

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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DEALING WITH GOD

Man is accountable to God, and every man must give an account of himself to God. But innumerable are those who go through life and have no dealing with God. The first they will ever have to do with Him will be when they have no other choice but to appear before the judgment bar of God. Their account with Him could have, been settled "out of court," but they have chosen to wait until that day when nothing can be settled except their guilt and their penalty. That matters between men and God should be settled before the day of judgment was the teaching of Jesus Christ in His words:

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Matthew. 5:25.

Those who read these lines are probably among the number who realize the wisdom of dealing with God now. They realize the danger of ignoring Him, feel that God should not be excluded from their lives; and honestly desire to give Him the eminent place in their lives. Nevertheless, when the searching rays of God's truth are turned upon them, it becomes plain that they have never had anything at all to do with God. They mean well, but due to confusion they have dealt with churches, with *men* and with morals, but they have never dealt with God.

This deplorable situation is brought about by ignorance - ignorance of the way that God deals with man and man deals with God. As a rule they have taken it for granted that God deals with men through churches, and that men deal with God through religion and since they desire that this shall be true, they refuse to give any thought to the divine revelation which sets forth the basis upon which God deals with men and men with God. This is called in the Scriptures going "the way of Cain" (Jude 1:11). Cain sought to deal with God according to his own wishes in the matter, only to find that His offering was rejected.

At the entrance to certain 'business establishments one will see a small sign saying "Wholesale Only." These two words explain their method of dealing. If they are true to their established principles, they will deal in no other way; No man will dispute their right to do this, but many will dispute the right of God to say how He deals with men, and will insist on doing business with Him in some other way than that which He has established. In fact some insist that God deals on a "cash" basis, and they believe His blessings can be purchased. Others believe His business is one of "credit" and we can deal with Him on the "installment" plan, obtaining His favor by regular attention to religious duties. However, this is not the teaching of Scriptures, and we need to give the most careful thought to what God has said concerning the manner in which He deals with the one who comes to Him. This, we will now do.

Concerning the Gospel

A most positive hindrance to the understanding of the Word of God and to the full appreciation of the truth it reveals is that many important words make no impression upon us. These words are usually simple, familiar and in constant use, but they convey no message to many who hear or read them.

This is true of the word *gospel*. It is one of the most familiar and commonly used terms among professing Christian people: Long familiarity with it seems to cause many to treat it with what amounts to contempt. When they come upon it in Scriptures, they slide over it about like a man walking might suddenly shoot forward when his heel hits an icy spot on the sidewalk. There are many who will without hesitation attempt to tell what the *gospel* is, but at times it seems that they have no clear conception as to what the word *gospel* means. It would be much better for us if we came upon the word *gospel* as if it were an obstruction beyond which we could not pass until we had carefully considered it and comprehended the force and value of it in view of the setting or context where it is found.

The word *gospel* must be fully understood by all who would deal with God, just as the words *cash*, *credit*, *wholesale* and *retail* must be understood in dealing with certain firms.

Some translators seeking to overcome the difficulty that the word *gospel* has become meaningless to many minds have made use of such terms as *evangel*, *good news* or *glad tidings* in the hope that the minds of their readers will be duly impressed by this important word. These efforts are commendable, but for the purposes of this study it will be best if we strip the Greek word commonly translated *gospel* down to its plainest primary meaning, and **use the word *message* in place of the word *gospel***. This is the fundamental thought in the Greek word.

Before anyone attempts to deal with God there are three great terms that should be clearly understood. For the sake of accuracy these will be given as Greek words, then in their English meanings.

First, the word *evangelion*. This is always translated *gospel* in the New Testament, and it means a *message*.

Second, the word *logos*. This is usually translated *word*, but where the context so indicates, it means a *message*. See Acts 10:36 for an example of this.

Finally, the word *pistis*. This word means *faith* or *belief*. It speaks of the conviction which is based solely upon hearing, and not upon sight or knowledge. With these three words before us, let us pursue our studies by considering certain statements made by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Separated Unto the Message

In the opening verse the Apostle declares that he had been separated or severed unto the message of God (Romans 1:1). In these terse words he sets forth the word of God in relationship to his life that gave it its character from that day he met the Lord upon the Damascus road until the day he was executed in Rome. He had been cut off from all else for the work of receiving, comprehending, believing and proclaiming the message of God. His life was not centered in men, but in a message to be proclaimed to men. He was to believe and proclaim this message without any thought of what the results might be. His duty was to proclaim it. The consequences that followed the proclamation were in the hands of the Lord.

Promised in the Scriptures

In his next statement Paul tells us that this message had been promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. By these words he brings to our attention the fact that among the many things promised in the Old Testament, there was a promise of a message. The importance of this is seldom realized. There are many who know that the prophets promised, a King, a Kingdom and a reign of righteousness. They know that the Old Testament promised a Savior, but very few of them know that it also promised a means by which men could participate in these things. The Old Testament promised that there would be a message, even the message of God.

All that God has ever provided would be of no value to man if no means were provided for man to lay hold of these things. Take for example the death of Christ, and consider all that is made possible for man in His death. His death would mean nothing more to us than the death of any other man if God had not provided some means by which we could lay hold of the benefits that are made possible by the Cross. The means is God's message concerning the Cross, and this provides faith with a handle by which it can lay hold of the blessings purchased by His sacrifice.

When God deals with man it is only by means of a message, and apart from a message no man can deal with God. The man who has not heard, believed and acted upon God's message has no relationship with God. The sole "means of grace" is for man to believe a message. This is as true of the continuance of the Christian life as well as its beginning. The just live by faith, that is, by believing, and they live by no other means. By believing a message we establish connection with God, we enter into relationship with God and we obtain blessings from Him. All of man's dealings with God must be upon the basis of faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God. All who come unto Him must believe, and there is no possible way for anyone to believe except by believing a message. Faith is the belief of a message, and no man has exercised faith unless he has heard and believed a message.

The reader will readily realize the important place that messages have in our daily lives. There are messages that come by mail, by phone and by wire. Some are delivered in person. Certain messages bring good news and others bring bad news. We hope for messages that never come, and wait patiently for messages that have been promised. We believe some messages, refuse to believe others; act upon some and refuse or fail to respond to others.

Let us never forget that God's Word as a whole is a message that deals with a multitude of things. Each subject in it makes a separate message. Some of these messages are universal and some are limited to certain people. Our relationship with God begins when we believe the message He has given concerning His Son, and our new life in Christ should be dominated by the task of discovering and believing and acting upon every message of God. We begin by faith and we should continue in faith, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

However, we are not now considering the manifold messages in the Word of God, for we are dealing with the most important message - the one to which Paul had been severed, the one that was promised in the Old Testament, the one which, Paul declares, is:

Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord

This message is "of God" as to its source, and it concerns the Lord Jesus Christ as to its contents. Therefore, the man who does not proclaim the message that God has given concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord does not preach the gospel. It is the privilege of the messenger to find as many different ways of presenting this message as he can, nevertheless, the true messenger has been given a particular message to proclaim and any deviation from this message is an unwarranted presumption upon his part. There is no spiritual value in any man telling the story of his life. This has become a prominent feature in present day evangelism. In fact it has become so prominent among a certain class of evangelists that the man who cannot tell a story of a lurid past is not considered competent as an evangelist. But God's message does. not concern you or me, nor does it concern what Christ has done for us. It concerns the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the record that God has given of His Son; It is not the record of God's dealings with me, no matter how precious these may be to me or how much delight I may get in, telling of them. The redeemed of the Lord should say so, and we should be confessing with our mouths the Lord, Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, these confessions are not God's message concerning His Son.

If man would deal with God he must keep uppermost in his mind that we are now in possession of a message from God concerning Christ. Therefore, our most important action in relationship to God is to believe His message. The mass of mankind errs in thinking that God has set before man some great work to do. When the disciples asked what they should do that they might work the works of God, His answer came clear and plain: **This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. John 6:29.**

God has not set before man some great work to do, some ritual to perform or some ordinance to have done upon him. He has given to man a great message to be believed. We are not asked to ascend into heaven and persuade Christ to come down to earth, neither are we asked to descend into the abyss and bring Christ up from the dead. Jesus Christ has already come down from heaven to earth. He went into death and came out of it again. We do *not* need to persuade Him to live for us or to die for us. His work is finished and does not need to be repeated. Now a message has been brought near to us. It is in our hearts and upon our lips. Our personal acceptance or rejection of that divine message is declared by God to be the point that determines our destiny.

He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:18.

Thus we realize the importance of God's message. Apart from a message we cannot lay hold of Christ. His journey to earth, His death upon the Cross, His settlement of the sin question may be accomplished facts, but apart from a message from God to us concerning these, we cannot become partakers of the benefits that come from His work. They are not for sale. They cannot be obtained by works. They are granted to men only upon believing and apart from a message no one can believe.

A common failure among those who know God is a lack of appreciation of the many benefits that He has in love provided for us. This is especially true of the fact that we now have a message, making it possible for us to believe and upon which we can act. This was not always true, and our appreciation of the fact that God's Word has come near to us would increase if we would consider the Biblical revelation of God's dealings with the human race.

Biblical history from Adam to Abraham shows that mankind as a whole was without a message, except the message of conscience. A few men like Adam, Abel, Enoch, Methuselah and Noah received messages from God which they believed and upon which they acted. When God spoke of "the seed (descendant) of the woman," Adam saw in this statement a message. He believed it and responded to it by calling his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Noah received a message of warning from God. He believed it and acted upon it, with the result that his whole house was preserved. But these were special cases, giving these men the opportunity of becoming men of faith, but the mass of mankind was without any direct message from God.

The Message to Abraham

In due time God selected Abraham to be the recipient of a stupendous message. The message was delivered by Jehovah personally, and it was not to Abraham alone but also to his descendants (seed) after him. That the words of God to Abraham were a message (gospel) is clearly seen in **Galatians 3:8**.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

As time passed many precious additions were made to the original message. Israel as a nation was never without a message to believe and act upon. Their failure is always seen in their lack of faith – their failure to take God at His word and act accordingly. Therefore, the message proclaimed to them was often of no profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. When they forsook God, they were invited to return, and God made much of the fact that such an invitation was extended. This had not been true of any other nation.

From Genesis 12 throughout the rest of the period covered by Old Testament history, the Gentiles were without a message, save the message of conscience. They could be a people of obedience but not a people, of faith. To Israel alone had been committed the oracles of God (Romans 3:2). To Israel alone belonged the promises (Romans 9:4). Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, only Israel had the opportunity of becoming a people of faith. This gave them a great advantage and put the Gentiles at a distinct disadvantage.

There was no change in this when the Lord appeared upon the earth. Many ignorantly believe that He was at the time of His birth sent to the whole world, and accompanying Him was a message inviting all men to receive and thus obtain the blessings that were in Him. But those who believe this do so out of ignorance of His own declaration concerning the extent: of His ministry, or else their

unwillingness to believe what He said about His own mission. This is seen in the clear record we have concerning His dealings with the Syrophenician woman as set forth in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30.

This woman was a Gentile and she sought from the Lord that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. She desired to deal with the Lord but had no basis whatsoever upon which she could deal with Him. God deals with individuals by faith only, but this woman had no message from God, therefore, faith upon her part was impossible. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (message) of God, and it was a message that this woman lacked. True, the Lord was upon earth with infinite power to heal. He was healing the most undeserving in Israel, and this woman's need was as great as any in Israel. The Lord was well able to fill her need, but she had no invitation and no message. If she deals with Christ, she must bring faith in her hands and this is not possible in her case. Where could this poor woman obtain faith? Where could she show that she had accepted or was accepting God's word and acting upon it? God had sent no message to such as she.

Any needy man can take a check to the bank and cash it, *if he has the check*. This Gentile woman came to the One in whom all God's blessings were deposited, but she came without any claim upon Him. She had the need and the willingness, but not the check.

The Lord's first declaration in answer to her plea was that He was not sent "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" Her further plea for help brought forth the statement, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs."

This statement was harsh, but it was the truth and it needed to be spoken. However, in this declaration, the Syrophenician woman saw a message addressed directly to her. He had called her a dog. Here was her opportunity to exercise faith - to take God at His word and think or act accordingly. She took the dogs place by saying, "**Truth, Lord,**" but she claimed the dogs portion by adding - "**the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table.**" She could have argued, she could have reasoned, and she could have rejected His statement. But, she did none of these. She took Him at His word, with the result that He commended her great faith and granted her request.

The spiritual lessons to be learned from the record of the Lords dealings with the Syrophenician woman are (1) that God deals with men only upon the principle of faith, (2) there can be no faith without a message, and (3) the message may be contained in a single word. In view of this think what an opportunity men have for faith in connection with the statement "Christ died for the ungodly."

Cornelius the Centurion

The truths we are considering are emphasized and illustrated in the case of. Cornelius as set forth in Acts 10. This Roman centurion, being a Gentile, had no message from God except that of conscience. To this he had responded and the result was that he was a devout man, a God fearing man and a praying man. Thus he was a man of obedience and not of faith. He feared God and worked righteousness. It may have been that through contacts with Israel he had gained some knowledge of the sacred scrolls of the Old Testament. If so, he knew that God had said of the seed of Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee." This was a promise applicable to every man, and in harmony with it Cornelius "gave much alms to the people (Israel)." Thus he had in his dealings with God gone just as far as a Gentile in his day could go. He who deals with God must bring faith in his hand for without faith it is impossible to please God. Cornelius had no opportunity to secure faith, that is, to believe the message of God.

But, from the record given for our learning it is evident that God determines that this man shall be given opportunity to possess the coin of His realm. He will be given messages to believe and act upon, and if he avails himself of the opportunity, he will have faith. He had given of his means to the people of God, but now God is going to give to Cornelius. And *the gift is a message*.

A messenger (angel) of God appears to Cornelius telling him to send men to Joppa, call for Simon Peter who will tell him what he ought to do. When this takes place, Cornelius is in possession of a message from God. He now enjoys a high privilege but faces a great responsibility. If he fails here, any further opportunity for faith will depend upon the grace of God. There is no guarantee that a second opportunity will be forthcoming.

One can easily imagine the joy and satisfaction that came to Cornelius when he realized that he was in possession of a message from God. If it is acted upon, the divine rewards are sure to be abundant. But what good would the message do him if he rejoiced in his experience, felt pride in the fact that God had spoken to him and revealed His will for him, if he never acted upon the message.

He would have been destitute of faith, therefore, without any means of approaching God. But Cornelius did not fail. His joy was tempered by a sense of deep responsibility. He took God at His word and acted accordingly. Furthermore, he did not attempt to act over and beyond the instructions. The message said, "Send men," and no personal zeal was permitted to lead him to go in person. To have gone in person would have accomplished the same results, but he would have been the possessor of less faith if he had done so. Beyond all doubt, God credits faith to men. If not, then such words as "Great is thy faith" and "O ye of little faith" are meaningless.

On the other hand, when Peter went to the house of Cornelius, it was an act of faith upon his part; for he too was acting upon a message. Read Acts 10:9-17. This message was quite repugnant to Peter when it was first given, but he did not rebel against God.

When he arrived at the house of Cornelius, he did not tell them of a great work to do, a ritual to perform or of an ordinance to have performed upon them. He proclaimed unto them a great message to be believed. And even as he was speaking, God who knew their hearts, knew that they were believing the message and gave unto them the Holy Spirit.

The Message is the Power of God

Following his pronouncement that the message concerns His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Paul declares that he is ready to proclaim the message to those who are in Rome, declaring that he is not ashamed of the message of Christ for it (the message) is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

Since the message is the power of God unto salvation, then, without a message we are powerless. In many places we see great towers supporting great wires entering great cities and these we know are linked up to light, motors and every form of electrical appliance. But all of this is inoperative and useless apart from the electric current flowing through it. Even so, all the work of God is inoperative in relationship to us until we hear and believe the message which is the power of God unto salvation.

It Sets Forth a Righteousness

In the message that Paul proclaimed a righteousness of God is set forth or put on display. Romans 1:17. Things put on display are as a rule being offered to the public. This is true of the righteousness of which Paul speaks. His statement leads us to consider briefly four great truths that are set forth in the Word of God.

1. God demands righteousness of those who would stand in His presence. May God in grace impress this truth upon every reader of these lines. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; therefore, all who would see Him must be in possession of a righteousness that has no flaw. The conscience gives witness of this to all men and many of their efforts are directed toward producing something which will make them acceptable in the presence of a thrice holy God. Like Adam and Eve, man's knowledge of his nakedness is followed by efforts of his own to cover it. But like Adam's apron, man's efforts will not screen his sins from the eye of God. Let us honestly face the fact. Man does not possess the righteousness which God demands.

2. No matter what man does he cannot produce the righteousness which God demands. He may join churches, practice rituals, partake of ordinances and be quite religious, but the divine declaration that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God will still be true of him. Sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the wrath of God. Let us also honestly face this fact: man cannot produce the righteousness which God demands.

3. If God makes a demand that man cannot fulfill, then He will make possible the fulfillment of His own demands. If any burden He lays upon men is too heavy, then He will bear it. He told Israel that the land should not be planted in the seventh year. This appeared to be an intolerable demand, for it required that the land in the sixth year produce enough for the sixth year, the seventh year and that part of the eighth year that came before the harvest. This demand was so heavy that God assumed the burden of it by promising that the sixth year crop would be such an abundant one that it would suffice for three years. Thus, He made possible the fulfilling of His own demands.

Even so it is with His demand for righteousness in those who would stand in His presence. Man being unable to produce this righteousness, God has provided it for man.

4. In the message of God a righteousness is set forth or put on display. Therefore, let all men consider this righteousness as being offered by God to fill their deepest need. Let them examine this garment of righteousness to see if it will properly clothe them to stand in the presence of God. This righteousness takes into consideration the deepest need, the blackest sin and the greatest guilt of the human race. It is the righteousness of God. It has no connection with the law, being without the law. It is unto all and upon all who believe. It brings to the sinner a righteousness in which God can find no flaw.

Does the reader possess this righteousness? If not, then let him deal with God. It can be his if he will believe the message God gave of His Son.

For what saith the Scriptures? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 4:3-5.

The End

TRUTH FROM THE SCRIPTURES

(Continued from Vol. IX, No.1)

The Second Coming of Christ (Continued)

Familiarity with the Word of God is sure to bring the conviction that it is necessary for God to end and close out His present work among the Gentiles (nations) before He resumes His work with Israel (the nation) again. All instructed premillennialists recognize that this must be done, and many of them believe that God will suddenly and dramatically close out His work by snatching away every saint. In proof of this belief they quote **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17**:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

It is evident that those who quote this passage as proof that God will suddenly close His present work by suddenly snatching away every believer, hold that the mere quotation of it is proof positive of their position. However, they refuse to sincerely face the facts that this promise is limited to those who "are alive and remain unto the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord," and that Matthew 24 in a positive manner fixes the *parousia* as occurring at the extreme end of the great tribulation; therefore, this promise can be realized only by those saints who will pass through that period.

They also quote **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** as proof of their position:

Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

This is also quoted without any regard for the definite time element contained in the words "the last trump." The book of Revelation sets forth the "last trump" as sounding at the close of the great tribulation, but before the indignation begins. If the time elements in both the passages already quoted are fully recognized, then the rapture set forth in these verses cannot be the present expectation of any believer.

The criticism that this robs the believer of his hope must be disregarded. In the first place, our hope is Christ, and He is not taken from anyone by the acceptance of the truth that the promise in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 does not apply to us. In the second place, if to be raptured alive has been the hope of every believer since these promises were made, then none of them has realized it, for having died, they never will be caught up without dying.

Furthermore, we must disregard that criticism which says that if God does not bring to an end and close out His present work by the sudden removal of every believer, then there is no other way for Him to do it. It would be better if these critics would confess that they know of no other way, rather than to insist that there is none.

In order to give careful consideration .to the work of God which brings to an end and closes out God's present work upon the earth, there will need to be full understanding between writer and reader in regard to certain terms which will be used repeatedly throughout these studies.

God's Present Foundation

At this moment God has upon the earth a company of people whom He has separated unto Himself. These people are to be found in every nation, and their present standing before God is based upon a Work that God has done for them individually and personally. He has related them to Himself by bringing them to faith in Jesus Christ. This great company of people are often loosely referred to as Christians, and some call them "the church.". The word *Christian* has become a blanket term commonly used to designate who is not a Jew or Mohammedan, and "the church" is misleading because no two people Who use it seem to attach the same meaning to It. Furthermore, present day saints are no more "the church": than Israel was.. Therefore, in considering God's present company of believers, we will need certain terms by which we can designate them. These terms must be neutral, having no theological bias or coloring, and they should be Scriptural. One such term is suggested to us in **2 Timothy 2:19**.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. .

The word *foundation* is commonly used to signify that part of a building upon which the superstructure rests. But since there is nothing that supports God it can have no such meaning here. If we consider other meanings of this word it will bring to our minds the thought that the *American Red Cross* is a foundation; that is, a company of people and certain means which exist for the purpose of dealing with great disasters of every nature. The *American Cancer Society* is a foundation that exists for the purpose of dealing with the scourge of cancer. Therefore, it is evident that *foundation* is a company of people existing in relationship to a certain purpose. And since it is evident that God has at this present time upon the earth a great company of people whom He has separated unto Himself in relationship to a certain purpose, the term "the foundation of God" is peculiarly appropriate as a designation. Therefore, the people of God upon the earth at any time since Adam are the foundation of God. .

God has had other foundations, for Israel was also a company of people separated unto God for a certain purpose. In view of this it will be necessary for us to say "God's present foundation" and recognize its constituency as being "those who are His." The Lord knows every member of this company, and while we may have difficulty at times deciding whether a man should be considered a part of this company or not, the Lord knows every member. Therefore, throughout this study the term "God's present foundation" will designate the company of people living upon the earth at the present time who are related to God by their faith in Jesus Christ.

To avoid too many redundancies and in order to stress certain aspects of God's present foundation, the terms "God's present saints" and "God's present calling" will also be used. These too are Scriptural terms and they will be used as identical in meaning with God's present foundation. God's present foundation has a unique character, and this distinguishes it from all past and all future foundations. This unique character comes from the time of its calling, the purpose of its calling and the nature of its calling. We have been called by God since that time that His salvation was sent to the Gentiles as recorded in Acts 28:28. We were not called in connection with God's purposes to establish the kingdom of the heavens. God's present foundation is called solely in grace and without any connection with the people of Israel. It' is predominantly from among the Gentiles.

These things are not true of any other foundation, not even the one called between Acts 2 and Acts 28. A clear distinction must be made between those whom God called during the Acts period and those called since that time. In God's foundation of the Acts period there were two distinct orders of believers (see 1 Cor. 7:18-20); the Jew had the advantage and circumcision was profitable (Romans 3:1-2); the Jews had a priority on the message of God (Romans 1:16); the Gentiles were given a place that certain in Israel had lost; they were called to provoke Israel to jealousy, and were in debt to Israel for their spiritual benefits (Romans 15:17). None of these things are true in regard to God's present foundation, and those who are familiar with the Scripture revelation of God's works and ways will have no trouble seeing the distinction between God's foundation in the Acts period and His foundation in the present dispensation.

Many have labored to prove that these two foundations are the same, pointing to many similarities that exist in both of them. But to discover likenesses between two things does not prove that they are the same. We are not told to prove that things are the same, but to distinguish things that differ. If one considers only the likenesses between Christ and man, he will come to the conclusion that Christ is man and not God. If he considers only the resemblances between man and the ape, he will decide that man is a true ape. But, if he considers the things that differ he will arrive at the true conclusion that Christ is divine, that man is human, and the ape is simian.

Even so it is with the foundation of God that existed in the Acts period and the foundation of God that exists at the present time. Men may submit their long lists of points which are true of both foundations, but these prove nothing. As long as there is one clear distinction between the two, we know they are different.

Let those who insist that these two are the same answer these questions: Has God for *1900* years been blessing Gentiles for the purpose of provoking Israel to jealousy? Is our position in Christ one that was lost by an unbelieving Jew? Are we grafted into Israel's good olive tree? Are we at a disadvantage because we are uncircumcised? If Romans 1:16, 3:2-3, 11:11 and 11:17 are read it will be seen that these things were true very late in the Acts period. Since they are not true of the believing Gentile today, then we are a different foundation.

God's Future Foundation

If the Word of God that deals with the future is carefully studied, we will discover that there is to be a foundation of God upon the earth in the future that is quite different from the one existing today. This company of people upon the earth in a future time are called in connection with a purpose of God that has no relationship to our calling. They are called out after the salvation of God returns to Israel, and they are predominantly, if not exclusively, Jewish. They keep the law as the terms of God's covenant; they observe the seventh day as the Sabbath and their worship centers in the rebuilt temple. They are called in connection with God's purpose to establish His kingdom upon the earth, and they will be upon the scene when Daniel's seventieth week runs its course. They will pass through the great tribulation, and many will lay down their lives for their faith in that time. They are the company that will have to face the question of receiving or repudiating the mark of the beast. Since they pass through the most dreadful time in human experience, God has seen fit to supply them with detailed instructions on how to act, and has also given them some exceedingly precious promises. He has also provided them with an exact prayer to say in that dreadful time.

Some of the instructions He has given them can be found in Matthew 24, 1 Corinthians 7, and 1 Peter. One of the precious promises given to them is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. The prayer He gave them to say can be found in Matthew 6:9-13. We confuse our own walk if we try to follow their instructions, we are guilty of selfishness if we try to steal their greatest promise, and we are guilty of hypocrisy if we continually pray their prayer.

When God's foundation of the Acts period is compared with God's future foundation, it will be discovered that these two foundations are a unit, one being the continuation of the other, they being different only because they are separated by the present parenthesis. When God resumes His work in the future, He will be completing the sentence He began to write in the Acts period.

Many who may not fully agree on the distinctions I have made between God's foundation of the Acts period and His present foundation will agree with me fully in the distinction between His present foundation and the future one. Nevertheless, they are somewhat puzzled as to how God will end the course of His present foundation upon the earth to clear the way for His future people. They know that the present body of saints will not be in the great tribulation, for the time will never come when we will have to face the problem of fleeing on the Sabbath day and praying against this eventuality. See Matthew 24:20. But they feel that if the Lord does not suddenly come and snatch His present foundation out of the earth, then it will be here when the apocalyptic judgments begin. To many of them, this seems like such a simple solution to the problem that they close their eyes to the fixed time element set forth in the passages already quoted, then use them as positive proof of their "any moment" rapture theory. An event that God has stated will happen "at the last trump" cannot take place at any moment. And when honesty has forced a man to recognize the time elements set forth in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and abandon the idea that the rapture declared in these two passages cannot take place until the end of the great tribulation. His first inclination is to find a rapture in some passage where no time element is involved; therefore, one that can take place at any moment. This difficulty arises from the desire to have an experience for God's present foundation that will equal the one promised to His future foundation. In connection with this, I must say with Pharaoh's chief butler, "I do remember my faults this day." Many who read these lines will be familiar with the attempts of certain sincere teachers to read a rapture of living saints into Paul's words in Philippians 3:14. Those who have followed my writings through the years will remember my own attempts to read a rapture into Philippians 3:11. All this came about because I knew of no other way for God to close out His present foundation except by a rapture of the living saints.

In considering the manner in which God closes *out* His present foundation, we will need to consider more fully those believers who made up His foundation in the Acts period. This great company of saints did not suddenly appear upon the earthly scene. It began with eleven men after the resurrection of Christ (John 20:22); it became 120 on the day of Pentecost, increased to 3120 after Peter's sermon, and came to be about 5000 soon after that. At Acts 10 the first Gentiles were added to the foundation, and in due time members of that calling were to be found in every nation throughout the then known world. Now the normal course of the lives of these believers would be that after having put their faith in Jesus Christ could expect to live out their lives upon the earth, die and then be raised from the dead at the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord. This was the normal expectancy and experience of these believers.

However, there was an emphatic message of God to them which made it plain that the experience of some may not be what was generally the normal one. This message revealed that there would be one generation of believers, those who were alive at the return of the Lord, whose experience would

be abnormal when compared with the experience of other believers of the same calling. It emphatically declared that one generation of saints would not die but would be raptured from the earth. But, no such promise as this has been made to God's present foundation. At no place in the Scriptures is there any promise made to those in our calling that the experience of one generation will be radically different from all who have previously fallen asleep. As stated before, out of sheer desire for such a promise, many have tried to take the words recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 and apply them to God's present foundation. Others (including the present writer) desiring to leave this promise to the people to whom it belongs (who so sorely need it in view of the tragic times through which they will pass) have mistakenly tried to find another rapture in Philippians 3:11. Beyond all question, there is a special resurrection set forth in Philippians 3:11, but to read into this a rapture of living saints (as I have done) is an unwarranted presumption. I do not find anywhere in Scripture a promise that gives any member of God's present foundation the right to expect immunity from death. Not one of them has escaped death up to this moment, and I do not believe any of them will in the future.

Experience has taught me to expect that when I make this declaration, some will insist that I have robbed them of their hope. I do not see how they can honestly accuse me of this when all that I insist is that it will be with us just as it has been with every believer since the present calling began. What right do you or I have to think that it will be different with us than it has been with them. If we had a promise from God to this effect, then we would have every right to expect that we will not experience death. Almost eighty generations of believers have lived and died since God began His present work among the Gentiles. Why should this generation think that it is going to be different with us than it was with them -- that while their earthly course ended in death, ours is to end in rapture. I readily admit the desirability of not experiencing death; nevertheless, I will not allow any wishful thinking to lead me to formulate or follow a teaching just because it is well pleasing to me.

In considering the truth concerning the manner in which God will bring to an end His present foundation, we receive much light if we remember that He brought to a temporary end and closed out that foundation which existed in the Acts period in order to clear the field for His present company of saints. When the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28), God ceased to call men into that calling and no longer added to it. Callings into it and additions to it ended at that moment when Paul announced that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles. From that time forward all who believed were called into and became members of a new foundation. The old foundation was not closed out in a split second of time. Years after Paul's pronouncement, it was still in the process of passing from the earthly scene while the new one was coming on.

Many people have the fixed idea that God's present calling must end its course in a split second of time. This is not true; it is not taught anywhere in the Word of God; and it acts as a barrier to the truth. When Christ was upon earth certain men rejected Him because of a fixed idea that He was to come out of Bethlehem. See John 7:41-42.

Acts 28:28 Reversed

As my studies in the Word of God have matured, they have brought the ever deepening conviction that the next great act of God in relationship to this world will be that the salvation of God will be taken from the Gentiles and restored to His people Israel. This will bring about a complete reversal of Paul's proclamation in Acts 28:28. And, inasmuch as God sending His salvation to the Gentiles marked the beginning of God's present work, its return to Israel will mark its close and the resumption of that program which was broken off by God at the close of the Acts period. Once the salvation of God returns to Israel, then all that remains to be done to set the stage for the fulfillment of God's prophetic program is the orderly closing out of God's present foundation.

It will be closed out by a reversal of the process by which it was established. It was brought into manifestation by God calling men into it and adding them to it upon their response to His call. It has been maintained by constant additions. It will be closed out by God ceasing to call to it or add to its number. And when there are no additions to a company of people, its earthly existence in due time comes to an end.

Less than ninety years ago our country had an army consisting of about three million enlistments. This was the Union Army that fought in the war between the States. According to recently published figures only 400 of these members of the Union Army remain, and this small number will in a few years pass from the earthly scene. Not one member could possibly be added to this Army after Lee's surrender brought the war to a close. How could a man be a Civil War veteran who enlisted after the war was over?

Even so it was with the foundation of God in the Acts period, and even so it will be with God's present foundation. Not one member could be added to God's foundation of the Acts period after the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles. Why would God graft believers into something after His salvation had departed from it?

Furthermore, after God's salvation returns to Israel, none will be added to His present foundation. This will mark the beginning of the end for His present calling. And the time will yet come when some believer will be the last living member on earth of God's present foundation. God grant that even though walking alone he will still be walking worthy of the calling wherewith he is called. When the last member of God's present calling has finished his course, a course that will end in his death, then God's present foundation will have been closed out and a new one will be coming upon the scene, ready to play the part that prophecy assigns to it in that great drama of the ending of this present evil eon.

Saints in the Tribulation

The careless use of inaccurate terms is a constant difficulty in comprehending the truth. "Will the Church go through the Great Tribulation?" has long been a popular sermon topic and the title of numerous pamphlets. Men argue, sometimes with more heat than light, that the church will not go through the great tribulation, but they fail to make it clear what church they are talking about. These men would not dare to argue that there will be no *saints* in the great tribulation. I agree with them that God's present company of saints will never see the first day of the great tribulation, but I strongly insist that there will be another company of saints of another calling who will pass through that time. The weakness of many systems of prophetic interpretations is found in the fact that no teaching is offered for the calling and development of this company. They have God's present foundation suddenly snatched away, and wonder of wonders, the very next day a great company of saints are upon the earth, ready to resume the morning and evening sacrifices, and still more marvelous, many of them have already turned from the faith and are ready to sign a seven year covenant with the ruler of the world empire. Such illogical ideas make good sermonic material for the sensation peddler, but they cannot be believed by diligent students of the Word of God. Furthermore, having stolen their promises, they have no teaching concerning the dramatic removal of this company from the earth at the last trump, just before God's indignation is poured out. The Son of man will find no faith (no believers) upon the earth when He comes again.

There will be a time upon this earth when one company of saints are passing off the scene and another company of saints will be coming on the scene. In due time one will be gone and the other will be fully manifested. Some will object that this will require too much time, but I remind them that God has plenty of time and he cannot be hurried. His present foundation did not suddenly appear upon the earth, and it will not suddenly end. Our experience will be normal with those who have preceded us. We have no word from God that would lead us to expect otherwise.

This ends our studies on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Under the general title of *Truth from the Scriptures* we will next consider "The Called and the Chosen."

(To Be Continued, Vol. IX, No. 3)

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

(Continued From Vol. VIII, No. 6)

An Exposition of John 1:1-14

That the Expression or Logos was God is emphatically stated in the Scripture. In fact, we know no God save the One who is seen, heard and revealed in the Expression. He is our contact with the One who has never been seen, whose voice has never been heard and who is revealed only in the One who is His Image and Expression. From Genesis 1 to the end of Malachi we have continually before us the Expression of God, whether called Elohim, Jehovah or Adonai. As the New Testament opens we see the Expression made flesh, but still, even though self-limited by the flesh, still revealing, declaring and expressing the Absolute God.

In spite of the plain declaration of John 1:1, there are many who say that they cannot understand how Jesus Christ can be God. If we ask these people if they understand how God can be God, they will claim that they do. If pressed for explanation, they can only say that God is God simply because He is. This is also true of Jesus Christ. He is God simply because He is. The Scriptures declare it, and I take God at His word and think accordingly. This is my faith in Jesus Christ. For if Jesus Christ is the Expression of God, then He must be, He can be, none else but God.

There are some who do not believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ who think that they have Scriptural grounds for their position. They point to such passages as Colossians 1:15 and Revelation 3:14. Let us examine these.

Firstborn of Every Creature

They hold that if He is the firstborn of every creature, then He is a created being, therefore, not God. A close look at this idea would quickly reveal the fallacy of it. It confuses birth and creation and makes them a jumble. If the image of the invisible God were born, then He was not created. They say that God created Him, and they seek to prove it by this passage which says nothing about His supposed creation. The title *Firstborn* is a term of great dignity, somewhat like *King, Ruler* or *Potentate*. It includes the ideas of inheritance, possession and rule. Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of every creature for by Him were all things created that are in the heavens and the earth. Therefore, He

is the God who is set before us in the opening verse of the Word of God. When we read of One who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, we are reading of the Expression of God who later was made flesh and tabernacled upon earth. I know of nothing more fantastic than the idea of a *created Creator* of the universe. The very passage (Colossians 1:15) that some point to as casting doubt upon His Deity, gives the strongest possible evidence that He is God.

The Beginning of the Creation of God

Revelation 3:14 is also cited by some as proof that Jesus Christ was a created being, but that is not the truth set forth in this passage. It declares that He is the original of God's creation, or "God's creative original". This is a marvelous truth that few comprehend. An illustration may help.

I am acquainted with a man who is six feet nine inches tall. He has been forced to spend most of his mature life stooping and bending in over to reach desks and tables or to keep from bumping his head. Having prospered in his business, he determined to build a new home with all doors of sufficient height so that he could walk through them with his hat on, all furniture and mirrors high enough so that he would never need to stoop, and beds long enough so that he would never need to curl up. When strangers show surprise at the odd appearance of his home, he good-naturedly tells them that the carpenters threw away their rules and used him as a measuring stick. The truth is that the house had its origin in his height. He was the "original" of that house.

Visitors to *Independence Hall* in Philadelphia will see if they look closely at the two rows of chairs in the main hall that each one is of different height, width and depth. These chairs were made to fit the men who were to use them. Each one had for its "original" the man who was to occupy it.

When, in the beginning, the heavens and the earth were created, they were made in conformity to the glory and perfection of the One who is the Image and Expression of God. He was the original, and even man was made in God's Image and after His Likeness. When the new heavens and new earth are a reality, creation will again conform to Christ. It will fit Him, He is the original of the creation of God. If we do not conform to Him, we will be excluded from that glorious realm. So be not conformed to this world, for it does not conform to Christ.

Thus, once again we see that the very passage that men would use to cast doubt upon His Deity, fully proclaims His Deity.

The same was in the beginning with God. In the first verse of John's gospel the term "the Word" (the Expression) occurs three times. Therefore, three statements have been made of the Expression. (1) He was in the beginning, (2) He was with (toward) God and (3) He was God. In the second verse these three statements are joined into one. This is the Spirit's method of emphasizing these three great truths. The words "the same" could be more forcefully translated "This One."

All things were made by Him. This statement presents the first great work of the Expression, the creation of all things. The first two verses deal with His person and the third verse deals with His work. The work that He did verifies the truth that has been stated of His person; for the Expression Who created all things is most certainly God.

The Greek word translated "were made" (*egeneto*), means "came into existence." All creatures and things that have ever existed have their origin in the acts recorded in the first chapter of Genesis.

And without Him was not anything made that was made. This means that without Him not a single thing that exists came into existence. There is a positive first half of John 1:3 followed by a negative second half. The second part emphasizes the first part, making the statement absolute. Since the Expression exists and since not one thing that exists came into existence save through Him, we will make the Expression the Creator of Himself if we include Him among created things. He never came into existence. He is the eternal Expression of the Absolute Deity.

In Him was life. This important statement should capture and hold the attention of all who come upon it. In this statement a reality that transcends all human understanding is uttered in words of utmost simplicity. However, due to centuries of false teaching, this statement does not make the impression it should, for very few indeed are seeking for or are desirous of possessing *life*. The commonly accepted Platonic theory of man's nature holds that man is immortal; therefore he has life and can never lose it, and once he is alive must live forever. It leads men to believe that they will live eternally, either in bliss or woe. Even though the Scriptures declare that the gift of God is eternal life, they have little interest in it, inasmuch as they believe they already possess a life that is eternal.

We might better understand *life* if we use sight as an illustration. The possession of life makes us *living* souls and the possession of sight makes us *seeing* souls. Not once in my experience have I ever sought for sight, inasmuch as I have sight and could make no use of another. I fully recognize that sight can be lost and have taken every reasonable precaution to preserve the one I have. If I knew that some process was at work which would take my sight from me within the next ten or twenty years, I would give constant thought to securing another sight to take its place. Where I now read with interest the records of successful corneal grafts, I would, if my sight were leaving me, read these with intense hope and joy.

Far more precious than sight is the gift of life which we possess. But because of the transgression of Adam death has passed upon all men and there is a process at work within me that will in time eventuate in the loss of this life which I now possess. The time will come when it will return to God who gave it to me and will be as it was before I possessed it. In view of this, I have gone to the Word of God to discover what it reveals concerning another life to replace this one which is to be forfeited because of Adam's sin.

The Scriptures declare that the work of Christ has secured for every man another life to take the place of the present one; that every man who dies in Adam will be made to live again in Jesus Christ. However, the retention of this life depends upon the results of the judgment of the great white throne. The life that men obtain in resurrection can be lost because of their own sins. If it is lost, there is no third life to take its place. The second death will be the end of all who are sentenced to it.

Without qualifications, in Christ was and is life. Not life for a period so that man's case can be judged. Not life without the gift of immortality. In Christ is eternal life, a life that guarantees a man a place in the new heavens and new earth. Earnestly desiring to possess life and retain it, I have placed my faith in Jesus Christ. I must be cut off from the relationship that this faith has brought to me before I can be cut off from that life which He will give to me in resurrection. How good is the word that declares nothing shall ever separate us from Him!

And the life was the light of men. In its simplest sense this statement means that the life which was in Christ constituted a light which shined upon the hearts of men. The gold that is in the hills acts as a mighty compelling power upon men who desire or who need gold. Even so the life that was in Christ proved to be a light that should have compelled men to turn to Him. Did the light operate or did it fail? This is answered in the next statement.

And the light shineth in the darkness. From the very beginning Christ has been the life and light. He shines at all times and in every man. He shines in defiance of the darkness.

And the darkness comprehended it not. This means that the darkness at no time has ever put out that light which shines upon the blackened hearts of men. The light persists in spite of every attempt of man to extinguish it in his own breast.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. Here, the Spirit breaks off for a moment the record concerning the person and work of the Expression, to bring in the divine mission of John as proof of the statements made concerning Him in verses four and five. Having declared that He was the Light, it is now set forth that John's mission was to give witness to this truth. In this the universal message setting forth the record that God has given of His son, the Israelish aspects of John's ministry are not mentioned, and another aspect is set forth. He was not a spokesman for an organization. He was an individual sent from God. When men demanded to know what company he represented, he said he was the voice of one.

The same came for a witness. His record before God is that he did the thing he came to do. He was God's message bearer.

To bear witness of the Light. Here the *King James Version* puts a capital letter to the word *Light*, which makes it to be a person rather than a thing. While it is entirely true that John came to bear witness to a Person, in my judgment a different truth is stated here. John began by fanning that spark of light which no man could extinguish. He sought to make it flame into a blaze, so that men who rejected his message would be forced to reject light. A wise witness indeed was John. What men sought to cover, he sought to uncover.

That all men through him might believe. The word *men* is not needed here. John did not seek to get all who heard him to perform some ritual or do some great work. He did not witness so that men would see the light or know the light. He knew that God would deal with men only upon the basis of their faith, so he witnessed that all might believe. No man ever responds to the work of God in his behalf until he believes.

He was not that light. John was not the light, and he could not impart the least glow of light to any man. His witness concerned the light that was in every man. He fanned this spark, and when it burst into a flame, some men in panic fled, and others cried fire and sought to extinguish it. They beheaded John but they could not put out the light.

But was sent to bear witness of that light. The previous statement told what John was not. This positive statement tells what he truly was.

The introduction of the ministry of John the Baptist in verses six to eight leads many to believe that everything beginning with verse nine has to do with that period of time after the Expression was made flesh and was tabernacling in this world. This, in my judgment, is a mistake, for it robs us of one of the most important statements concerning God's dealings with men in those times before the Son of God appeared upon earth.

Every statement made in John 1:9 to 13 was true in times preceding the appearance of the Expression of God upon earth as a man. The proof of this can be found in the experiences of men in Old Testament times and the truth revealed therein. The earthly sojourn of Jesus Christ is not set before us until we came to verse fourteen, and then this is followed by the ministry of John the Baptist.

That every statement found in John 1:9-13 concerns the Expression of God before He became flesh will be fully considered in our next study.

(To Be Continued, Vol. IX, No. 3)

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

I apologize for being late with this issue of the magazine. To be late makes me feel that I have not done right by that great group of readers who depend upon this periodical for their teaching ministry: Many anxiously await each issue, and I do want to get it into their hands as regularly as possible. I trust that they will all bear with me patiently as I seek to solve the problems which this ministry imposes. Much thought and study is being given to a revision of this work so that I can devote my entire time to the written and spoken ministry.

****We have just received from England twenty-five copies each of *All Truth* and *New Testament Ministries* by J. Eustace Mills. This is our first shipment in several years, and we are happy to be able again to offer these books by a capable and concise writer, who fully recognizes the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line. These sell at \$1:50 per volume.

****For the first time in four years the Editor plans to take a vacation. My readers have probably heard of the postman who went hiking on his day off, giving rise to the term "postman's holiday." I have had quite a few of these in the past four years, but this one will be different. Friends who may plan to visit the work will please note that I will not be in Grand Rapids during August.

****This report comes somewhat late, but I wish to say that the two-day meeting in Buffalo and the ten-day meeting in Philadelphia were spiritually profitable. Mrs. Sellers and I were privileged to have the company of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Roman of Muskegon, Michigan, as our traveling companions throughout the entire trip. Tentative arrangements have been made for a three-day meeting in Buffalo, and a nine-day meeting in Philadelphia this fall. If these plans work out, definite notice and dates will appear in a later issue.

End, Vol. IX, No. 2