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Editorial

“ Among The Mature “

In past generations life was more simple and predictable for students and young people learning their craft. In school and college the dictionary could always be relied upon to supply the meaning or a brief summary of the meaning of a word. If someone did not have a dictionary one might be found at home, where father's, or even grandfather's school dictionary still served its purpose. The age of these books mattered little, for the lists and definitions had scarcely changed over the years.

Now, with the explosion of learning in science and technology there are many new words to learn. Not only so, there are many terms, often coined by the media, to describe new products, ideas and activities where none previously existed. The increasing use of these terms means that they soon appear in the latest revisions of dictionaries.

One such term was heard recently on a broadcast about culture: it was 'kidaults' and was used to describe an attitude of behaviour. Whether it will eventually be included in The Shorter Oxford Dictionary or any other will depend on its general acceptance and use. 'Kidaults' is a noun to name adults who exhibit juvenile behaviour and attitudes.

Material prosperity has brought about a great change in adult behaviour. Fifty years ago young people leaving school had an immediate purpose in life. They had to find work and secure their future income and well-being. Nowadays there are no such pressures: indeed, in many prosperous countries there is little incentive to forge a

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career, for government benefits can sustain a family in relative comfort, even though not one member works.

The increase of leisure time has resulted in a great increase in leisure pursuits, mainly sport and entertainment. The largest crowds are often found at spectator sports where there is little effort required to follow the game. It seems humanity prefers the easy option. Many broadcasts on radio and television appeal to the lowest common denominator in culture and intelligence and are often an affront even to those who have no interest in spiritual matters. One is often surprised at what is acceptable in a 'respectable' publication.

But though the medium is new, the message is old, for what we are considering is the atmosphere of the age. The world has little time for the word of the cross. It is foolishness to them, just as it was in the days of Paul. The wisdom of the world thought—and still thinks—that the word of the cross is foolishness.

Paul faces this in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter one. There he says:

} We are heralding Christ crucified, to Jews, indeed, a snare, yet to the nations stupidity. Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, for the stupidity of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ~

The atmosphere of this age will continue until God has completed the number of the ecclesia, those chosen in Christ before the disruption of the world. They comprise the church which is His body, and are called, not according to their acts, but according to His own purpose, as Paul tells us in his second letter to Timothy, chapter one.

Meanwhile the god of this eon blinds the apprehensions of the unbelieving. We should not be surprised at the term "kidaults," nor at the immaturity of much of the adult population. Many of the wise men of this world are amongst their number. With the all their learning, and all the wisdom of this eon, they consider our words as foolishness.

But Paul continues—

} Yet wisdom are we speaking, among the mature—

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—yet a wisdom not of this eon, neither of the chief men of this eon who are being discarded, but we are speaking God’s wisdom in a secret which has been concealed, which not one of the chief men of this eon knows, for if they know they would not crucify the Lord of glory. ~

God is Working

By John H. Essex

We are all familiar with the words of Paul in Romans 8:28, "Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose that, whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand also to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. Now whom he designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom he justifies, these He glorifies also. What, then, shall we say to these things? If GOD is for us, who is against us?"

Notice how, in these verses, all the emphasis is upon God. "Now we are aware that God is working . . ." The Authorised Version omits the word "God," but it most assuredly is in the Greek, and the Concordant Version therefore includes it. Things do not work together by chance to achieve God's purpose; there is no element of luck in the matter. No, it is God Himself Who is working all together for the good of those who are loving Him. It is God Who foreknew. It is God Who designates beforehand those who are to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is God Who calls, and Who justifies and Who glorifies. Truly, all is of God! There is no room here for self-calling or self-justification or self-glorification.

For what say have we had in our calling? None whatever. Who has brought us into a knowledge of the truth of the scriptures? It is God, not us. Who is operating all according to the counsel of His will? God, and God alone!

God Is Working

What, then, shall we declare to these things ?

That God, having chosen us, will ever let us go?
Shall we say this ?

Or that God, having chosen us, will allow anything to come between Him and us –to separate us from His love in Christ Jesus, our Lord ?

The answer to both these questions is an emphatic, “No.”

Nothing in this whole universe can step between us and our ultimate glorification, not even our own stupidity. For there are saints who say really stupid things, like “I really don’t see what use I can be to God,” or, “I am too ignorant, or too unworthy, or too fond of other things, to be one of His chosen ones.” The answer to such doubts lies in the fact that it is chiefly those of no account (humanly speaking) who are the very ones whom God has chosen for His ecclesia, so that glory may be His (1 Cor.1:26-31).

Not one of us can boast in himself – in his own achievements. If we wish to boast at all, let it be in the Lord, “for His achievement are we, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them” (Eph. 2:10). Let us remember that “it is God Who is operating in us to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight” (Phil.2:13).

Let us have confidence that the God “Who undertakes a good work among us, will be performing it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil:1:6). Like Paul, let us “rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of all mankind, **especially of believers**” (1Tim.4:9).

“May the God of expectation be filling you with all joy and peace in believing” (Rom.15:13)

Letters

From our "In" and "Out" Trays.

(Names have been omitted to preserve confidentiality,
and the text has been changed very slightly.)

"I am new to the truth of the salvation of all mankind. Do you have any tapes I can have for free that will help me in my studies ? What happens to the believer and unbeliever after death ?" L. By e-mail

Dear Sister in the Lord,

Thank you for your e-mail. We are sorry for the delay in replying, for which there are many reasons. We also have found over the past few years that e-mail is far from reliable, and think that probably as many as 20+% of e-mails do not get through.

By separate mail we have sent you more of our publications, including 2 "Outreach" editions, designed to guide the reader to an understanding of God's purpose. Many dear saints, on discovering this wonderful truth initially tell a few friends, and get a lukewarm or even hostile response. They then tend to mark time, still believing in the outcome of infinite grace, but making little progress in the knowledge of God's ways.

All of us come to an understanding of reconciliation (this is the proper use of the word) in different ways. Some, such as a Jewish cabalan in 14th century Spain, came to reason it out from their knowledge of God's wisdom, love and righteousness. As God was the Creator, and was all wise and all powerful, then He must surely have planned the end as well as the beginning, and must have planned the salvation of all His creatures. He could not otherwise be just.

Others, such as Sir Isaac Newton, became aware that when reading orthodox versions of the Bible, we were prisoners of the bias and opinions of the translators, and that God's wisdom had been obscured because the translators just could not believe it. Some, such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, the poet, had a high opinion of the love and righteousness of God, and while not fully understanding how, saw that God's love and glory required nothing less than the salvation of all.

In our fellowship we initially came to an understanding of ultimate reconciliation in the early years of the last century, when making a translation of the Bible with the unique feature of a consistent vocabulary. This version is known as the Concordant Version, and has been in print since 1926. When work was begun, the editor, A.E. Knoch, believed in eternal punishment, but as study progressed he came to see that it was entirely absent from the original scriptures. From there we have, over the past century, made considerable progress in understanding of God's ways, coming to see not only that His love required the salvation of all, but His right-

eousness also required it, as do His wisdom and His power.

In His ways with humanity, God has saved: some Jews, followed (now) by some Gentiles. In the next eon He will save all Jews, followed (in the succeeding eon) by all Gentiles, and ultimately the entire creation, including all spirit beings, until the point when He becomes All in all. (Eon is the Greek word *aiōn*, wrongly translated as 'eternity,' as well as several other words.)

As we read God's word, particularly in the Concordant Version, we become aware of the purpose of God. Only Paul reveals this, and only Paul explains what God is doing. Please note Rom. 8:28: "Called according to the purpose that —" Note in each of the steps mentioned it is God Who is acting, not us. Then consider Romans 9:11 — "That the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice" Note 2 Timothy 1:9 "God . . . saves us and calls us with an holy calling, not in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own purpose, and the grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian."

No matter how important, or how unimportant a matter may be said to be, it cannot be separated from the purpose of God. We were predestined according to His purpose. We are called according to His purpose. We are justified according to His purpose, and most assuredly will be glorified according to His purpose. "All is of God, Who conciliates to Himself." (2 Cor. 5:19).

Several tapes are enclosed with the literature, and these will help you to understand more of God's ways. No one ever has plumbed the depths of God's revelation, and we give daily attention to His word in order to grow

in understanding. May I suggest that you consider getting a Concordant Version. This version has a consistent vocabulary, and many things that were previously obscure will become clear. You will probably not like it the first few times you read it, but once the initial strangeness is over it will become a delight and you will rejoice in the statements of God's ways of love.

"Give thanks to the Father Who makes you competent for a part of the allotment of the saints in light."
(Col. 1:12)

"And you, being once estranged, and enemies in comprehension by wicked acts, yet now He reconciles." (Col. 1:21).

"He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world" (Eph. 1:4).

(We are told this so we will know that there was no reason for the choice, other than God's own counsels)

"God will have an administration of the *complement of the eras*, to head up all in the Christ." (Eph. 1:10)

"And having made peace through the blood of His cross, to reconcile all to Himself." (Col. 1:20)

These statements are beyond the ability of any human to imagine. They demand the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Yours in His grace,

Andrew Maclarty.

"Wisdom are we speaking among the mature"

Encl. No.s 46,47,48,49,50,51. Tapes and magazines to follow

"WHATEVER WAS WRITTEN BEFORE"

By

Granville Walker,

For one whose claim was "Not being myself under law" (1 Cor. 9:20), Paul, the apostle to the nations, quoted from Israel's law and the rest of their scriptures quite freely, adapting them radically to reveal new truths, doing so with conviction and authority.

He asked the Corinthians - "Is the law not also saying these things? For in the law of Moses it is written: 'You shall not muzzle the threshing ox.' Not for oxen is the care of God. Or is He undoubtedly saying it because of us? Because of us!" (1 Cor. 9:9,10).

Beginning the next chapter, Paul gives a brief resume of the events following Israel's exodus from captivity in Egypt -- and how that in the majority of them God does not delight, since they were strewn along the wilderness. And we wonder at Paul's relating all this to gentiles -- until he explains: "Now all this befalls them typically -- yet it was written for our admonition!" (1 Cor. 10:1-11). Though Paul was meaning himself and his converts, actually —yet undoubtedly—it applies equally to whoever God has called or is still calling out during the administration of His grace.

A most notable instance of this treatment of scripture is seen in (Romans. 4:2,3). "For if Abraham was justified by acts -- he has something to boast in -- but not towards God. For what is the scripture saying? Now 'Abraham believes God, and it is reckoned to him for righteousness!'" Paul makes the point that a worker's wage is not given as favour, but has been earned and is his due. Whereas the one who is not doing works -- yet is believing on Him who is justifying the irreverent, that one's faith, He is reckoning for righteousness. Then he refers (still in Romans) to another place in scripture (Psalm 32) and continues: "Even as David also is telling

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of the happiness of the man to whom God is reckoning righteousness apart from acts." (Rom. 4:2-6).

AN important definition, expressed in simple words...

Many readers skim through the following passages, to their loss, so please note:—

“ The Circumcision, in Paul's letters were simply those Jews who, moved to repentance, believed the Lord Jesus was indeed, their Messiah, and would soon return as their long-awaited King.

The Uncircumcision are those from every land, called by God to believe a better evangel for His greater glory. And to herald this evangel He severs Saul, His enemy, from unbelieving Israel. ”

“This happiness then, of David's” Paul is saying -- "Is it for the Circumcision -- or for the Uncircumcision, also? For we are saying, 'To Abraham, faith is reckoned for righteousness'. How then, is it reckoned? Being in circumcision —or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision!" (Rom. 4:9,10). For at that time, Abraham had not received the sign of circumcision. Neither did Abraham receive the promise through law. For the law came 400 years later — through Moses!

"For not through law, is the promise to Abraham, or to his Seed, for him to be enjoyer of the allotment of the world -- but through faith's righteousness. For if those of law are enjoyers of the allotment, faith has been made void, and the promise has been

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nullified, for the law is producing indignation. Now, where no law is, neither is there transgression. Therefore it is of faith that it may accord with grace." (Rom. 4:13-16).

The inspired Paul then declared: "now it was not written because of him only, that it is reckoned to him -- but because of us also, to whom it is about to be reckoned, who are believing on Him Who rouses Jesus, our Lord, from among the dead — Who was given up because of our offences and was roused because of our justifying." (Rom. 4:23-25).

Dividing the scriptures into chapter and verse was inspired thinking, but was not the work of enlightened saints. Someone thought the subject closed there — end of a chapter! But chapter 5, verses 1 and 2, is surely the obvious conclusion. "Being, then, justified by faith, we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we have the access also, by faith, into this grace in which we stand, and we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God!"

Paul had already said of the Jews, "*They were entrusted with the oracles of God*" (Rom. 3:2). And Paul's use of these oracles for the other nations, he justifies when he tells us that: "All scripture is inspired by God — and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act" (2 Tim. 3:16) —but not acts of which we may be boasting —it is "God Who is operating in you to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight" (Phil. 2:13). "Written before" — as he provides our final scripture on this subject. "For whatever was written before was written for this teaching of ours, that through the endurance and the consolation of the scriptures we may have expectation." (Rom. 15:4).

---ooOOOooo---

“ Paul’s epistle to the Philippians is the full and final treatise on the conduct of the saint. There we are told that God is operating in us, to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight ” (2:13). E.H.C

Approach to Romans

A serial study by Bernard Davies

Part 10 Continuing in Chapter 2

Having shown the proper use of the critical faculty, Paul now closes up two other ways by means of which men would absolve themselves from judgment. It may be that they are reckoning to escape it. The emphatic use of "you", in verse 3, indicates that these are reckoning on some personal standing to absolve them. Or, it may be that they are despising the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience. God does not hasten into judgment even though the affairs of men deserve it. He continues to maintain nature with its benefits for mankind. He forbears to take action against them for the insults they heap upon Him; He is, indeed, patient and kind with them. All this should lead them to repent of their conduct toward Him, and yet . . . Yes, men may think that they will escape, or they may despise His actions, but the fact of the case is that they are hoarding indignation for themselves in the day of indignation and revelation of the just judgment of God.

—*"Who will be paying each one in accord with his acts"* sets before us the controlling principle of the judgment. Men will stand before God as individuals of the race. The trappings of humanity, which men are so busy collecting, will be of no avail here, for they will be stripped away and men will take their place simply as creatures of the Creator. Not what men have collected, nor what they are in religion, wealth or power, but what they are in relation to God, as evidenced by their acts, will be the basis of judgment.

This passage shows the fundamental difference between the judgment of God and the judgment of men.

“God’s judgment is not merely punitive — it is designed to set right that which is wrong.”

It is an educational medium by means of which men

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are taught the high standard and inflexibility of God's righteousness in contrast with their own spasmodic efforts. And it is designed to fit men for their ultimate place in God's purpose. Hence it is that the whole of a man's life is reviewed, the good and the bad, and he will receive pay which accords with it. This is not grace, but strict justice in which each one will be paid that which his life has earned.

A difficulty that remains is one of approach to the judgment. How often do we hear it said "If I do that which is right" or "If I live a good life God will approve". Yet when one seeks to go a little deeper and to understand the terms "right" and "good life" one finds them to be too vague to be of much value in the case before us. In fact, the position really means that the speaker would be the one judged as well as the judge. Such an attitude may bring an immediate comfort to anyone so thinking, but it is illusory, for God will judge and His use of terms is the one that will prevail, and they are given in verses 7-9

There we are told how acts will be valued for payment. Three terms are given, and we should note them most carefully, good acts, the truth and evil, for conformity to these decides the quality of pay. Few terms have been more bandied about than these, and they have been the happy hunting ground of all who

delight in argument. Let us, therefore, remind ourselves of verses 1:18-21, for these verses are the basis of the charge laid against men. They set forward the truth which will face men in the judgment. And their endurance in good acts, or their effecting evil, will be decided by the way in which they have responded to this truth.

Any who may have lived a life which truly thanks and glorifies God as God, such would be the ones covered by "*enduring in good acts*", they will get the pay of eonian life. But those whose lives have not been fully governed by the truth which is apparent among them and manifested to them by God, those who have been stubborn towards it, these are the ones effecting evil, and for them the payment will be indignation and fury, affliction and distress.

This is an extremely grave situation, and no one should dismiss it without deep and careful consideration.

} **The historical manifestation of God's indignation, and the future day of God's just judgment, are the background and reason for the Evangel of God and its salvation. ~**

All who have not already done so should carefully read these scriptures 1:18-2:16;

Approach to Romans

should become well acquainted with what they say, and then see how their own life, as they themselves know it, will fare in the judgment. This is a matter which concerns all and calls for complete honesty, for anything else is merely self-deception and hoarding of indignation. If anyone has lived a life which will bear this investigation and entitle him to eonian life, then God, the Just Judge, will pay it to him, and he will not need the evangel of God. But for those whose life does not reach this high standard, the position is vastly different, for they are faced with the active expression of God's indignation, and their great need is for the evangel which is God's power for salvation.

Both of the Jew first and of the Greek shows how all embracing is the judgment. We have already seen that the judgment proceeds on an individual basis: each one will stand before God to answer for himself. The scope is now dealt with, and that takes in the whole of mankind. The distinction between Jew and Greek was made by God, for He it was Who chose the Jews; they were and are "His people". Yet even so favoured a position does not absolve them from the judgment, rather does it increase their accountability. For the payment, whether it be eonian life or indignation, is to the Jew first. The Jews are included in the judgment because *there is*

no partiality with God. True, God, had favoured them, for they possessed His law, but that does not exempt them. The law is not a shield against judgment, but a channel through which it operates. They should have realised that having God's will written for them increased their accountability to Him. They also had the revelation of God in creation to guide them, as had the nations; this further privilege of having His written law increases the strength of the witness against them. The case remains—in spite of favours—for the Jew as well as for the nations. God calls them to account for their acts, for "*not the listeners to law are just with God, but the doers of law shall be justified.*"

What then is the position of the nations? Are they, seeing they have not the advantage of the written law, entitled to partiality? By no means, for they are, by creation, moral beings.

On occasions the conduct of men reaches a high standard. These occasions, rare though they are, are sufficient to demonstrate the moral impetus that is, the nature which was given to them in creation —the action of the law written in their hearts. The inanimate creation has been stamped with, and witnesses to, the truth of God, for He made it also. Both the written law and mankind have their origin in the same Creator, and

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both are of Him. The written law sets out in code form the kind of life God expects men to live. And nature, in the human sphere, is the impulse imparted by the Creator, and is in harmony with the written law.

Nature when joined with conscience is a strong witness for the moral standard. And this united witness, the awareness of right and wrong, is behind the reckonings by which men are able to judge actions. Their reckonings between one another are sufficiently keen to enable accusing or defending, and they prove that men, without the written law, have in themselves all that is needed to follow the course of the judgment session, and to recognise the justice of the sentence when pronounced.

Thus is mankind, both Jews and Greeks, ushered into the day when God will be judging, for neither is granted partially by God. Then God will be judging, not only those things of

which men are proud, but those things which are hidden. Then will nature and conscience blaze forth in the fullness of their strength, for they will be unhindered by the repression which men put upon them now, and they will lead men to approve the verdict.

**“ Judgment
accords with
Paul’s evangel,
but it is not the
evangel. ”**

It forms the background to, and reason for, the evangel which heralds that God is conciliated to all by the death of His Son. Yet, judgment awaits all men, and an adverse decision, that of condemnation, is the danger from which men need to be saved. The removal of that danger can only be effected by God’s power for salvation, which is the Evangel of God.

**“ The law was given to
Israel, not to make them
righteous, but to show them
they were *not* righteous. ”**

NEWSDESK

America

Meetings for the coming months have been arranged as follows.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Call</i>	<i>Phone</i>
Sept. 2 nd	Grand Rapids MI	Orville Hunt	616-457-2213
Oct. 6-8 th	Baldwin MI	Dean Hough	810-798-8131
Nov. 2 nd	Grand Rapids	Orville Hunt	616-457-2213

England

Blackheath, Birmingham. Meetings to be arranged. Call Roy Reece as below.

Annual Concordant Conference at Bawtry Hall, Bawtry, Retford, Notts. Dates from Friday 8th till Sunday 10th September. Please call Eric Spink to make your reservation. 01708 449 461.

Fellowship meetings: For details of meetings and fellowship in:—

- **Birmingham:** Blackheath call Roy Reece 01384-279 781
- **Birmingham:** Solihull call John Babilus 012-684-2781
- **Brighton:** call Christopher Rudd 01273 695 217
- **Gloucester:** Call David Osgood 01452 421 224
- **Glasgow.** East Kilbride Call John Ferguson 01355 224 208
- **London** (Hornchurch) call Eric Spink 01708 449 461

The Teaching of Jesus

Sometimes, amid the clamour and confusion amongst Christian sects, there emerges the cry “Back to the teachings of Jesus !” When there is disagreement among believers as to what is the teaching of the apostles —particularly when what is thought to be the apostles’ teaching seems to contradict what is taught by many denominations —then we should go back to the source of all truth, the words of Jesus, for He above all others can be believed. There we will find truth.

What then was the message preached by the Lord Jesus ?

There is often an assumption that the teaching of Jesus was new to Israel—a new message that supplied what was lacking in the discipline of the law—and that the new birth supplied the life that was impossible to the law. But though many teachings were given during the ministry of Jesus to Israel, these are almost entirely corrective. They deal with Israel’s failure to understand and obey the law of Moses, both individually, and as it applied to their tenure in the land of promise.

In Matt. 18:16 we read: “One coming to Him said, ‘Teacher, what good shall I be doing that I should be having life eonian?’” Note how Jesus directs the questioner back to the law. Had the teaching of the law been understood there would have been no need to ask that question, for the law promised length of days to those who observed its precepts. So long as law was observed, so long would life be preserved. But it was a most precarious position, for the slightest slip could not be allowed, and sincere persons in Israel recognised that the law could not bring them to life. To Israel and to humanity as a whole comes the condemnation —“There is none righteous, not even one.”

What then about the new birth which forms such a substantial part of evangelical preaching ? Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel, and did not understand the new birth. But that does not make it a new teaching. Indeed it is found in the prophecy of Isaiah—spoken of the rebirth of the whole nation. Most English versions obscure that Jesus applied the teaching in the plural **Ye** must be born again. It referred to

the rebirth of the whole nation. Why then did Nicodemus not understand ?

THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH 6: JEHOVAH REJECTS ISRAEL !

If we are to understand subsequent history, we should look at Isaiah 6. The first eight verses of this chapter are well known, and often read in services, but the following verses are seldom read, and less understood. We will now quote verses nine to eleven:

9 “And He said ‘Go and say to this people: “Hear and hear, but do not understand: See and see, but do not perceive.”

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy: and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn about and be healed.”

11 Then I said, “How long, O Lord ?” And He said, “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate.”

In the purpose of God, the delinquencies of Israel had brought about their rejection. Was Israel cast off forever ? What about God's promises to the fathers, would they now be forever unfulfilled ? Isaiah probes —“How long, O Lord?” —and receives the assurance, but not the time —“Until . . .” This passage in Isaiah 6 is the first intimation of what are known as the Divine Mysteries or Secrets. Here we are told that God would make their eyes dim and their ears heavy and give them uncomprehending hearts, so that they **would not understand** His message to them !

Jesus was born at a time when the nation was in subjection to Rome, and this again indicates God's displeasure with Israel. They were in subjection because of their forsaking of God's law. Various sects, most notably the Pharisees, who understood these portents, sought to turn the people back to obedience to God's law. They failed to see that the law was weak through the flesh. Ideal conditions in the glorious kingdom under David and Solomon, had failed to produce a righteous people, yet they sought the restoration of that kingdom to bring peace and prosperity, having dimly grasped God's promise to seat Another on the throne of David. The title Christ (Heb. Messiah) means Anointed.

ISRAEL HOPED FOR A RESTORED KINDOM.

The situation in Israel was thus a mixture of legalism, anxiety, indifference and apostasy, and it was in such times that the Lord Jesus

began His ministry. We find the kernel of His preaching in Matt. 4:17 — “Repent ! For the near is the kingdom of the heavens!” The King was in waiting: and all that was required was for the nation to repent. Then would the kingdom be **restored** (Acts 1:6).

But such was not God’s intention at that time. In Matthew 13, in answer to the question of the disciples, Jesus says that He spoke to Israel in parables so they would not understand and would not believe (V.13). He then quotes the words of Isaiah 6 as above. In keeping with His secret ministry, when He performed acts of healing, He asked that those healed should tell no one. He began His ministry on the very northern borders of the country, as far from Jerusalem as possible, and taught mainly in Galilee and the surrounding district, though vast crowds followed Him from all over Israel.

There is a chapter in Leviticus which can be regarded as a preview of all Israel’s subsequent history (chap.26) There Jehovah rehearses His contract with Israel. First are outlined all the benefits that will be theirs if they walk in God’s ways: then follows the consequences of their lawlessness if they break His commands—they will ultimately be scattered among the nations !

Yet from that chapter Israel would also learn that Jehovah would not cut them off altogether, but would remember His promises, so, following Isaiah’s solemn declaration, God causes Jeremiah to declare in the following book (31:31-34):—

³¹ “Behold! The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they brake, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days says the Lord. I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be My people ³⁴”

Later, in Ezekiel 36 the same promises are repeated, again in words similar to Jeremiah and to Leviticus 26. But it is Isaiah who speaks (chap. 66) of a nation being born in a day, and it is to this that the Lord Jesus refers. Though a teacher in Israel, Nicodemus did not understand, and repeatedly questioned the Teacher come from God.

If Jesus had brought a new message to Israel, He never once says so, though He does on several occasions put a much finer point on the requirements of the law. Yet it must always be noted that all His teach-

ings are within the spirit of the law, and at no point does He suspend its teaching, for He came not to demolish the law, but to fulfil.

The earnest adherents of law had perceived that the whole law was summed up in two precepts: love of God and love of associates. (Matt. 22:37-40. Notwithstanding all the law's directions, Israel were not capable of the love that would display God's righteousness. Such passages as Matt. 5:43-48 neither amend nor suspend the law of Moses.

Jesus left His home in Nazareth for the rejoinings of Zebulun and Naphtali, adjoining Phoenicia. From the very beginning His message was a call to repentance. It was an exhortation to Israel to return to the law. The Greek word for repentance is *meta noia* —'after mind'. Those who had forsaken God's law were directed to return to its obedience. Only those who had known the law could repent. With the heralding by the Lord Jesus, the kingdom of God had indeed come near. The King was present, though unrecognised. All that was necessary was for the nation to repent and return to the law. This much was understood by the teachers and scribes, who looked forward to the restoration of David's kingdom.

IF THE LAW FAILED, WHY DID JESUS NOT INTRODUCE A NEW GOSPEL AT THAT TIME?

For an answer we must go into Paul's letters. Paul is the only writer in the Scriptures who explains what God is doing, for it was given to him to complete the word of God (Col. 1:25). He takes us back to a time before Adam, and to a time beyond the end of the book of Revelation. (The translators changed the word 'eon' (age) to 'ever' in Rev. 20, and thus concealed that Paul, in First Corinthians 15 takes us far beyond the end of Revelation.) Paul is the only apostle who heralded "the word of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, (ch. 2:6) Paul reveals to us why the Lord Jesus was not recognised and acclaimed.

"Yet wisdom are we speaking, among the mature, yet a wisdom not of this eon, neither of the chief men of this eon who are being discarded, but we are speaking God's wisdom in a secret which not one of the chief men of this eon knows, for if they know, they would not crucify the Lord of glory."

Finally, in Romans 11 he tells us why. "Callousness, in part, on Israel has come, *until the complement of the nations may be entering*" (verse 25).

Summary

Jesus began His ministry heralding the evangel of the kingdom. His message was: “Repent ! For the kingdom of God is near !” His ministry was corrective, to the intent that Israel should return to the law and to their God.

During His life on earth Israel was apostate and in servitude to the Romans. This was a sign of God’s discipline for their lawlessness.

If Israel had returned to the keeping of God’s law, the kingdom would have been established in power, with Jesus, the Son of David, as its rightful King. This is still to take place, in the next eon.

In God’s purpose, Israel was blinded as to the person and ministry of Jesus. He spoke to Israel in parables so that they would not understand and would not believe His message. In answer to the disciples questions about this He quoted Isaiah 6, where God says to Israel that He would dim their senses so they would not understand and believe.

If Israel had not been blinded, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, as Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians 2:6-8.

Then finally, Israel’s present blindness is so that the complement of the nations (the church which is His body) may be completed. Only then will Israel become all that God has planned for them.

Further reading:

“Correctly Cutting the Word of Truth”

A “Grace and Truth” publication.

“The New Birth Contrasted with the New Creation.”

By E.H. Clayton. Published by “Grace and Truth.”

Job

By J.M. Doe

How adequately does the book of Job deal with the questions it raises ? What relevance does it have in a contemporary response to the problem of suffering ?

Many have a problem with undeserved suffering *because* they have faith in the goodness and love of God. It is not an answer to disbelieve in the goodness of God or to reject the hope that in this life, (and the next) there should be both satisfaction and justice. In the end Job finds peace with God through his sufferings and not in spite of them. Job's suffering ultimately points to the death, resurrection and vindication of Christ Jesus as God's final answer to the problem of innocent suffering.

Job himself gives some useful advice on how to deal with a suffering person, which still has a relevance for today. (13:4-12). It may be wise and appropriate to stay silent, at least initially, and really listen to the problem. We should not rush in with judgments about what went wrong or how things could be put right. Only when asked can the comforter reply and then in quiet reassurance.

The first question in Job is asked by Satan: 'Does Job fear Elohim gratuitously, or for nothing ?' (1:9). Is it possible to love God for God's sake, and not merely for the benefits of being faithful ? And what if those benefits are all removed so that there are no benefits but God alone ? Is it still possible to love God without expectation of reward — 'for nothing ?' There are times in every person's life when these questions will arise. It is, after all, Satan's first question in the first chapter. Is Job's faith without any ulterior motive, or, as Satan believes, merely a commercial contract rather than a covenant of belonging ? Job however, remained faithful and at no time did he deny God. In the end, his endurance was rewarded when God restored to Job everything he had lost (42:10). Job's endurance was an insistence on connecting the evil he was suffering with the God who had brought him into existence (1:24), and Who is operating all. Job feels sure that his fate lies in the hands of the Almighty (9:4).

Job then asks his wife, 'Indeed should we receive good from the One Elohim and should we not receive evil ? (2:10). It is here we see that Job's attitude towards God was one of fear. This is confirmed by the testimony of God (1:8, 2:3), and of the Adversary (1:9). Also, Job's acts showed how ex-

traordinarily fearful he was. Even when there was no evidence that his children had sinned, Job is afraid that they may have sinned against God in their hearts, and offers sacrifices for hypothetical sins. This is usually looked on as proof of Job's perfect piety. It is far better than indifference, yet it was not the spontaneous, heartfelt, fearless adoration Paul in his epistles explains, and which all humanity will experience in the coming eons. Job has yet to learn that God's love would one day be freely available to all.

What is God's place in man's heart? It was with this issue that Satan was to test Job (1:9).

Was Job's testing a way of bringing him closer to the Almighty? Job's first response was to worship his maker (1:21). Naked I came forth from my mother's belly and naked I shall return there. Yaweh, He gives, and Yaweh He takes away. Blessed be the name of Yaweh."

Is God allowed to do these things to Job simply because He is God? (40:1-2).

God deals with these questions by pointing Job to His own greatness in His created world (38:4-38). Regarding the legality of what had happened to Job, God points out to him that He is the Righteous Judge (40:4-8)—that God's ways are to be accepted as right because He is far above man (2:13, 42:2-7)

Satan's purpose for afflicting Job was to tempt him to deny his God. In a sense, suffering always brings with it the temptation to sin against God. Humanity's sufferings can often have no naturally known cause. And Job was unaware that God had singled him out, or that Satan was masterminding the attack.

“ God has limited Satan. Though Satan is ‘the God of this eon,’ he can only go as far as the Almighty will allow. ”

God knows all about humanity just as He knew all about Job. Just as Job's response was to worship, so God can use humanity's suffering to display His glory, and witness to His grace and love.

The nature of the struggle between God and Satan which is the cause of Job's suffering is complex to say the least. It appears a celestial duel fought on earth between good and evil. A human is the duelling ground where these mighty heavenly powers clash. As in a duel, equivalent weapons are chosen so that the contest is kept fair. God's omnipotence is never

Job

in question. What is being disputed in these battles on earth is God's moral right to omnipotence, His mandate to rule. In this contest which is not exactly a wager, because there are no stakes, it turns out, God knows Job far better than Satan does.

God loves humanity, yet sicknesses and disasters are just some of His ways to allow humanity to see a greater good now hidden from their eyes, as it was (initially) hidden from Job. Not only is the purpose of the duel kept from Job, but God's commendation of him is also kept hidden right until the end (42:7). However, it will be clear from Job's agonizing prayers that He longed for God's approval (6:1-30).

Strange as it may seem the dreadful suffering of Job appear to have given him a greater experience of God. He has a visit from the Almighty. My ears have heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you (42:5). This personal visit from God silenced all Job's questions about unfairness. Once he saw God he had nothing more to say (40). Does this foreshadow a time when God would pay a longer, personal visit to the earth? In Jesus, God came not in power and majesty, but in poverty and pain. Job stands as the clearest Hebrew Scripture example of unfairness, an upright man who suffered much. Jesus stands as the supreme example, a perfect Man who suffered even more. Both hint at a glorious conclusion to God's purposes.

Faith in God does not ensure a smooth path in life. Rather, contrary to what some say, God does not deliver the believer from problems as much as to deliver him into them. They still have illness, accidents, deaths in the family etc. On a deeper level, a personal encounter with God brings at the same time as joy and peace, a whole new set of problems and questions. Sometimes, like Job, it is difficult to understand the why of the suffering, and whether God has any redeeming purpose in it at all, and just what the response should be. Traditionally, theology has wrestled with how a good and powerful God could allow or even cause, as Job claims, suffering and evil in the world. The secularist, the fatalist, the atheist do not have Job's problems, but then neither will they have to start with his ultimate blessing (42:5). Some would talk about their rights and so charge God with wrongdoing. However, Job believes God to be absolutely sovereign, and worships Him even when circumstances appear to shout the denial of the goodness of God. Job lived in a culture very different from today's world. His response was totally in accord with the cultural norms of his day, and God spoke directly with him, something which is now very unlikely.

But how does the record of Job's experiences help us to deal with the problems of suffering in today's world? It is true that today we can now expect to find healing in ways that were unheard of in Job's time. However this does not prevent accidents, cancer, or heart disease. Children still

drown, aircraft crash and people die from totally unexpected illness. Some people say that if only Adam had not sinned we would still be in paradise. But before Adam sinned, there is nor record of any expression of thankfulness or gratitude to a loving God for all the goodness around him. It is only when these things are removed that man begins to show any appreciation for what he has lost. And it is the same for Job. It is only when the material things are removed that he can truly worship. To see light there must be darkness. In every sphere of life there has to be opposites. However, simply to trace all, both good and evil, to the one God is not enough. In seeing that all is out of God, we need to be led also to see that all that happens is for the greatest good. Indeed this truth is most graphically shown in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It was through that dreadful death that salvation has come through into all humanity, and to all creation.

The appreciation of God in His wisdom, power and above all, His love, is the consummation God has in view for Job and ultimately for all creation. Nothing is left to chance, all will benefit from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one is, or can be, left out. Suffering is a part of life and is used as a means by which God reveals Himself to humanity. Job was vindicated by God, yet he hated himself. Through his trials he was led to a far greater blessing and a closer knowledge of God than he could otherwise have expected. He had heard of Him before; now He saw Him (42:5). Some sufferings remain an enigma to humanity and the book of Job certainly does not have all the answers. “Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him” (13:5) or concordantly rendered “Behold. He may dispatch me, yet I shall wait for Him; Yea, I shall plead by ways before His face.”

At the heart of the matter, coping with suffering becomes a very personal matter between the individual and God.

**“ God, in Christ Jesus, joined
with humanity in suffering. ”**

Job could only dimly see what can now be clearly seen. He said, ‘I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth’ (19:25). The Son of God became man to suffer on our behalf. He knew the reality of suffering. He was familiar with physical tiredness, and he knew all about mental suffering and emotional distress. He was tempted in every way yet was not found wanting. The grace of the evangel is such that God leads humanity to love Him not for His gifts, great as they are, but for Himself. Love will then respond to love. This is the outcome of God’s purpose, and the ultimate to which the whole of creation will come.