning with the call of Saul of Tarsus, and continuing even to the present day. At some point in the not too distant future, we believe the ecclesia will be called up together to meet the Lord in the air. Then He will be presenting to Himself a "glorified ecclesia, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that it may be holy and flawless" (Eph. 5:27). Paul proceeds to expound the analogy in the next few verses of Ephesians 5, and, as we quote them, please note the oneness between the partners which the underlined words suggest.

"Thus, the husbands also ought to be loving their own wives **as their own bodies**. Who is loving his own wife is **loving himself**. For no one at any time hates **his own flesh**, but is nurturing and cherishing it, according as Christ also the ecclesia, for we are **members of His body**. For this 'a man shall leave his father and mother and **shall be joined to his wife**, and the two shall be **one flesh**.' THIS SECRET IS GREAT, yet I am saying this *AS TO CHRIST AND AS TO THE ECCLESIA.*"

We must never try to carry an analogy beyond that which it clearly claims to represent, and a great mistake has been made in using this passage to support the mistaken idea that the ecclesia is the 'bride of Christ.' Adam never sought a bride. A bride of necessity comes from without; Adam received his complement from within. The word 'bride' does not occur in this passage, nor is the term 'bride of Christ' to be found anywhere in Scripture. (The 'bride,' and 'wife,' of the Lamb do occur, but always in contexts relating to Israel).

The passage does not even suggest that Christ is the husband of the ecclesia, or that the ecclesia is the wife of Christ. What it is saying is that, *as* husbands should be loving their wives, so Christ loves the ecclesia, "for we are members of His body." *It is the oneness of the relationship that is being stressed*, and the figure of husband and wife is just being used as the closest physical relationship extant to illustrate the even closer spiritual union between Christ and the ecclesia. It is only as husband and wife see themselves as being one that they can truly picture the mystic union between Christ and those who form His body.

Going back to the original illustration of Adam and the woman, later named Eve, we notice that once the complement became a separate entity, then the one from whom it was taken fulfils the purpose of God only through the medium of the complement. Adam fulfilled the positive command of God in Gen. 1:28 to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" through the medium of Eve, though previously he had done things, such as naming the animals, on his own (Gen. 2:19,20).

Similarly Christ, having fulfilled (as God's Complement) the prime purpose for which He came to earth ('it is finished - it is accomplished') (John 19:30), is now seated at God's right hand, waiting until the ecclesia, which is His body, is ready to be presented to Him, after which He will proceed to

carry out, through His complement, the great work for which all creation is waiting while groaning and travailing together until now. (See Eph. 1:23; Rom. 8:18-22).

It is not without significance in these times of abounding lawlessness that the sanctity of marriage is so lightly regarded. It behoves all married believers to honour and guard the sacredness of their union, seeing that the bond that joins them together is a picture of the closeness of the tie that exists between Christ and His ecclesia. The advice of the apostle on this point is quite explicit, "Moreover, you also, individually, each be loving his own wife thus, as himself, yet that the wife may be fearing the husband" (Eph. 5:33).

This is an exhortation that each partner should be trying to put into practice every day, that their union may be giving glory to God in that it is a true picture of the greater union between Christ and His ecclesia.

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# When Did the Church Begin ?

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*"Wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel ?"*

In the first part of this short series we noted that the ministry in the early part of the book of Acts was to the Jews. The powers of the Kingdom were in evidence, with signs and miracles. In the following issue we saw how God began to act in grace, how He called Saul of Tarsus to be a missionary to the nations, and how Paul (as his name became) first preached justification to the nations. In his subsequent ministry it was his custom to go to the Jews first, but now that ministry is fulfilled. God will now deal direct with the nations, for He is conciliated to the world, and no intermediary is necessary. The place of Israel as a priestly nation is suspended. In this concluding article we see Paul rejected by his kinsmen, delivered from their hands by the Roman power and become "Paul The Prisoner of Christ Jesus." *Only when Israel has been set aside can the supreme truths of the prison epistles be declared.*

We now find the apostle Paul journeying to Jerusalem, and

when he comes to Jerusalem he meets James, who says to him, "You are beholding, brother, how many tens of thousands there are among the Jews, who have believed, and all are inherently zealous for the law. Now they were instructed concerning you that you teach all the Jews among the nations apostasy from Moses, telling them not to be circumcising their children, nor to be walking in the customs" (Acts 21:20,21). At James' advice he goes through certain ceremonies, or attempts to go through them; yet, significantly, the Jews were so incensed at him that they would not allow him to do it. God so stirred up the people that Paul's attempt to Judaize failed. And are these Jews the unbelieving bulk of the nation who persecuted the disciples at first? No. Thousands of them are believers, not unpardoned unbelievers, but Pentecostal believers who were in Jerusalem at that time and who are today supposed to be the nucleus of the church. See what they did! When

they saw him in the temple they "threw the entire throng into confusion, and laid hands on him crying, 'Men! Israelites! Help! This is the man who is teaching all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this holy place. Besides, still more, he led Greeks also into the sanctuary, and has contaminated this holy place'" (Acts 21:28).

That Pentecostal believers were concerned in the attempt on Paul's life is confirmed by their subsequent behavior. When Paul speaks to them they do not resent the proclamation of the Nazarene or Paul's reference to Him as Lord. This would have been most unpalatable to the unbelievers, the orthodox Jews who rejected Jesus as the King of Israel. Note that it is only when he mentions his mission to the other nations that their frenzy flames afresh, and he is compelled to cease speaking.

There was a company of people even in the days of our Lord who were a "church". These were present in the church at Pentecost, so that no church began at Pentecost. It was the same church that already existed during the Lord's ministry. That church apostatized from the truth and would not allow the grace of God to reach out to any other nation, so that when the apostle Paul came into their midst they did their best to put him to death.

This recalls to our minds the Lord's parable of the two debtors. There was the ten thousand talent slave who was pardoned. These Jerusalem believers correspond to the ten thousand talent slave. They were far more guilty than the nations because they crucified the Lord, even though it was done in ignorance. The slave who owed his lord so much was freely forgiven. How did he act toward his fellow slaves? He met a fellow slave who owed much less, and instead of forgiving him, what did he do? He seized him by the throat and said "Pay, if you are owing anything!" (Matt. 18:28). These Pentecostal believers forgot what the Lord told them in the so-called Lord's prayer, "If you should not be forgiving men their offenses, neither will your Father be forgiving your offenses" (Matt. 6:15). They believed in the Lord's prayer but it worked against them. Instead of allowing the other nations to receive forgiveness, they wanted to kill the man whom God used to present it to them. ***So, just as it was in the parable, the pardon that had been extended to them was withdrawn. They believed in falling away and they did fall away.*** And if you wish to read the book of Hebrews intelligently, remember the apostasy of the Pentecostal church, the temporary pardon which they received, and the withdrawal of that pardon because of the attitude they

took toward the other nations. This explains the sixth chapter concerning "those who were once enlightened, besides tasting the celestial gratuity, and becoming partakers of holy spirit, and tasting the ideal declaration of God, besides the powerful deeds of the impending eon, and are falling aside." It is impossible to be renewing them again to repentance.

After Paul is repudiated by the believers in Jerusalem God does a very strange thing. He loads him with a chain, and ever after we have Paul the prisoner. After his trial in Judea he is taken to Rome and in Rome we have the end of Israel's apostasy chronicled. It is notable that, when Paul was at Ephesus, which was the religious center of the nations, then it was that the conciliation (in 2 Cor.) was made known, and all barriers between God and man were thrust aside. Later, when Paul went to Rome, the political center of the world, the decrees which the elders had made at Jerusalem were abrogated (Eph.2:15; Col.2:14), and the last sign of Israel's supremacy vanished. While Paul was at Ephesus priestly functions failed. ***At Rome the political primacy which the apostles exercised over the disciples among the nations was lost. This is the end of Israel for the time being.*** Paul, at Rome, writes and expounds the truths that he learned long ago when

he was lying outside the gates of Lystra. Now he can give us more than the conciliation. He can give us the reconciliation. Jew and Greek are both included in one new humanity. From what we have said it is hoped we will be able to gather certain definite conclusions. ***The present administration was gradually introduced as the nation of Israel was set aside. Israel's glory wanes with the waxing of the ministry of the apostle Paul.*** The first intimation we have of God's dealings with the nations in grace is given at Stephen's death. We get a nearer glance in Saul's call on the road to Damascus and we have still further intimations after he has been severed from the rest and preaches justification outside the land of Israel, to the other nations. In Pisidian Antioch there was a company of people who were gathered through the ministry of Paul. Here is where the church began. But, if the church began there let us not imagine for a moment that the present administration began there. We must distinguish between the two. Let us not imagine that the church there had all the truth that was revealed later. As Paul goes to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth he continues to gather together companies of people who are members of the ecclesia which is Christ's body. The church which is His body appears in the book of

Acts, but it is not so spoken of because there it is seen in connection with the kingdom, and nothing is introduced but what is in accord with that kingdom.

***"The present administration however, did not begin until after the book of Acts is closed and Paul is a prisoner in Rome. In the present administration much that has been done in Paul's ministries is modified and changed."***

Every truth that was proclaimed in his previous ministries received added lustre because of the fact that at this point even the tokens of Israel's political place vanished and her ascendancy over the believers among the nations has no longer any force. At this point we are introduced to heaven,<sup>1</sup> and all the blessings which the apostle Paul administers are celestial. Consequently, they are not in conflict with the blessings of the nation of Israel. Here we have "the

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<sup>1</sup>Paul is the only writer in Scripture to mention life in the celestials, and this is in keeping with his ministry to the nations. The monopoly of blessing on earth was to Abraham's seed—Israel. John 14:2 refers to the temple in Jerusalem. See all the other occurrences of "My Father's house."

body" but there is a distinction between this body and that which existed before. In the body which existed before, as described in Romans and Corinthians, the members had various ranks and some were subordinate to others, as the feet to the head. But now it is a joint-body and all of the members are of equal rank. Now the believers among the nations, in spirit, are also joint enjoyers of a celestial allotment, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through Paul's evangel (Eph.3:6). The following outline summarizes the "acts" of apostate Israel and the divine "counteracts" which they provoked.

In closing we might suggest an illustration. When did the United States begin? Some might go back to the time when dissenters in England crossed over to Holland. Some might go back to their arrival at Plymouth Rock, where they had freedom to worship according to their own consciences, but were still subject to the king of England. That is something as it was with the early church. Though not dependent upon Israel for their worship they were subject to the decrees issued from Jerusalem. But later on when the colonies threw off the yoke of allegiance in the revolution, then it was in a very real sense that the United States began. The present

administration did not commence until the close of Acts—but long before this the truth was being taught and the people prepared. From Stephen's death till Paul's imprisonment there is this transition period that we have hastily reviewed, which we sometimes designate the interregnum.

The book of Acts is the answer, first of all, to our Lord's prayer upon the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they are not aware what they are doing!" It records their response to the proclamation of pardon, and chronicles their apostasy and their gradual rejection. But it also records God's answer to their apostasy, so that He, instead of being balked in His purpose to bless the other nations, makes their apostasy the basis of a much greater, a much grander grace than the nations would have experienced if Israel had not apostatized. There is no clear statement of the grace shown to us in the book of Acts, yet all the symptoms of this grace will be found and each symptom follows a crisis in the apostasy of Israel. So, while we read the Acts let us remember that God is dealing with the nation of Israel, and as He deals with them and bears with their apostasy He is making room for that grand display of grace which we enjoy and which we will find fully expounded in Paul's epistles, some of which were written during this

period. But the perfect expression of the truth for us was not penned until he was a prisoner at Rome after the action of this book had ceased.

Before we can appreciate the transcendent grandeur of God's grace as revealed for us in Paul's prison epistles we must close the book of Acts.

Paul was not present at Pentecost. He does not appear until its powers began to fail and fade away. *The present grace is not a continuation or renewal of Pentecostal power*, but depends on the failure of all that it promised. Paul would never have appeared, he never could have fulfilled his mission if the twelve had not been driven out of Jerusalem and the kingdom proclamation become a complete collapse. Let us then no longer look to Pentecost, or even Paul's ministry in Acts, for present truth, but let us turn to his epistles, especially those written at its close, for light for today.

**Recommended for further study:**

**"The Circle of the Twelve"** by J. H. Essex. Available free from "Grace and Truth."

**"The Gospel of Our Salvation"** by Adlai Loudy, published by The Concordant Publishing concern.

# Origen

(C 185-254 A.D.)

**By David Osgood**

**Oregenes Adamantius**, to give this man his full Latin name, is probably the most important theologian and scholar of the early Greek church.

He was born in Egypt's capital and chief seaport, Alexandria, a city founded by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. This city was a major centre of Hellenic (Greek) scholarship and science. The Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures, the "Septuagint," had been translated here by seventy scholars in the third century before Christ, so probably there was a large Jewish community. This city was also to give its name to an important Greek text of the New Testament—the Codex Alexandrinus.

Origen's greatest accomplishment is the work known as the Hexapla, a synopsis of six scroll versions of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures). Much of his life was spent scrutinising the Greek texts of the Hebrew Scriptures, and on the exposition of the entire Bible. In Origen's Hexapla the Hebrew and a Greek transliteration were used, and use was made of the authoritative Septuagint already referred to. His work on the Psalms was greatly influenced by a translation found by him in a jar in the Jordan valley.

It is worth noting the background to Origen's studies and ministry. Since the days of the apostles, the evangel had spread in the Greek language and later in Latin. Few people could read, and what scriptures were available were in Greek. Other than the Septuagint, there was no access for even educated people to read the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament.) It is likely that there was very little knowledge of the history of the chosen people and of God's dealings with them. This makes the work of Origen to be of particular importance. He was one of the first to realize the importance of acquiring and attesting the texts of the early scriptures.

What Paul had suffered so much in opposing only 200 years earlier had by now become established teaching in the early church. That church had failed to discriminate between the gospel of the Kingdom, heralded by the Lord Jesus, and the gospel of grace preached by Paul—the apostle to the nations. Though Israel's expectation had lapsed, the gospel taught by the early church differed little from the heralding of the twelve. Christ our Saviour had become Christ our Example and Teacher. It is a sad fact that today, just as in the time of the Apostle Paul, Christianity has lost its way in knowing what is the evangel, and indeed what are the guidelines for be-

lievers today. Paul showed the Galatians that the law with its ordinances and precepts was a shadow, a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, Who is the end, the completion of all law keeping. How blind the Jews were to this! They stumbled on the stumbling block —Christ Jesus, as is shown in Romans 9 through 11. Yet they have fallen so that grace may come to us—Gentiles, who, prior to Paul's evangel of grace, were without hope and occupied to a secondary place under the Jewish law. Because Gentiles were proselytes they were never allowed to enter the temple.

The majority of Christian churches today are preaching, not what is for Gentiles, *nor* what is for Jews, but a mixture of the law of Moses and the terrestrial hope of Israel following the ministry of the Lord Jesus. We who are Gentiles can only claim Justification through faith in, and of, Christ. This is a total free gift of grace, bestowed on us through Christ's finished work, and not the product of any effort on our part.

If we really understood the evangel for us, Friday, Saturday, or Sunday sabbath-keeping are all things of no material benefit to us. Paul leads us to such a high and glorious understanding that every day is holy to us, and our God lives and motivates and directs our thoughts and actions (Acts 5).

This digression has a deliberate intention. The overwhelming majority of early scholars all readily agree that Origen was an exceptional person, and is a link between the teaching of the early apostles, and the systematic attempts by false teachers and apostates to subvert and deny the freedom of the grace that is ours in Christ. To this end Origen can be regarded as the greatest teacher of the early church after the apostles.

Around 229-230 he went to Greece to dispute with a follower of Valentinus, Candidus. The Valentinian teaching was that salvation and 'damnation' are both predestinate, independent of volition and therefore Satan, the Adversary, is beyond repentance. Origen replied that if Satan fell by will, even he can be forgiven! Demetrius, Bishop of Alexandria, was appalled at this assertion, and instigated a synochical condemnation of Origen. It was never accepted in Greece or Palestine, but it did cause Origen to move to Ceasarea, where he had many pupils.

Origen's teaching saw people progressing upon a scale of spiritual understanding. Christianity was a ladder of divine ascent, and the beginner must learn to mount it with all other believers in a never ceasing advance.

***Everything in Origen's theology ultimately turns upon the goodness of God and the freedom of the creature. His teaching was that, in overflowing love, God created rational and spiritual beings through the Logos (Word).***

There were many accusations against Origen. His opponents stated that his teaching made the Son inferior to the Father, (a similar teaching to Arianism, a fourth century heresy that denied that the Father and the Son were of the same 'substance,' therefore spiritualizing away the Resurrection of the body.)

It is clear that the thinking of Origen became part of the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity, followed by the Catholic Church. Yet it is equally clear that this was not Origen's understanding of the Father and Son relationship.

The Vatican at Rome holds many of the fragments of Origen's work, and indeed he is regarded as one of their early fathers, but in reality there is far less common ground than was supposed.

Origen continued his work and travels and 235 saw him in Cappadocia, modern Turkey, defending a local bishop accused of denying the pre-existence of the divine word and on the actuality of the substance of the soul, one of the many spurious notions about which the early church, with little knowledge of scripture, was often in conflict. .

Under the reign of Emperor Decius, c 250 AD Origen was imprisoned and tortured. He survived but died several years later as a result of his sufferings. His tomb was given a place of honour at Tyre, and this can be attested from references to it by historians during the crusades and the "Holy Wars," of Richard 1st of England in Palestine.

It is very clear that even Origen had a limited grasp of Christianity, and of the radical departure from Judaism brought by Paul's ministry.

Whatever Origen's beliefs were, he played an important part in the translation from Hebrew to Greek and the preservation of the Scriptures that we have and treasure today. Could we bear to think of a world without access to the word of God ? Truly God uses all manner and types of people in His furtherance of His plan for humanity. We may be thankful that regardless of the limitation of Origen's understanding, he was instrumental in the world being that much better for his early work and endeavours to convey Christianity to all of us poor Gentiles, who, until Paul came forth with God's evangel, were without hope of anything other than servitude to His firstborn, Israel. What a marvellous and intriguing way God has of working all out to His will and intention !!

| <b>ISRAEL'S ACTS</b><br>(Apostate Israel)  | <b>GOD'S COUNTER ACTS</b><br>(of favour to the nations)  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Murder of Stephen</li> <li>■ Judea and Samaria</li> <li>■ Limits of the land</li> <li>■ Proselytes: Eunuch: descendent of Ham; Cornelius: descendent of Japheth</li> <li>■ Lystra —stoning of Paul</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: right;">—Saul is at his stoning</p> <p>—Saul called on the road to Damascus</p> <p>—Saul separated at Pisidian Antioch</p> <p>—Paul preaches justification to those of the nations</p> <p>—Paul receives revelations (2 Cor. 12)</p> <p>—Paul sent to new fields: Philippi; Thessalonica; Corinth.</p> |
| <p><b>OUTREACH</b></p> <p>The apostles and elders make <b>decrees</b> for those of the nations, thus asserting Israel's precedence over them.</p>  | <p><b>OUTREACH</b></p> <p>Greater <b>grace</b> is dispensed at greater distances from Jerusalem.</p>   |

The Acts

"As these things were fulfilled **Paul pondered in spirit . . .**" (Acts 19:21)

— **The Conciliation is declared !** (Romans 15:19-22) Paul was at the the world's religious centre, Ephesus.

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| <p><b>JERUSALEM</b> Saints try to kill Paul.</p> <p><b>WRITINGS:</b></p> <p>The epistle to the <b>HEBREWS:</b></p> <p>"How shall we be escaping when negelcting a salvation of such proportions ?"</p> <p><b>ISRAEL FORSAKEN !</b></p> | <p><b>PAUL</b> Sent to the political centre (Rome)</p> <p><b>WRITINGS:</b></p> <p>Paul's <b>PRISON EPISTLES</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Transcendent truth revealed !</b><br/> <b>Grace replaces law !</b><br/> <b>Decrees against nations nullified !</b><br/> <b>Reconciliation !</b></p> |
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