



Christian Identity Ministries

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"Blessed be the LORD God of *Israel*; For He hath visited and redeemed *His* people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for *us* in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; That *we* should be saved from *our* enemies and from the hand of all that hate *us*; to perform the mercy promised to *our* fathers and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to *our* father Abraham, That he would grant unto *us*, that *we* being delivered out of the hand of *our* enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of *our* lives." Luke 1:68-75; the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic-Germanic-Scandinavian people are *ISRAEL!*

#213

Newsletter

December AD2003

ULTIMATE RECONCILIATION

By Tom Mitchell

The term "Ultimate Reconciliation" identifies a doctrinal position that many within the world-wide Christian Israel movement are still unfamiliar with. It is the belief that every single person who has ever lived will eventually come to salvation, God's kingdom, and everlasting life.

People holding to this interpretation of Scripture admit that only a minority have found salvation, through Jesus' blood, in this world age. They agree that participants in the millennial age to come will consist of only a small percentage of the world's total population since time began.

"Time," from a Biblical viewpoint, might be described as; the Old Testament era, the New Testament era, the millennium and eternity. From the "Ultimate Reconciliation" position the millennium is followed by age after age where people who did not find salvation in the earlier periods are cleansed of sin. These long ages to come are seen as punishing and correcting, adjusting and convincing, all suffering sinners with "purifying fire" until finally everyone who ever lived has surrendered to God and received Jesus as saviour. There are variations on the above, but the central theme remains clear: Everyone Will Be Saved!

The Bible does teach that under Jesus' rule a perfected creation will come to a genuine ultimate reconciliation before Almighty God! (It is ONLY Israel who will be reconciled! CIM)

Creation began in a state of total harmony under God. This relationship ended after the fall of Adam and Eve and a future reconciled kingdom will manifest after the victorious millennial reign of Jesus. (I wish more people would take note of the fact that 'christ' is an adjective, NOT a noun! CIM) Jesus' 1,000-year rule climaxing with the second resurrection and His final judgment will completely adjust and correct all the effects of sin resulting in a renewed creation. The millennial reign brings the kingdom on earth to perfection. Every rock, river, plant, insect, animal, human and angel will exist in divine harmony - obedient to Jesus' personal supervision and cleansed of corrupting sin. Descriptions of this triumph are found in Rev. 21 and 1 Cor. 15:24-28. The Kingdom is pictured after the forceful elimination of evil, the beast, the false prophet, death, hell and "whosoever was not found written in the book of life" culminating in Rev. 20.

Most Christians look forward to an ultimate perfected kingdom age. Their theology varies in how they see God handling unrepentant sinners to establish this condition. Three views predominate regarding their fate:

1. They will live forever in a special zone of eternal torment.
2. They will all be purified and cleansed for ages and

enter eternal life.

3. They will receive the punishment of actual, everlasting death.

All three groups have their favourite Bible verses, interpretations and historical quotes to back up their views. The majority position of British-Israel and Christian Identity teachers and writers has always been number 3: The Annihilation of the Wicked. This view, often called "Conditional Immortality" understands man's natural destiny (since the fall) is inevitable, real and eternal death, but that we may receive the special gift of the resurrection and everlasting life through Jesus' sacrificial death. God's rebellious enemies collect the natural "wages of sin."

Final reconciliation comes about by a cleansing destruction of the "tares" NOT be refining them into wheat (Matt. 13:30, 40, 50).

A leading "Ultimate Reconciliation" teacher has portrayed people suffering "fiery" correction for ages after the events chronicled in Rev. 20. The time period of Rev. 20 includes the end of the millennium, the white throne judgment, the end of death and hell, and the second death of unregenerate sinners. For a proof text that pain and evil continues after the completion of these events he referenced Rev. 22:15; "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Of course Rev. 22 does follow Rev. 20 but in actual fact John's revelation vision ends in Rev. 22:8! John "comes to his senses"

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at this point and returns to his own time where he talks with the angel "which shewed me these things." John is now back in his own era at the feet of an angel (messenger) who had revealed God's vast panorama of the future to him.

John has returned from the end of time to his own time. Rev. 22:15 is simply future to John's earthly lifetime. It does not describe episodes after the millennial age! But the speaker did ignore some verses that do legitimately follow Rev. 20 time wise; "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:14). The finality of judgment at this time is brought out again a few verses later; "... the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. 21:8). Also before John's Revelation vision ends at Rev. 22:8 one more verse sums up the post-millennial condition; "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." (Rev. 22:3). By reviewing the above, I discovered how a simple misinterpretation was being used to support the idea of "purifying" torture for sinners continuing for ages after Jesus' victorious millennial reign.

Incidentally some insist rebellious sinners are still living after the second death of rev. 20 based on Rev. 21:8; "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." But this verse is clearly a reference back to the one and only "second death." A restatement of the fact that the people described (experiencing second and final death) will not be in the "new heaven and a new earth" - "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:1,2). Remember: death dies in the second death - the end of death. Hell (hades) dies in the second death. Thus "whosoever was not found written in the book of life" also experience their end! The first death (personal) offers potential resurrection in Scripture. The second death (general) does not. ("He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man {that is} in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts {that} perish." [Psa. 49:19-20] CIM)

Reviewing Matthew Chapter Seven

Most of us are familiar with the many Old Testament passages that make a clear connection between sin and genuine death. "Live Forever" theology (whether with eternal tormenting fire or age-lasting cleansing fire) seems to draw mainly from the New Testament. But punishment by eternal death is taught here too. Matthew chapter 7 is one example of many. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go thereat." (Matt. 7:13). The picture here is of two gates only. A strait (narrow) gate and a wide gate. The verse tells us the wide gate leads to destruction. Strong's Concordance (#684) defines the Greek word 'apoleia' as: "ruin or loss (phys., spiritual or eternal); -damnable (nation), destruction, die, perdition, perish, pernicious ways, waste." Young's concordance sums up the meaning as "loss." Neither reference suggests the wide gate could lead to ages of refinement.

"Apoleia" is used five times in Scripture including Romans 9 where Paul speaks of God dispensing His mercy in verses 15, 16 and 18. Then he gives the illustration of two vessels: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make

his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he has afore prepared unto glory" (Rom. 9:21-23). Note that the vessels of wrath are destined for destruction and the other vessels to mercy and glory. But if the vessels of wrath are coming into eternal life via cleansing fire they would also be receiving God's mercy, when the passage teaches they won't. The first fulfillment of this wrath-bringing destruction pictured here was the AD 70 destruction of over a million Messiah-rejecting Jews. As a type of end-time wrath it presents us with death and total devastation.

The other three uses of 'apoleia' also represent ruin, loss, death or destruction in the accepted sense of those terms (Phil. 3:19, 2 Pet. 2:1 & 3:16). For example 2 Peter 2:1 warns that 'apoleia' will be swift. Can age after age of refining fire be thought of as "swift"?

The two gates in Matt. 7:13 are pictured as opposites.

We know the broad gate leads to destruction. It will help us to understand "destruction" if we see where the other gate leads. "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). The strait gate leads to life! The broad gate doesn't. There is no hint that the broad gate leads to life by ages of suffering. And to clarify this more fully Scripture states; "... few there be that find it." The many that go through the broad gate do NOT find "it." A univer-

salist theory of salvation is that the broad gate leads to the slow method (ages of purgatorial cleansing) to life and the strait gate is the rapid route. Sorry - the few that find life do not find destruction. Those that find destruction do not find life. The essential meaning in Strong's and Young's of 'apoleia' as "loss" is clear. Destruction here illustrates loss of life!

Only modern man would have trouble understanding the next few verses of Matt.7; "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 6:16-19). Jesus is presenting by his street preaching to the common man in an agrarian culture an everyday example from normal farming practice. No one should imagine that throwing a corrupt tree into fire could produce a better tree, then or now. Or, that the tares can get into the barn with the wheat after cleansing fire. The natural reading of Jesus' warning is that certain people - represented by bad-fruit-producing trees, or by tares, will be destroyed.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21). This begins a powerful section of Scripture packed with meaning that preachers have mined for centuries, but note one clear teaching of verse 21: **NOT EVERY ONE WILL COME INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN!**

Jesus is talking about these people who shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven when He says: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you (see Amos 3:2): **depart from me, ye that work iniquity** (lawlessness)"

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(Matt 7:23). If Jesus never knew them and he orders them to “depart from me” it seems safe to assume He didn’t know them, He doesn’t know them, and isn’t going to get to know them. Could His command be taken to mean, “**Come into my presence to experience the cleansing fire of my law?**”

Jesus then compares a person’s whole being to a house. “*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who build his house upon the sand: and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it*” (Matt 7:24-27). [ever seen those houses on the coast in America fall into the sea during a storm or shortly thereafter?] In this parable Jesus describes two houses, relating them to salvation. One survived, founded on a rock (Jesus). The other represents those who hear Jesus but don’t act on His sayings. Their “house” is destroyed, it falls, it’s over and finished. Nothing in Matthew 7 offers the unrepentant sinner a second chance.

Paul often warns about destruction being sudden, inescapable and unexpected. For example in 1 Thes. 5:2,3 Young’s defines the Greek as simply “destruction” and Strong’s states: “(to destroy; a prol. form); ruin, i.e. death, punishment; - destruction.” Malachi 4:1 describes the awesome judgment coming on the wicked. The Bible pictures judgment as swift and final, not as continuing for ages after the millennial kingdom where sinners are rebuilt and refined into eternal life.

A Caution Regarding Dogmatism

Countless published studies (deeper and more detailed than this sketch) have helped Bible students to understand their immortality to be totally conditional on receiving Jesus’ sacrificial payment for sin. Again and again Christians have been satisfied that real destruction of the wicked rests on a more solid Scriptural footing than both eternal torment and universalism via “cleansing fire.” yet all interpretations have their stronger and weaker points. It could be a big mistake for some Israel-Christian organizations to insist on only this position as a sort of doctrinal statement or litmus test for participants. Many Identity groups decided years ago to avoid becoming official “churches” or denominations. By avoiding polarization on various issues several fellowships have escaped fragmentation over the years.

The belief in eternal torment has been a majority orthodox doctrine throughout much of the history of Christendom. The modern resurgence of the Israel Identity (from around 1850) coincided with the rise in understanding of “Conditional Immortality.” This era has also featured the strongest exposition of the Kingdom on earth. Yet pockets of all these teachings (including “ultimate Reconciliation”) have always survived within smaller assemblies of believers. The ultimate reconciliation view has been on the rise in the last few years, often under the banner “The Restoration of All Things.” Those who defend it vigorously have developed alternative interpretations of the Bible verses that seem to deny it - just as those expounding the two other main views have done for their beliefs. Generally the majority of Christian-Israel teachers and books have accepted that actual death is God’s eternal punishment for sin. This is evident by reviewing the material released for decades by Covenant Publishing, Destiny Publishers and

other major distributors. Should any British-Israel or Identity group begin insisting that “Ultimate reconciliation” is the only “Scriptural Truth” and attempt to publicly refute every criticism they could be excluding many sincere Bible believers and leading their fellowship into narrow denominationalism.

In any case each Christian stands alone before The Almighty, responsible to shine what light he has on those controversial issues even under intense persecution, “*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in [gehenna] hell*” (Matt. 10:28).

Courtesy British-Israel Vancouver Bookroom, 1307 Kingsway, Vancouver BC Canada
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AN EXAMINATION OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY

by Pastor Don Elmore

Brief History

1st Century

In the days of the early new covenant churches the apostles and elders had to deal with erroneous doctrines promoted by the false apostle - Simon Magus. Simon was a prominent religious leader who mixed paganism and Gnosticism with the Christian doctrines of the condition of man, election, atonement, believer security, faith, the irresistibility of the Holy Spirit and salvation. Many of his teachings

not only became the foundation of a new religious organization, but also have leavened Christendom for the last two thousand years.

6th Century

Magus’ teachings were slowly dying out until they were revived five centuries later by another pagan, Gnostic, and converted Catholic by the name of Augustine. Augustine was a prolific writer whose main target was the teachings of Pelagius. Pelagius taught that man was born innocent, that there was no such thing as original sin, and that sin was a habit. Augustine countered that there was original sin and that as a result all of mankind were born in a state of total depravity or a total inability to do anything spiritually good. The result was a compromise by the Catholic Church of these two extreme positions that became known as semi-Pelagianism. Simply put:

- Augustine believed that man’s will was in total bondage to sin.
- Pelagius taught that man’s will was free.
- Semi-Pelagianism was a compromise view that man’s will was weakened, but not totally in bondage to sin.

16th Century

This compromise was the prominent view for almost one thousand years—until the Protestant Reformation. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin were Augustinian Monks in the Roman Catholic Church. They both led the Protestants back into the teachings of Augustine. Jacob Arminius and his followers known as the Remonstrants soon opposed them. Finally, the Dutch Church convened the Synod of Dordrecht in 1610 to resolve the dispute concerning as to which was the correct interpretation of the Bible. The Remonstrants drew up five statements of doctrine in which they set forth their own views. The Calvinists answered these *Five Points of the Arminians* with their own, which has come to be known as the *Five Points of Calvinism*.

21st Century

Video

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The Five Points of the Reformers:

1. Total Depravity or Total Inability
2. Unconditional Election
3. Limited Atonement
4. Irresistible Grace
5. Preservation of the Saints

The Five Points of the Arminians:

1. Partial Depravity
2. Conditional Election
3. Unlimited Atonement
4. Resistible Grace
5. Uncertain Security of the Saints

While the Calvinist position was given approval by the Dutch Synod and was believed by almost every Reformer, over the last four hundred years it has gradually declined in popularity until now it is believed by very few denominational churches—not even in the majority of Lutheran Churches (followers of Martin Luther) and Presbyterian Churches (followers of John Calvin). But it still remains very influential, because of the many books and commentaries that were written in time past by prominent and famous Calvinist preachers, like the Puritans.

However, it is my opinion that both of these two major theological positions are incorrect. And they are erroneous because of the same reasons. They both minimize or misapply the covenants that God has made with His people and they also fail to utilize proper biblical hermeneutics. As a result, they both agree with the unbiblical *universal salvation* interpretation taught by Simon Magus. Sadly, a third alternative interpretation, covenant theology, is seldom, if ever, taught in Seminaries, preached in churches, or written about in commentaries.

Total Depravity is the major foundation of Calvinism. And since Calvinism is contained in the creeds of most evangelical churches, and since it has had a remarkable influence in both Church and State, it is important for all believers to carefully examine this doctrine of the Reformed Faith. The starting point of the examination should be with the crucial doctrine of *Total Depravity*. For if that doctrine is proven to be false, then the remaining four points of this system of theology, since they are wholly dependent on that premise, must also be false.

The procedure for this short study on *Total Depravity* is to first look at some of the frequently used verses of Scripture that are used by Calvinists as their alleged proof-texts for this doctrine. Then, different writers of this position will be quoted who give their *Calvinistic interpretation* of these verses. Thirdly, the *specific and contextual application* of these same verses will be given. Hopefully, the contrast of the Calvinistic interpretation with the Covenant interpretation will expose one of the major flaws of Calvinism: its tendency to take specific and contextual applications of Scripture and make them a theological statement about all men everywhere.

SIX FREQUENTLY USED GROUPS OF SCRIPTURES **Isaiah 1**

“From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” —(Isaiah 1:6).

Calvinistic interpretation: “The wickedness was universal. Here is a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body. The distemper threatens to be mortal. From the sole of the foot even to the head; from the meanest peasant to the

greatest peer, there is no soundness, no good principle, no religion, for that is the health of the soul. Nothing but guilt and corruption; the sad effects of Adam’s fall. This passage [Isaiah 1:1-9] **declares the total depravity of human nature.**” —*Matthew Henry Commentary.*

Specific and contextual application: Isaiah was prophesying during the reigns of the last four kings of Judah prior to the Assyrian invasion. The context shows that Isaiah was describing the Southern Kingdom of Judah during that particular time in history (“sinful nation,” who have “provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,” v.4) as being likened to a man with untreated sores located all over his body. Isaiah’s concluding warning was that they were to be reduced to a very small remnant (v.9). This came to pass when God miraculously spared a small remnant of the Kingdom of Judah (those who had fled to Jerusalem), by destroying the entire Assyrian army (185,000 soldiers) in one night by means of His death angel.

Isaiah was describing the apostate Kingdom of Judah, not the total depravity of human nature.

Ezekiel 37

When the LORD showed His prophet Ezekiel, a valley full of dry bones, He asked: “*Son of man, can these bones live?*” After Ezekiel gave His answer, God then told Ezekiel to prophesy upon these bones saying, “O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.” Then God said to the bones, “Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.”—Ezekiel 37:3-5.

Calvinistic interpretation: “Sinners are compared to dead men, or **even to dry bones** in their entire helplessness. The choice of some to eternal life is as sovereign as if Jesus were to pass through a graveyard and bid one here and another there to come forth, the reason for restoring one to life and leaving another in his grave could be found only in His good pleasure, and not in the dead themselves.”—Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p71.

“What is the condition of man prior to his regeneration? How may we best describe him? The best place to start is with the Biblical description and the Biblical terms.” The author quotes parts of Ezekiel 37:3-5. Then he concludes: “Before regeneration we are nothing but **dry bones.**” —Douglas Wilson.

Specific and contextual application: The identity of the dry bones is given by God to Ezekiel: “Then he [God] said unto me [Ezekiel], Son of man, **these bones are the whole house of Israel.** (v.11). While Ezekiel was exiled in a Babylonian Prisoner of War camp, God showed him that the dispersion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (which had occurred about 135 years previously) was going to last for a long time (“dry” bones). And that these Israelites, who were hopeless (“our hope is lost”) and were “cut off” from the covenant were supernaturally

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going to be brought back to life sometime in the distant future after God placed His Spirit in them. These dry bones, that represented the dispersed and divorced House of Israel with many from the House of Judah from the captives of Syria and Assyria, were totally unable to come to life on their own.

The valley of dry bones in no wise was descriptive of all unregenerate people of all different ethnic groups, but foretold of the thousand-year condition of the captive house of Israel.

Ephesians 2

“And you hath he made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins.”—Ephesians 2:1

“Even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) ...” —Ephesians 2:5

“That at that time ye were without Christ (anointing), being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”—Ephesians 2:12.

Calvinistic interpretation:

“In the Westminster Confession the doctrine of Total Inability is stated as follows: - ‘Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.’ Time and again Paul tells us that we are dead in trespasses and sins, estranged from God and helpless. In writing to the Ephesian Christians he reminded them that before they received the Gospel they were “separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world, 2:12. There we notice the five-fold emphasis as he piles phrase on top of phrase to stress this truth.” Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p.61.

“Unregenerate man is dead in his transgression and sin (Eph. 2:1-2). He is not sick, he is not ailing, he is dead ... this means the natural man has no ability to comprehend the gospel.”—Douglas Wilson.

Specific and contextual application: The Apostle Paul was writing to the Christians of the church at Ephesus, Greece—the previously dead “dry bones” that were now “alive” by the blood of Jesus Christ. These dispersed Israelites were the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s famous prophecy: they were previously dead, without hope, and cut off from the commonwealth of Israel but now were made alive by the Spirit of God. This “salvation by grace (the unmerited favor of God to law breakers) through faith” was describing the mercy shown to the disobedient physical seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In addition, both the Apostle Paul and the prophet Ezekiel next described the **same** amazing event: the reconciliation of both houses (kingdoms) of Israel. Ezekiel was told to write on one stick, “For Judah, and for the children of Israel, his companions” and on the second stick, “for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his compan-

ions” and to “join them one to another into one stick” (Ezekiel 37:15-28); while the Apostle Paul refers to the event as making “of two one new man” (Ephesians 2:14-22).

In no wise do these verses describe all the unregenerate or natural people of the world, but are the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy—the reconciliation of the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Romans 3

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” —Romans 3:10,11.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”—Romans 3:23.

Calvinistic interpretation: “All men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins and are, therefore, totally unable by their own wisdom or strength to do anything pleasing to God (Romans 3:9-12).”—TBS Ministries, Doctrinal Statement

“The doctrine of Total Depravity is derived from scriptures that reveal human character; ... He does not seek for God (Rom. 3:10-12) .. in light of the scriptures that declare man’s true nature as being utterly lost and incapable, how is it possible for anyone to choose or desire God? The answer is, ‘He cannot. Therefore God must predestine.’”—Matthew J. Slick.

Specific and contextual application: The question is the identification of the words “none” and “all.” The context shows that the Apostle Paul was informing the dispersed Israelites in the church at Rome of a similarity between the two kingdoms of Israel. And that similarity was sin.

The Northern King-

dom had from the very first day that they seceded developed their own apostate religion with two golden calves in two different temples served by a non-Levitical priesthood. Each succeeding king led this larger kingdom into more and more evil until they became as wicked as the Canaanite nations that preceded them in the Promised Land: “For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, [then the sins for which Israel was carried away into captivity are listed] ... as did the nations [Canaanite] whom the Lord carried away before them, and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger;” (2 Kings 17:7-11).

The Southern Kingdom fared somewhat better. They did have four major revivals during their 345-year kingdom. But shortly after the deportation of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians, which also included many from their own kingdom, they sunk to a new low in their wickedness. Under the reign of King Manasseh, their sins were also compared with the former inhabitants of the land: “So [King] Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err; and to do worse than the nations, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Chronicles 33:9).

Therefore, they experienced another deportation—this time by the Babylonians. Not only were they taken cap-

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The Stone Kingdom

This documentary covers the Gospel of the Kingdom message in a unique way by bringing the true history of the world and the Word of God together. Many people today neglect their Biblical Heritage and fail to understand the purposes of God. This special documentary will take you through the Bible from Abraham through the early development of the Christian Church. It will also reveal some exciting truth about the New Jerusalem. The film features 9 different speakers, E. Raymond Capt (Thousand Oaks), pastor Dave Barley (Sandpoint), author David Hilliard (Belfast), pastor Robert Phillips (Wales), Catherine Cameron-Sage (Avalon), George Southwick (Santa Maria), pastor Bob Williams (England), and Ernestine Young (Nampa)

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tive, but also Jerusalem was totally destroyed, including the palace and temple. A small remnant was divinely allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, although things were never the same.

At the time of the advent of Jesus, an Edomite was on the throne of Judea; Edomites and Shelahites were in the priesthood and Sanhedrin; and God's laws were made of none effect by the "oral traditions of the elders" that were concocted during the time spent in Babylon

So, even though the Southern Kingdom had outwardly kept the rituals of the old covenant (circumcision, purification, Temple rituals, Levitical Priesthood, etc.), while the Northern Kingdom did not, they were both guilty of rejecting God's covenant. But it was those of the Southern Kingdom who participated in the crucifixion of their Saviour, being persuaded by those non-Israelite "serpents" who carefully plotted Jesus' death. Nevertheless, the Kingdom of Judah looked down on and felt superior to their former long time (one thousand years) enemy: the uncircumcised apostate brethren of the House of Israel.

Thus, the Apostle Paul addressed this attitude while writing the Israelites in the church of Rome: "Are we (of the tribes of Benjamin, Judah and Levi - the Southern Kingdom) better than they (the remaining 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom) (Romans 3:9)? His answer was, "No!" "There is none [either kingdom] righteous ... There is none [either kingdom] that understandeth, there is none [either kingdom] that seeketh after God ... For all [both kingdoms] have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23).

*** These verses in Romans are not about the totally depraved nature of all men, but the sinful condition of not just the former Northern Kingdom but also the Southern.***

John 8

"Why do you not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my Word."—John 8:43

Calvinistic interpretation: "Fallen man lacks the power of spiritual discernment ... And since this state of mind is innate, as a condition of man's nature, it is beyond the power of the will to change it ... Jesus taught the same truth under a different figure when He said to the Pharisees, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word."—Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p.65.

Specific and contextual interpretation: The first book of the Bible tells of several first-born sons who lost their inheritance to another: **Cain**, the first to open the womb of Eve, lost his inheritance to Seth; **Ishmael**, first-born son of Abraham, lost his inheritance to Isaac; **Esau**, first-born son of Isaac, lost his inheritance to Jacob/Israel; and **Shelah**, first-born of Judah, lost his inheritance to the twin brothers, Perez and Zerah. Is it just a strange coincidence that the descendants of these four men have constantly acted in a manner of jealousy and envy towards the inheriting children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Could there be something that is passed on in their genes that causes them to do all in their power to bring down and destroy Israel?

And God Almighty cursed some men and their descendants forever. For example, Canaan and his eleven children (who became the powerful nations of the Hivites, Jebusites,

Hittites, Arkites, Sidonites, Amorites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, Hamathites, Girgashites, and their children, like the nation of the Amelekites) were permanently cursed by the God of Noah. To totally ignore, as Calvinism does, the seed of these cursed and disinherited people is a major flaw in their interpretation.

To fail to distinguish between "sheep" (God's covenant people) and "serpents" (people who were cursed by God) is a fatal blunder in interpreting Scripture. In John 8, like in Matthew 23, Jesus was addressing Edomites (descendants of Esau) and Shelahites (descendants of Shelah), both of whom had intermarried into the lineage of the descendants of Cain/Canaan. Many of these enemies of God had usurped their way into positions of leadership in Judea, the Priesthood of the Temple, and the ruling body of the Sanhedrin. It was and is certainly true that these cursed people could never understand and hear the Words of Jesus!

*** The divinely cursed ancient enemies of Israel were the people who were rebuked by Jesus in the verses quoted by Calvinists in John 8. What was said to and about them cannot be applied to Israelites of this present New Covenant era.***

Romans 5

"Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned..."—Romans 5:12.

"Through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation..."—Romans 5:18

"By one man's disobedience the many were made sinners..."—Romans 5:19.

Calvinistic interpretation:

"If [the above 3 verses] do not prove that all men are condemned on account of the sin of

Adam, language has no meaning. Adam was made not only the father but also the representative of the whole human race. And if we fully understand the closeness of the relation between him and them we would realize the justice of the transmission of his sin to them."—Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p.77

Specific and contextual application: Calvinist writers assume that Adam was the father of all the different ethnic groups—but this cannot be true for both scientific and Biblical reasons. However, that argument aside, their conclusions are still wrong because the "**all**" of these and similar verses do not refer to all men of all races. In all the books of Romans, the subject people are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh (Romans 4:1)—i.e. Israelites and only Israelites. In chapter 5, these Israelites are identified as being "justified by faith," as having "God commending His love toward us," and as being "reconciled to God by the death of His son." Jesus Christ, the second Adam, provided a plan that embraced the restoration of the whole world of Adamkind through His covenant people Israel.

These verses are not applicable to all people of the earth, but only to the fleshly seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; descendants of Adam and Eve.

Summary

It is astounding that those who made their motto, "Sola Scriptura," would take texts out of their specific, contextual application and make them props for their

Tape of the Month

#A-7421 (a) Why Should Christians do Good Works? Charity is a Christian trait - and duty!

(b) Thanksgiving - Important to You and God. Thanksgiving is a way of faith. Biblical origins and commands to Christian-Israel.

#A-7422 The Lord maketh The earth Empty. pts 1&2. A study of Isa. 24 and the verses the Adventists (and others) use to teach total destruction of the earth by fire. This shows what the Prophet really meant.

#A-7423 God is Calling Us to Obedience. pts 1&2. A study of Romans 1 & 2. These chapters must be understood in order to understand all the other epistles.

This month these three tapes \$10 posted



Reformed Theology. This proof-texting of the worst sort has carried on the doctrines of Luther/Calvin, Augustine, and Simon Magus for centuries. To apply verses that were specifically written to and/or about:

- (1) Apostate Israel, or
- (2) Apostate Judah, or
- (3) Dispersed Israel, or

(4) Israel in general, or the (5) Edomite, Canaanite, and Shelahite Pharisees, and instead apply them to the fallen nature of each and every unregenerate person in the world is the result of failing to understand God's election of His covenant people, their history, and His cursing of His enemies.

Pre-exile Israel:

- They had the ability to serve God:

"Choose you this day which God you will serve ... Fear the LORD thy God ... Walk in all His ways ... Love Him with all thy heart and thy soul ... Keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD."

- They also had the ability to repent:

"If my people, who are called by My Name [upon whom My Name is called - Num. 6:24-27], shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." —2 Chron. 7:14

Exiled Israel prior to the advent of Jesus:

- They had no ability of their own power to get back into the covenant that they had willfully rejected:

For this period of time they were dead in their trespasses and sins and in darkness until the sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension of their Messiah.

- They had no ability to tear down the "middle wall of partition:"

Only the blood of Jesus the Anointed could break down the barrier that separated them from their racial kinsmen.

Post-advent New Covenant Israel:

- Because of the love, grace, and faithfulness of their merciful God, Adamic/Israel was not allowed to perish:

Salvation ("a great light") was brought to both Kingdoms of Israel by means of the blood of the New Covenant. They were exhorted to repent and believe the gospel of the kingdom.

Edomites, Canaanites, and other cursed peoples:

- Forever at enmity with the people of God:

They never had and never will have the ability to believe the gospel and be converted.

The complete ignoring of the proper antecedents of the pronouns by the Calvinist theologians in their proof text verses is either sloppy theology at best or a deliberate deception at worst. To constantly make the pronouns, "we" and "us" and "all" mean totally depraved, unregenerate men of all races (in a zealous attempt to justify their doctrine of a universal non-covenant sovereign grace salvation and random election), when the context is plain that it refers to a specific people or kingdom, is inexcusable.

And, they also twist predestination. They change God choosing the physical seed of the patriarchs whom He loved, "Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day," (Deut 10:15) to a new indiscriminate covenant-less election of totally depraved individuals of all races.

As A.W. Pink in his Calvinistic book *Gleanings From The Scripture: Man's Total Depravity* (pp.72, 73) explained: "John [the Baptist] was the herald of a new dispensation, one which would be radically different in its scope from the previous one, and one which would be inaugurated by breaking down the 'middle wall of partition.' For two thousand years the grace of God had been restricted almost entirely to a single nation [Israel]; but now it was on the point of flowing out to all [races]."

But the "middle wall of partition" that the Apostle Paul wrote about in his epistle to the dispersed Israelites in the church at Ephesus, was not a barrier between the Israelites and non-Israelites (as Mr. Pink advocated in his book), but was a barrier between the two kingdoms of Israel. The breaking down of this wall did not inaugurate a radical new dispensation, but inaugurated the **reconciliation** of the parties of the new covenant: the house of Israel and the house of Judah. so, the grace of God is still restricted entirely to a single nation and race.

As prophesied in Isaiah 49:6 (Septuagint, Brenton translation): "And He said to me, It is a great thing for thee to be called My servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob and to recover the dispersion of Israel: Behold, I have given thee for the covenant of a race—for a light of the Gentiles [nations]; that thou shouldst be for salvation to the end of the earth."

As the popular hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" proclaims: "Ye chosen seed of **Israel's race**, Ye ransomed from the fall, Hail Him who saves **you** by His grace ..." So, according to this hymn, salvation by grace is applied only to the chosen seed—Israel's race.

Besides the frequent misidentification of pronouns, another subtle danger of this "radically different" new dispensation is that it eliminates individual responsibility to repent from evil and turn to God.

Since God "supposedly has predetermined which totally depraved individuals shall be saved and which shall be damned, the believer's initiative to obey God and His commandments can be destroyed. and for those who follow total depravity to its ultimate conclusion (hyper-Calvinism), it can produce an "anti-missionary" spirit and a passive attitude of apathy and fatalism.

But Christ didn't eliminate the accountability of His people to keep His commandments and laws. As Pastor Kuhler wrote in the August 2003 edition of *The Virginia Christian Israelite*: "There is a great untruth and a deliberate falsehood being promoted by the conglomerate of so-called Christian churches in fostering the idea and concept that Christianity is indeed a "new" religion brought by the first advent of Christ Jesus. In truth, Jesus the Christ did not bring a new religion; He brought a NEW COVENANT to an old religion."

Jesus was truly the saviour of His sinful, hopeless people—"He shall save His people from their sins." Amazing grace, how sweet the sound—to those who were lost and now found; blind and who now see—the wretched and depraved seed of Israel's race. who are saved by the amazing grace of their merciful covenant-keeping God.

Courtesy The New Covenant Messenger, PO Box 321, Union KY 41091.



by **R.J. Rushdoony**

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.” (Lev. 20:1-5).

What this text deals with is a very important matter. Children are the future of any society; control over the children means to command the future. Now Molech (also seen as Moloch, Melek, Milcolm, and Malcolm) means king. Molech worship was state worship, and the ceremony referred to in Leviticus 20:1-5 means the dedication of the child to the state.

WHO OWNS THE CHILDREN?

Every culture has had rites of dedication of the child (often the male child, to symbolize heads of families) to the father, tribe, clan, or state. *Ownership* was affirmed by the rite.

In Molech worship, the child was passed over a low fire, or incense burner, before an image of the king, or the god of the state, or some insignia of the state to indicate that the child's life now belonged to the state and could be used at the ruler's will. Only on rare occasions was a child actually sacrificed, or slain. Most of the time, the ritual meant dedication. It was a rite of ownership. We have Molech worship with us still, the claim of the state to own the child and to command his life.

This makes understandable why God takes the dedication of the child to the state or any other false god as so evil. He is the Lord, the Creator. *“The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein”* (Ps. 24:1). To give our children to any other than the Lord is a criminal act, a fearful sin. We cannot give God's property to anyone other than the Lord: we are stealing what is His to give to another.

In some cultures, as in Sparta, a deformed child could be exposed to die; the state in other instances could decree abortion or ban it, depending on its need for warriors and state servants. All these represented forms of Molech worship.

Modern education is statist education for statist goals. The curriculum is designed, not to glorify God and prepare the child for His service, but to prepare the child for citizenship in the modern power state, to live or to die for social concerns. **(This is why Godly parents will REFUSE to send their children into a ungodly state education system).** Humanism has demanded more human sacrifices than any other religion known to man. Marxism alone is clear evidence of this.

GOD'S OWNERSHIP

As against all the pagan forms of dedicating the child to some variety of Molech worship, the Old Testament required circumcision. Circumcision means cutting off the male foreskin. It is a symbolic castration. It declares that man's hope is not in generation, but in regeneration, in the saving power of the Lord God of Israel.

According to Ezekiel 36:25, the sign of the new covenant would be baptism:

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you [Israel], and ye [Israel] shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I clean you.

Now baptism of children is no more than an act of choice on their part, than was circumcision on the eighth day an act of choice on the part of a male child. Our salvation is not an act of choice but God's act of Grace. Properly understood, all baptism, and especially the baptism of children, is a witness to our faith in predestination. In the baptism of our children, we give them to God, promising to rear them in His (not the State's!) nurture and admonition, and we pray that He makes them His own, members of His congregation and kingdom.

The baptism of a child is thus an affirmation of the sovereignty of God's grace. It is a declaration of His property rights over us and over our children. We have a duty to serve God, and also to pray for our children's children, that they be God's children also.

Having received grace, we affirm our children's need for grace. baptism is thus a witness to our faith in God's sovereignty, His mercy, His predestinating grace, and His mercy unto our children's children.

Courtesy Chalcedon Report, Box 158 Vallecito CA 95251

ON MARRIAGES AND COMMITMENTS

by **Samuel L. Blumenfeld**

Whenever I read my *Sunday Boston Globe*, I enjoy scanning the wedding announcements to see if I know any of the couples or their families. It gives a quick view of culture, religion, education, careers, and honeymoon destinations, all which reveal a great deal about our society in a very small amount of printed space. But this Sunday, there was something on the Special Occasions page that had never been there before, a section headed by the word **Commitments**, which listed three same-sex “affirmations of partnerships,” the partners being all males.

Homosexual “Marriages”

Most of the heterosexual ‘marriages’ took place in churches of all sorts of denominations. One took place at an inn on Martha's Vineyard. But on the whole, religion seemed to play an important part in the marriage. Weddings are traditionally religious ceremonies, and although we live in a largely secular culture, when it comes to such important occasions as weddings and funerals, families turn to religious traditions — Christian or otherwise — that have been handed down over several thousand years.

The widespread preference for church weddings is of course due to our general acknowledgment that newlyweds need all of the spiritual help they can get as they embark on their new lives as married couples. Marriage, along with parenthood, is a very demanding state of existence, requiring strong love and commitment.

And so I was interested in seeing whether same-sex ‘commitments’ reflected the same values as normal marriages between men and women. There were no gay church weddings. Biblical traditions made such religious ceremonies unlikely, if not impossible. No doubt there are liberal ministers who would perform such ceremonies. But their congregations may not have caught up with the new thinking.

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The first male couple “affirmed their partnership” at the parents’ home of one of the partners. A Unitarian minister officiated at the ceremony. Unitarians, of course, are humanists who believe in total sexual freedom and reject the Bible’s prohibitions against homosexuality, infidelity, pre-marital sex and fornication and promiscuity. Humanists claim to have morals, but they have nothing to do with restricting sexual expression. And the word “sin” isn’t even in their vocabulary.

The second male couple “affirmed their partnership” in the garden of their home, officiated by a Justice of the Peace. The third ‘couple’ “affirmed their partnership” at their home in a “new age” ceremony that relied mainly on Buddhist thought. It was officiated by the sister of one of the partners. The concept of sin doesn’t even exist in new age philosophy.

Same Sex “Divorce”

Now, we know that in America many marriages end in divorce. The high hopes of the marriage, with its commitments and affirmations, are wrecked on the shoals of infidelity, neglect, selfishness, alcoholism, and general incompatibility. Generally, it is the children who suffer most in such marriage break-ups. They usually love both parents and are torn by the need to be loyal to both while having to navigate the distance between them.

Same-sex commitments will face the same kind of disintegrating forces, if not more so. Homosexuals are notoriously promiscuous, since sex plays such an important part in their lives. But just as newspapers hardly report on divorces of average heterosexual couples, they won’t tell us about how long same-sex partnerships manage to last.

In order to be listed in the *Boston Globe’s* Commitments section, same-sex couples “must have their partnerships affirmed in an officiated ceremony.” And so, our liberal media has taken another step away from Biblical cultural and moral standards and extended the frontiers of humanist cultural hegemony over American society. Yet, even the *Boston Globe* did not call these same-sex commitments “marriages” - they called them partnerships.

In Massachusetts there is a movement to have marriage defined in the state constitution as matrimony between a husband and wife, a union of a male and a female. Webster’s dictionary of 1850 defines marriage as “the act of uniting a man and a woman for life; wedlock; the legal union of a man and a woman for life. Marriage is a contract both civil and religious, by which the partners engage to live together in mutual affection and fidelity until death shall separate them. Marriage was instituted by God Himself, for the purpose of preventing the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, for promoting domestic felicity, and for securing the maintenance and education of children.”

That was the Christian definition of marriage acceptable to all Americans in the nineteenth century. Today, we are being urged to accept another definition, which includes same-sex partnerships. Although polls indicate that most Americans do not accept such partnerships as marriages, our progressive media is slowly working to change the attitudes of the American people. Their thinking is that today’s population may reject same-sex ‘marriages’, but after the younger generation will have been duly “educated” in their

humanist, anti-God public schools, they will accept them. Christians who oppose them will be labelled intolerant bigots.

Christian Responses

Despite this pressure for liberal conformity, there is a growing movement among young Christians to promote abstinence before marriage and an enthusiastic acceptance of the traditional definition of wedlock. Courtship is replacing dating as the means of bringing young people together for future marriage and family building - which then builds further to community building. dating as practiced in today’s decadent youth culture, has been the cause of more social unhappiness and suffering than any other activity among the young. (Dating is just practice for divorce! CIM) Jealous rage among spurned teenagers has led to physical abuse and even murder.

However, the pure Christian approach to marriage and family is bound to attract more and more young people who yearn for a clear vision of future happiness as

lived in accordance with God’s precepts. Thus, they want nothing to do with the depravity and destructiveness of today’s mass youth culture.

Marriage, with all of its traditional trappings, is still extremely popular among Americans. All you have to do is pick up one of these phonebook-size bridal magazines to realize that woman want marriage, not only for future happiness, but for all the material goodies that go with today’s expensive, glamorous marriage ceremonies. Even discount merchants now feature Bridal Registries so that relatives and friends can buy gifts for the couple at moderate prices.

Weddings now require elaborate receptions in hotel ballrooms, complete with flowers, music ensembles, gourmet dinners, cocktails, photographers, limousines, etc. Marriage is big business in America, but same-sex “partnerships” do not as yet have the kind of commercial clout that warrants publishing fat magazines devoted to ‘gay’ “marriages.” Perhaps the heterosexual magazines will set aside a special section for “gay weddings.” Which means that in some areas of the country with large ‘gay’ communities, these elaborate receptions will become indispensable, or else it won’t seem like a real marriage.

Courtesy Chalcedon Report - address given earlier.

WHICH WATER SAVES

Analyzing the Theory of Baptismal Regeneration

by Pastor Jory S. Brooks

Is Salvation Due to Church Baptism?

A Teaching and Its Results

In looking for a Christian school for my daughter, I recently attended an “open house” sponsored by a local Christian academy. Upon arriving, I noticed a large “Church of Christ” denomination building next door, and asked a school official of they were associated with their neighbors. “Oh, yes,” she replied beaming, “We are an outreach ministry of the Church of Christ!” This denomination has also been termed “Campbellites,” after their founder, Alexander Campbell, and is best known for promoting the theory of “baptismal regeneration,” saying



that water baptism by complete immersion (submersion) is necessary for salvation (Peters and Weiland have their origins in these groups). An offshoot of that denomination, known as the "Boston Church of Christ" movement, further teaches that water immersion must take place by a Campbellite minister for anyone to be saved. Because they are very vocal and insistent in their views, Christians need to know if there is any truth to these assertions.

Before leaving, I explained to the school official that the Bible teaches salvation by faith, and anything else constituted a false salvation doctrine. I also asked her a question, and received an answer which shows the deleterious nature of the Campbellite belief. Suppose that an individual has been imprisoned in Red China, or until recently, in the former Soviet Union. Another cell-mate witnesses to this person about Jesus Christ and His death for our [Israel's] sins. The prisoner accepts the gospel message given, and believes in Jesus Christ with his whole mind, heart, and soul. yet immersion is not possible in that stark prison, and the prisoner dies soon after, without ever having received baptism.

"Oh, I doubt that ever happened!" the Campbellite official exclaimed. "Just suppose it does," I persisted, "Where does that prisoner spend eternity?" She looked at me, and an unbelievable smile crossed her face, "Why then," she said, "that person will burn in hell-fire forever and ever!" "Even if that prisoner had true faith in Jesus, and wanted to be baptized, but couldn't?" I asked. "Yes!" she said, "Because you have to realize that there are requirements for salvation, and unless every one of them are met, the end is eternal torment." She proceeded to give me the Scriptural "proof text" used by the Campbellites to promote their doctrine, found in the gospel of John chapter 3:1-8,

*"1. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews [Judeans]: 2. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.** 4. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **except a man be born OF WATER AND of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: **so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**"*

The fifth verse above is an important key passage to the followers of Alexander Campbell. "As the text stands, it embodies the doctrine of water regeneration literally and boldly." So said the late Biblical scholar Charles Clayton Morrison, former general editor of the Disciples of Christ denomination magazine. In 1914 he wrote a series of articles on baptism, and analyzed the theology of salvation by water baptism.

The Campbellite position on this passage is that no one can be a member of Christ's true church, or receive salvation, without water baptism by complete immersion (i.e. submersion). Does this passage really teach that?

[I suggest, that for what this passage teaches, you go

and read again the article by Arnold Kennedy, *Born Again or Begotten From Above*, Newsl. #147, Apr. 1998, p7, or study the book *Exclusiveness of Israel*, #714 @ \$21.95, CIM]

Immersion aside, the Campbellites have a problem with the ending clauses of verses 3 and 5, concerning entering the Kingdom. Being "pre-millennialists," they believe that the present age is not a part of the Kingdom of God. Yet they still assume that this "Kingdom" verse is speaking of joining the true church in this age and of how to become a Christian now! This passage is evidence that the Kingdom of God includes both of these ages - the present age and millennium - and is not limited to a future age. But there is something even more interesting here!

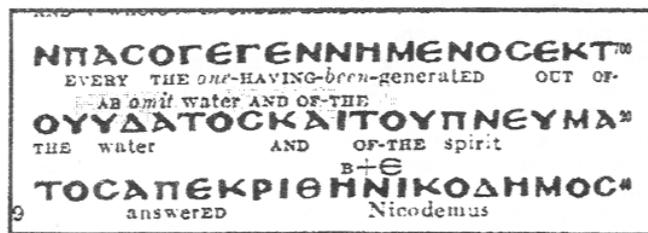
Justin Martyr referred to verse five in his First Apology, chapter 61, written about 130 or 140 AD, and quoted it as, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Dr. Morrison says, "Justin's text of the Gospel evidently did not have in it the "born of

water" clause. He appeals for the necessity of regeneration to the words of Jesus, but for the manner of accomplishing it in water by baptism, he quotes Isaiah 1:16-20. he would hardly have resorted to such round-about and dubious support for baptismal regeneration as the prophet Isaiah afforded had he had before him the express word of Jesus. Certainly the text of John 3:5 as it stands in our Bibles would have been just what he needed to establish the connection of water

baptism and immersion" ("Baptism" C. C. Morrison, p.1690170).

Morrison concludes by saying, "If we omit from verse [5] the words interpolated ... we will find that they are not missed. Verse [5] will then read, "Except one be born of Spirit {i.e. Spiritually} he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." JESUS IS INTENDING TO MAKE A SHARP CONTRAST IN THE MIND OF NICODEMUS BETWEEN THE PHYSICAL BIRTH AND THE BIRTH WHICH HE DECLARES TO BE ESSENTIAL TO ENTRANCE INTO HIS KINGDOM. THE ANTITHESIS IS BETWEEN "FLESH" AND "SPIRIT." FOR HIM TO MIX THE IDEA OF EMERSION FROM WATER IS TO DESTROY THE UNITY OF HIS THESIS AND REALLY TO CONTRADICT IT. All of which evidence, both external and internal, leads us to an agreement with Professor Norton in the conclusion that the reference to water in this passage is a second century interpolation, either intentional or due to a marginal gloss." (Morrison, p.172).

Professor Morrison presents an important point. Here is reproduced a passage from the *Concordant Greek Text*



of John 3:8. The notation shows that "A [Alexandrinus] B [Vaticanus] Omit WATER AND OF THE" Therefore, only the Sinaiticus manuscript attributes salvation to the presence of both baptismal water and Spirit in



this verse. Both the Alexandrinus and Vaticanus ancient manuscript copies of the New Testament omit in verse 8 the mention of water baptism as a requirement for entering the Kingdom of God. This is in agreement with other passages of Scripture, such as **Romans 10:13**, which states, "For whoever [of Israel] shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Again, Paul said in **Romans 10:6, 9**, "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise ... That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Paul repeated this truth yet again in Romans 1:17 in saying, "righteousness .. is of faith from first to last." See also Acts 16:30-31, Romans 3:28, Matthew 10:32, and Luke 12:8. Since the foregoing Scripture passages are repeated alike in all ancient manuscripts, the most that the Campbellites can do is to imply that the Bible contradicts itself in John 3. However, we do not believe that is the case, nor do we feel that important Salvation doctrine should rest upon only one Scripture passage, especially one in which the most ancient copies are not in agreement!

The concept of salvation by ritual act is foreign to the New Testament and the numerous Scriptures we have presented. This fact was well-known to Thomas Campbell, who was the father of the founder of the Campbellite sect. At the suggestion that no one had been baptized who had been immersed, he warned his son, Alexander, that to proclaim immersion as the equivalent of baptism is to "paganize the church." His son's followers should heed that warning today, for it is truly a false salvation message.

Another interesting point is that the thief on the cross in **Luke 23**, was converted to faith in Jesus, died without baptism, and yet Jesus told him, 'You will be with me in Paradise.' It is evident, therefore, that water baptism is not at all a necessary ingredient in salvation.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise." (Lk 23⁴²⁻⁴³)

What Kind Of Water Saves?

Since the Bible does command baptism for those who believe, we need to examine its symbolism and purpose in the Christian life and experience. As shown in a previous article, the preferred method of baptism is using flowing water - i.e. water in motion. The reason is that flowing water itself symbolizes holy spirit and the salvation it brings:

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee LIVING WATER." (John 4:10)

There are two key terms here: the "gift of God," and "Living Water." We learn the meaning of the first in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but **THE GIFT OF GOD** is **ETERNAL LIFE** through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus says that if she knew the meaning of salvation and eternal life, she would have asked for "living water." What is this? We find the answer in John 7:37-39,

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that BELIEVETH on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (BUT THIS SPAKE HE OF THE SPIRIT, which they that believe on him should receive: for holy ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not glorified.)"

Thus, "living water" is the Holy Ghost, not a big tank of chlorinated liquid! The water is a visible, demonstrable symbol for the invisible Spirit of God which is the source of our salvation. We see this truth several more times throughout the Scriptures: John 4:11-14,

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that LIVING WATER? Art thou greater **THAN OUR FATHER JACOB**, which gave is the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The spring of living water spoken of is given by God in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, not by a tank of water, and that well-spring provides us with everlasting life, salvation. Yes, God in Christ Jesus is the fountain of living waters:

"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken the fountain of **LIVING WATERS**, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer 2:13.

Again, these "living waters" are God's Holy Spirit. Since in a symbolic sense, the King represents the Kingdom, we see these waters graphically depicted on earth in the coming Tabernacles age: Zech 14:8-9,

"And it shall be in that day, that **LIVING WATERS** shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the **LORD** shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one **LORD**, and his name one."

We see the same scene described for us in the final book of the New Testament: Rev. 7:15-17, 21:6, 22:1-2,

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto LIVING FOUNTAINS OF WATERS: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

21:6, And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE freely.

22:1-2, And he showed me a PURE RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the RIVER, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Don't confuse the ritual with the reality, the shadow with the substance! Don't confound the symbol with the thing symbolized. Jesus in the flesh, is the real "Living Water" that is able to save us. The literal water which streams or pours over us in baptism is only a ritual representation of a Divine work of grace. Like the thief on the cross, **the Holy spirit can act entirely without human agency of a minister and bath water**. The baptism ceremony, then, is an entirely separate, outward demonstration of an inward grace; a grace performed by Divine

Please note:

The response to the mail out of those seeking contacts to send in their details has been very poor. I can only take it that people do not seek contact with others, either for themselves or for their children (of whatever age).

If you are interested in contact, please return the filled out form (coloured) which was sent with the Camp registration details on the other side! Thanks.



action. That Sunday morning demonstration of faith shown in baptism is entirely separate from God's action on a human heart, mind, and soul. The difference between the ritual and the reality is clearly shown in the book of Acts: 1:5

"For John truly baptized with water: But ye shall be baptized with the holy ghost not many days hence.

11:15-16, And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

In a similar way, it is not literal bath-water that Christ's ecclesia, His Church, is sanctified with; it is the Holy Spirit, the "Living Water" that brings us also to a saving faith: Eph 5:25, 26

*"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the **washing of water by the word**, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."*

Christ Jesus our high priest, has himself sanctified His People, washing us with the pure water of holy spirit.

"And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."(Heb. 10:21-22)

Again, the fountain of the water of life which saves us is not baptismal tap-water, but the Holy Spirit:

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Rev 21:5-6.

A FEW FINAL POINTS

1. Baptism Of Children? Even though baptism is a Christian initiatory rite, evangelical denominations that baptize babies still usually don't include baptized infants as members of the body until they are confirmed; so the baptism of little children in respect to initiation really does very little (same goes for circumcision) - they still need confirmation to be members, at a time when they are old enough to make their own profession. That's why we speak of Believer's Baptism [I think part of this is because the churches are *universalist* in their thinking, and not focussed on an *Exclusive Israel!* Small children are included because they are born into a family covenanted to the God of their forefathers. CIM]

2. Are Baptism And Immersion Synonymous?

My wife and daughter were both immersed and submerged yesterday afternoon during a fun-filled swim in the Huntingdon Woods Community swimming pool. Was it a baptism? Hardly, even though they were completely immersed! Obviously, it's not the immersion that makes it baptism. Penitent believers are immersed many times without being baptized!

The Didache, or teaching of the Apostles, (#297 @ \$5.30) was an early second-century work written by leaders in the Church, many of whom had known and discussed theology with the Apostle John before his death in about 95 AD. These leaders advocate baptism by "living (or flowing) water," but specifically mention the mode of pouring. Church

historian, Dr. Philip Schaff, gave the following remarks concerning the Didache: "The Didache has the marks of the highest authority and is one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, of the post-apostolic writings. There is nothing in it which could not have been written between AD70 and 100."

3. Remission Of Sin? If Baptism's purpose is for the remission of sin as the Campbellites teach, then why did Jesus need to be baptized by John the Baptist? (Matt 3:14-16) [this was answered in the previous part, Old Testament baptism, last month] The liberal/agnostic "Jesus Seminar" uses this reasoning to teach that Jesus was only human, a sinner in need of baptism, and therefore not a perfect offering for our sins! But in actual fact, when Peter told us to "*Repent and be baptized for the remission of sin*" (Acts 2:38), the emphasis was not on baptism, but on the faith and its resulting repentance by which our sins are forgiven!

Courtesy Restoration Bible Church, Box 325, Royal Oak MI 48068

CAMP

So far it looks like there will be about 28

people here altogether. If you have arranged to come, or are planning to come, please send in your registration form and fee, so that we can confirm that you are coming and allocate sleeping quarters. Thank you for doing so

NOW!

least at our best; the statistics seem to show that self-described evangelicals are in a dead heat with our unbelieving neighbours in the divorce rate). And if we did, there would still be plenty of other good men out there practicing the prophetic gift against divorce. That is not my aim here. No, my point is directed at others, the evangelicals who want everything practical and so go for practical divorce, all the sin without all the baggage.

The Sin Without The Baggage

"Practical divorce" is another, perhaps clearer, word for abdication. What we do instead of divorce is lie down on the job. Like Bartleby, when confronted with our familial job description we reply, "I would prefer not to." We find all kinds of ways to abdicate, to break the ties that bind, while still looking our best.

Often it is merely a matter of time. We simply fail to pay sufficient attention to our wives, husbands, or children. It may be sports, watching or playing. That we could even joke about "football widows" is a sign of decline. It could be the biggest sport of all, surfing. Whether we surf the east coast on a computer screen or the west coast on a TV screen doesn't make much difference.

The greatest danger lies in the greatest distractions. "Ministry" works great. Who better to have as your illicit lover than God Himself? Just let the wife or husband complain to the elders about that. Or how about the kids? Aren't they important? Better yet, call them God's covenant children. "Sorry I haven't said one word to you today, but you know, I've got these covenant children to look after."

Abdication doesn't even require absence. We can



spend all kinds of time with our families, and yet have a practical divorce. We do so by failing to perform our functions. When we want our children to see us as buddies, and so fail to discipline, we have abdicated. When we want our wives to see us not as covenantal heads but as evangelical Romeos, we have abdicated. When we want our husbands to see us not as godly helpmates but as Christian playmates, then we have abdicated. When we want our grown children to see us as over-indulgent sitters of their children rather than patriarchs and matriarchs, then we have abdicated. When we want our parents to see us not as blessings to be nurtured in the admonition of the Lord, but as future all-stars or movie stars to be chauffeured hither and yon, we have abdicated.

We have been given roles to play in families. And the family is no place for streams of consciousness improvising. These roles have been given to us by the Great Playwright Himself. These roles are no more stifling than the script of *Hamlet*. To be sure, the world beckons us to another stage where we can play the harlot. But God has not called to you be “you,” at least what you think “you” are. He has not placed you upon His stage to hear you warble through yet another rendition of “My Way.” He has called you to be His, that is, ever more like His Son. Like a mask, we put on Jesus, not only covering our shame in His glory, but becoming more like Him with each passing day. And surprise, we become more like what we really are. We find that we are putting back together the shattered pieces of the image of God in us.

Blessed Be The Tie

The ties that bind us in our familial roles are also the anchors in our lives. They keep us from being smashed against the rocks in the storm of cultural rebellion. They keep us from drifting into uncharted waters, littered with the rusting hulls of those who have made shipwreck of their souls. The ties that bind are like those that bound Ulysses, keeping him from leaping to his death in pursuit of the lie of the Sirens. The ties that bind us are the very chains that mark our enslavement to Jesus. He bought us, and He owns us. Let us honor Him in all obedience, and with great joy.

Courtesy Chalcedon Report, Box 158 Vallecito CA 95251.

PROBLEMS WITH BEING GOD’S ISRAEL

If Christian Americans of Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, or Germanic descent, begin to consider themselves as God’s chosen people, won’t that lead to some kind of national imperialism, some concepts of racial superiority, some religious self-righteousness? Could this possibly lead to an attitude that scorns others outside and does no favours for the kingdom of God? It has already happened for some extremists who hate others of different races and religions; and the same radical pride and jealousy pervades other races and religions.

Has such extremism affected Jewry who have been considered by some to be God’s Israel? To the extent that is has, it is wrong, because God did not choose Israel because they were to adopt a prejudiced, bigoted, imperialistic attitude toward others. Quite the opposite - God chose Israel to be His servant people, to serve God by serving others, to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Ex. 19:6).

God’s Israel was to be “a peculiar treasure unto Me

(God) *above all people*” (vs. 5). So are Christians according to Peter who repeated this verse to the same people:

“*You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*” (1 Peter 2:9).

Does this mean superiority? Ever since socialism tried to level all people, we have been taught that it is better to be equal to every body rather than better than anyone. We have tried to raise the lower classes and lower the upper classes to make us all one big happy family in the middle class. This is majoring in mediocrity. No one has ever succeeded in economic equality by taking from the rich to give to the poor. Any society that seeks as its aim to make all men equal, all bourgeois, destroys its leaders and also its workers.

There is nothing wrong with being better, being superior, being above others, higher, richer, smarter, etc. mediocrity is not an acceptable goal for Americans nor Christians. Christianity is *superior* to Islam and Judaism, to Humanism or Hinduism. Christ is *superior* to Moses, to Huxley, to Idols. Christians are *superior* to people of other religions and people of no religion. How are they superior? In name, in godliness, in holiness, in service to God, in wisdom, in charity, in love, in hope, in choosing, and in truth.

God chose Israel to be His Special People in these words: “*For you are a holy (separated) people unto the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are on the face of the*

earth ... because the Lord loved you!” Further more, “*You shall be blessed above all people.*” (v. 14). “*For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are on the face of the earth.*” (Deut 14:2)

The early English who settled America had their roots in Protestant Christianity. They were Puritan separatists and Church of England loyalists, but they all had a concept of their covenant calling as God’s chosen people to tame the wilderness and convert the natives (a mistake, CIM), to build the kingdom of Jesus in this new part of the world. How do we know? They said so in writing.

John *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (#310 @ \$7.20) was put in every cathedral in England in 1571, and it later became second only to the Bible among books known and read by English Christians. The influence of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* has been evaluated by historians of our culture (*Religion in America* by Winthrop Hudson, the *Elect Nation* by William Haller and *Redeemer Nation* by Ernest L. Tuveson). The titles of these books indicate their theses.

William Penn established Penn’s Woods (Pennsylvania) as a “Holy experiment” to show God’s example to the nations. This Holy Experiment was illustrated in the murals on the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg. The historic Massachusetts State House in Boston has a mural which is captioned, “**The Lord is Our Defense; the Holy One of Israel is Our King.**” Maryland was founded, according to Jesuit Father Andrew White, by the providence of God, and the “first and most important design” was “sowing the seeds of religion and piety.”

In Virginia, John Rolfe wrote that the English migra-

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tion to that colony was for “a peculiar people, marked and chosen by the finger of God” to possess the land. These early English colonies were beset with many hardships and tragedies with loss of lives and investments, but Alexander Whitaker of the Church of England wrote in *Good News From Virginia* in 1613, reminding the discouraged ones how “fortie years were expired, before Israel could plant in Canaan, and yet God had called them by the word of His mouth, had led them himself by a high hand. Yet may you boldly looke for a shorter time of reward.”

The Puritans of New England probably had the most clear perception of their destiny under God where they could establish a covenant relationship with God for their new Christian Israel society. As Prof. Cherry states (in *God's New Israel*, p.27), “They believed that like Israel of old they had been singled out by God to be an example for the nations.” It was expressed for them in John Winthrop’s *Model of Christian Charity*, written aboard the flagship Arbella. Winthrop spelled out the covenant as a divine social order in which there were some rich and some poor. He saw the Puritan New Israel as a new covenant with God.

Jonathan Edwards, leading theologian of the eighteenth century, defended this “Great Awakening” and saw revival in America as God’s “City upon a hill” whose light would shine until the Kingdom of God would spread from America to the rest of the earth. Little did Jonathan Edwards know then that this America would become a light to the nations as was prophesied of Jesus: “A Light to lighten the nations and the glory of Your people Israel” (Luke 2:22, Isa 42:6, Acts 13:43).

It is the United States of America that publishes more Bibles. Christian books, tracts, and literature; send more missionaries to more parts of the globe, builds more churches, church-related schools, and colleges, hospitals and homes for the elderly, conducts more services for the poor, for widows and orphans, than any combination of religions and nations in the world. (Unfortunately, it also publishes more mind-destroying movies, pornography, and distributes death and destruction by its military missionaries, and is leading the world to enslavement to communism, CIM)

Why? Because we are God’s Israel!

Excerpted from the writings of Pastor R.T. Woodworth



9.5 *I am confused about the time of Joel. Would you explain Joel 3:10, “Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears.” Why were farm tools to be changed into implements of war?*

The context of this verse shows us that this is speaking of the future time when Israel would be invaded at the end of the age. In ancient times there was often a shortage of metal suitable for manufacturing armaments, so the people would often have to melt down their farm tools and the fashion them into implements of war. Since farm tools were so important to an agricultural society, this shows just how urgent was the need to arm the nation against the enemy.

We have such a situation today, where America has been disarmed. I don’t know if we will ever have to melt down our tractors to build missiles, but the point is that the Bible says in the latter days Israel would be in urgent need of military equipment.

I might add, too, that Joel 3:10 should be read along with

Isaiah 2:4, “And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

This prophesies a time when Jesus would be in rulership over the earth, and there would be no more war. Only under the rulership of Jesus can we safely disarm and put our efforts back into production of real wealth, rather than into military hardware.**

9.6 *I would like to know what the Bible has to say about cremation after death. I know of friends and relatives who have expressed preference for cremation of their bodies. Is this contrary to God's Law?*

There is no specific passage prohibiting cremation, nor is there any command to practice it. However, in all Bible records of the disposition of the body of an Israelite, it was by burial.

The Canaanites burned children in fire as an offering to Baal. God condemned Israel for joining in such a terrible practice. In Jesus’ time all were buried, except that criminals were burned in the garbage dump called *gehenna* (translated “hell” in the KJV). Jesus warned believers to avoid *gehenna*, meaning not to sin and have their bodies burned.

Also, many pagan religions practice cremation, which alone would warrant our being opposed to it. With these many arguments against cremation, and no positive Bible command for it, we conclude it is God’s will that Israelites be buried. The fact that some are burned will have no effect on the resurrection. Even the sea will give up its dead on resurrection day, for which we praise Jesus Anointed.

Courtesy America’s Promise, PO Box 157, Sandpoint ID 83864

THANKSGIVING

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.” Ps. 92:1

The 92nd Psalm reminds us that it is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises unto His Name (the Psalms are the best thing for doing that with! CIM). In the US, in November, a special time has been set aside for God’s people to give thanks to the Almighty for his goodness and blessings.

God has told us in His Word that He blesses the nations and people who honour and obey His righteous commandments. As we look backward to the Pilgrims and pioneers, we see that they were a strong and God-fearing people who, under severe living conditions, saw it right and proper to set aside a time to celebrate God’s favour and blessings. And since that time, by proclamation of several Presidents, this has become a yearly observance. Throughout this former “wilderness” Thanksgiving will be celebrated in a variety of ways. But however we observe this special day, let us acknowledge that all of our blessings come from the Lord who made the heavens and the earth.

We have much to be grateful for. In many areas the Lord has permitted us to reach the hearts and minds of God’s people as we reach out with His Word. We are thankful for all who have helped to make this possible. And we are thankful for the strength and health which allows us to carry on with this ministry.

Let us all be thankful for the many blessings in our lives - many that we often take for granted or overlook. Let’s be thankful for the privilege of prayer, and the assurance that God hears the prayers of the righteous and of those who love and obey Him. May He bless you,

