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Temple Sacrifices

We quote from an article by the same title in *Jerusalem*, a journal of the Jewish Christian Community:

We have often written about the next Temple which is being spoken of and referred to these days. That such a Temple will be built in Jerusalem is evident from the prophecies. Jesus spoke of Daniel's words in connection with the "abomination that maketh desolate, and the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away on account of this abomination" (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15). In our opinion, this should not be confused with the Messianic Temple (Isa. 3:3). The first chief rabbi of Israel, Rav Abraham Yitzhak HaKohen Kook, claimed that when that Temple is built, animal sacrifices would not be introduced.

He quoted Isaiah's prophecy in defense of that view: "They will not do evil nor will they destroy anything in the entire mountain of my holiness because the knowledge of the Lord will fill the land as the waters cover the seas..."

The chief rabbi believed the prophet's words left no room for animal slaughter, no matter how idealistic the reason. In his opinion, in the Third Temple, the entire sacrificial cult will consist of "...the meal offering of Judah and Jerusalem, which will be sweet unto the Lord as in the days of old, and as in former years" (Mal. 3:4).

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin who writes the weekly Shabbat sermon in *The Jerusalem Post* comments: "Rav Kook's messianic vision teaches that the most significant part of the sacrifice was never meant to be the savory smell of the burning meat, but the trembling sincerity of the human heart."

What amazing words! We cannot help but wonder at the all inclusiveness of God's overruling of the chosen seed, not only those by faith in Christ Jesus, but also on behalf of the flesh of Abraham. Yes, they were cast off in punishment for a time. However, Paul tells us what will come with their return to favor: nothing less than the resurrection from the dead (Romans 11:15).

Natural Israel's course during the past twenty centuries has been much different than that of the Christian believer. Yet, God has brought many Jews to a point not far distant from Christian believers.

Of course, the Jew must yet accept the Lord Jesus Christ for what he is, their Lord and their savior. This we know will occur when he reasons with them (Ezek. 20:35; Zech. 12:10). Yet, can we not realize how wonderfully God has prepared them to receive Messiah even through the experience of their dispersion!

Consider the words of this rabbi, the first chief rabbi of Israel! He has better understood the words of Scripture than many who claim to be Christian. Many supposedly Christian believers can still lift their eyes scarcely higher than their own church, their own pastor, their own order of service. This rabbi, however, understands and teaches the true purpose of the temple service. ' This service is the ascendancy of the human heart to God in worship, meekness, repentance, and adoration. If the Jew of our own day grasps this astoundingly simple spark of truth, will they not be as a fire brand fanned into flame (cf., Isa. 42:3) when they turn and accept him who died for their sins?

Consider the fervency of Saul of Tarsus when the Lord Jesus appeared to him and changed him into Paul. How similar Saul's change to Paul will be the experience of a nation turned to God in the days for which we pray, *"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth even as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:10). If we hope to be part of that Kingdom, what manner of persons ought we to be...?

God pardons like a mother who kisses the offense into everlasting forgetfulness. -- Henry Ward Beecher

"So shall my word be which goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it" -- Isa. 55:11

"And I will betroth you to me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion" -- Hosea 2:19

Confession of Sin

"I have sinned"

This scriptural confession, "I have sinned," occurs seven times (Exod. 9:27; Num. 22:34; I Sam. 15:24; Josh. 7:20; Matt. 27:4; Job 7:20; Luke 15:21). We will review each of these references. In doing so we will find that each conveys an entirely different attitude. While one person confesses, "I have sinned," and receives forgiveness, another says, "I have sinned," and goes on his way to blacken himself with worse crimes than he had before committed.

The Hardened Sinner - Exodus 9:27

Pharaoh was the hardened sinner who said "I have sinned" only when terrorized. *"And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."* Why this confession from the haughty tyrant? Did he desire to humble himself before God? Judge his confession by the circumstances under which it was made:

"And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation" (Exod. 9:23, ff.).

While the thunder is rolling through the sky, while the lightning flashes set the very ground on fire, while the hail falls in big lumps of ice -- "Now," says Pharaoh, *"I have sinned."* -- Is this the first time that Pharaoh knew that he had sinned against God and his children? No! He had been mistreating them for years, but he was too proud to humble himself, confess his sin and seek the forgiveness of God and his children to mend his ways. In time, he seared his conscience; wrong conduct and unjust practices had little effect upon him. He hardened his heart. Of what value was his confession? That confession, begotten during the terrors of the storm, died in the calm. That repentance, which was born amid the thunder and the lightning, ceased when all was hushed in quietness. Pharaoh returned to his former evil ways.

The Double Minded Man -- Numbers 22:34

Balaam was double minded. He said, "I have sinned," and felt it too. He felt it deeply. However, he was so worldly that he preferred the wages of unrighteousness to obeying God's commands. Balak, king of Moab, feared the children of Israel and encamped his army on the plains of Moab. Balak sent messengers to the Prophet Balaam, asking him to come and curse the Israelites so that the Moabites might engage and defeat them in battle. These messengers carried with them bribes for Balaam, bribes which Balaam wanted to receive. He said, *"Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me."* Balaam pled the cause of Balak: *"And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed."*

The next day Balak received a message from Balaam. He then sent his sons to promise the prophet promotion and honor in addition to their gifts if he would curse Israel.

"And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more."

Next Balaam went to see Balak, and on his way an angel interrupted his journey. Here, he realized that he had erred in not listening to the commands of God. It was to the angel that he said: "I have sinned."

Upon meeting Balak, Balaam was taken to view the armies of Israel. Again, he was offered bribes if he would curse Israel. Again, Balaam went before God, pleading the cause of Moab. Returning to Balak he said: *"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?"* Sincerely, he repeatedly approached God to plead the cause of Balak, and with sincerity he returned each time to Balak with a refusal. At one time, he speaks words reminiscent of the Apostle's reference to the *times of restitution... which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,* saying, *"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh."* Balaam was double minded. He wanted to serve righteousness, but he also wanted the wages and honor of unrighteousness. He troubled himself in hoping to convince God to change his mind so as to make this second desire possible.

The Insincere Man - 1 Samuel 15:24

Saul was insincere when he said, "I have sinned." Balaam, on the other hand, was partially sincere. Saul did not have a single dominant characteristic, and he was molded by circumstances which passed quite over his head. Samuel reproved him, and he confessed: "I have sinned." Yet, he was not sincere, as the rest of the verse shows: *"I have sinned; for/ have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; because I feared the people and obeyed their voice."* This was a lying alibi. Saul never feared anybody; he was always ready to do his own will. He was king. Immediately before this he had offered another excuse. He had saved the best of the sheep and oxen to offer to the Lord as a sacrifice; both statements could not be true.

Insincerity dominated Saul's character. One day he called David from his bed, thinking to kill him in his house. Another time he declares: *"God forbid that I should do ought against thee, my son David."* One day, because David saved his life, he said: *"Thou art more righteous than I; I will do so no more,"* but the day before he had gone out to fight against his own son-in-law in order to slay him. Sometimes Saul sought help from the prophets; other times he obtained counsel from witches -- sometimes one thing and sometimes another insincerity in everything.

In spite of similarities between Saul and Balaam, there are contrasts between the two men. Balaam was the great, bad man; great in all he did, whether good or bad. Saul was little, small in everything except stature; little in his good, and little in his vices. He was too weak to be desperately bad and too wicked to be at any time good. Balaam was great in both; the man who could at once defy God and yet say, *"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more."*

Continuing in Sin - Joshua 7:20

The story of Achan is one of a man who continued in sin until his sin was found out. Achan was a thief, a habitual thief who had hidden -- great wealth (gold, silver and garments) under his tent. He did not confess his sin until God, by process of elimination, pointed out that Achan was the man. His confession did not come from humble contrition, Achan confessed only from having been caught in theft and being forced to acknowledge his guilt.

The Confession of Despair - Matthew 27:4

Judas' confession is the worst confession of the seven. His is a repentance of despair. Judas said, "I have sinned." Yes, Judas the traitor, who had betrayed his Master when he saw that his Master was condemned, repented. In a fit of despair, he

"...brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priest and elders, saying: I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.... And he cast down the pieces in the temple and went and hanged himself."

Here is the worst repentance of all -- the dreadful, terrible, hideous and torturing confession of despair!

We will tarry no longer here but carry our thoughts higher to a more cheerful light. The previous confessions have been mean and dark, but the sixth is encouraging for it is the confession of a humble and contrite heart.

The Sincere Man -- Job 7:20

Job's confession recalls how Satan set himself against a man to bring misfortune upon him and to force him to abandon faith in God. Job's cattle were stolen. His servants were killed by cattle thieves, except for the two or three who escaped to bear him the news. His seven sons and three, daughters lost their lives in a storm. Yet, Satan's work was not complete. He stripped Job of his possessions, except for his wife and friends -- and they only added to his torments.

Mental stress is grievous and when mixed with physical ailment so that one is unable to sustain himself, it is far worse. Job broke out with boils; not a few, as might commonly confine a person to bed, he was covered with boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. That was not all:

"When I say my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me with visions; so that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life."

Poor Job, he could not even sleep. He would roll and toss with worries and pain. When he finally lulled off to sleep, he awoke with nightmares. Note his confession:

"I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? For now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be."

These are not the words of a hardened sinner arising from his own terror. They are not from the lips of a double minded man who vacillates between God's cause today and another's tomorrow. These are not words from the lips of the insincere self-excuser, nor from the schemer who refuses to confess until forced to admit his guilt. Neither is this the confession of despair, as one who has surrendered all hope of forgiveness and surrenders himself to deeper and blacker crimes.

This confession is sincere and penitent. Again, the confession centers on the restitution promises (Acts 3:19-21) of which all God's prophets spoke: *"For now shall I sleep in the dust and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be."* No, when God shall seek Job in the Millennial

morning through Jesus Christ the righteous, Job shall not be. He will be asleep in the dust.

The Prodigal Son -- Luke 15:21

Our final confession is that of the Prodigal son.

A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

This parable has its interpretation, but have you ever felt yourself in a similar position? Have you ever spent long hours away from the Father's house? Have you ever been engaged in riotous living, being wrapped up in the pleasures of the world? Have you ever left the Father's table or found yourself involved in the theories of man? Have you ever found yourself shopping around from one "herd of swine" to another?

While the "swine" thrive upon the pods of the locust or carob tree, the new creature in Christ Jesus starves for lack of spiritual food. He longs to return to his father's table. What was the prodigal's first reaction upon coming to his senses? *"I will go back."* I will return, but not in self -- righteously or excusing myself. I will return in contrite humility, fully confessing my errors and willing to accept the lowest place in my father's family -- as a servant.

Full, humble confession is the only basis for divine restoration to the privilege of sonship. The prodigal's resolution would have been inconsequential had the man not done what he resolved. There are many who are dissatisfied with this world and with the husks of daily life. They desire to return to their Father's table, but upon reflection they decide that the loss is too severe to be borne. They consider their older brothers, and in pride they say, No! They would rather search for a few beans among the husks than acknowledge the error of their ways.

The prodigal not only longed to return, he willed to return, and then he did return. *"And the father seeing him a great way off, had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."* The prodigal attempts to confess with a broken and contrite spirit, but he is interrupted by the father's love and the parent's request for the "best robe, figuratively the robe of Christ's righteousness -- justification; "the ring," being the Pentecostal blessing and a signet of everlasting mercy, forgiveness and love; "the fatted calf," showing the good, solid, wholesome truths and a general rejoicing, for the dead had come to life, the lost had been found, the wayward had returned.

We, also, approach our heavenly Father in travel stained garments. Bleeding from the shocks of life with our head bowed from our shame and our conscious of guilt, we approach him. As the father in the parable came out to greet his returning son while the son was yet afar off, so our heavenly Father forgives us our sins and welcomes us back to sonship if our confession is humble and sincere. If we are not double minded or insincere, our Father will forgive us our sins and welcome us back as long as we forsake our evil ways. We cannot, like Achan, continue in sin.

"Whosoever confesseth his sins, and forsaketh them, shall find mercy."

The Completeness of the Body

The church is the "one body" of Christ, and Christians are individual members of that body. No one lives to himself. No one dies to himself. When one member suffers, all members suffer with it.

One of this self sufficient age's sins is to deny the unity and the completeness of Christ's body and to test unity by other terms than he appointed. In the natural body, each member united with the head has a living union with every other member connected with the same head. The basis of true Christian unity is union with Jesus Christ who is the head of the body. Only in him do men obtain life, just like only in the body does an arm or leg continue to live.

Men lay down as the basis of their unity, unity with some leader, the doctrines which he proclaims or the forms which he institutes. They are united by external observances, by laws, forms, rites, and bands. Their union is the union of staves in a barrel; Christ's union is that of branches in a vine. Man's union is that of bones in a skeleton all wired together but destitute of life. The union of Christ and his people is the union of the members of a body, joined together by ligaments which secure each joint, and is pervaded by the energy of a common life.

Christ inaugurated a union of the entire family of God. It includes every man who owns Christ as his head. Man's schemes are too narrow for this. Men include only those persons whose opinions agree with their own and whose forms of worship are shaped according to the same pattern.

The Lord Jesus Christ asks us to receive one another as he received us. If we have passed from life to death and are united with Jesus then we are united to his people. If our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son, it is also with all those who are in them.

Men, however, restrict their fellowship by choice. While Christ's church includes many and reaches far, man's churches are narrow and exclude more than they invite in. What is the result? Those who seek kindred fellowship are prohibited, and those who do the excluding are hardened in heart. Many churches are crippled and helpless for lack of the sympathetic labor of Christian brothers who stand idly by. Why, if they are willing to help, are they hindered by party *shibboleths* (Judges 12:6) or unscriptural forms or names. How often are believers hindered from Christian service because they do not accept unscriptural statements or arrangements other men try to impose upon them before they are received into fellowship? Men toil on in weariness and bring themselves to the borders of the grave so that they can do what others would willingly do -- but cannot because they are prohibited from participating. Thus do men say to God's children: "You may be members of Christ's body, but we have no need of you or your services."

The Apostle taught us that no member of the body can be spared from its place and its proper work without injury to the body. No man can separate himself from the Body of Christ without injuring himself.

Nor can any group of Christians separate themselves from others who love the lord, or exclude other Christians from their fellowship without injuring themselves.

True Christian union emanates from Christ. The adaptation of one to the needs of the others is so complete and perfect that any separation must harm both those who cause it and those who endure it. The feet may say we are strong and need no eyes. We carry the body and the eyes are

mere useless gazers. When the eyes are gone, the feet grope and flounder in the ditch. The literal folly of this is evident, why cannot believers see the spiritual folly as well?

Whenever the inexperienced or self sufficient among the believers think themselves able to dispense with the services of others, they sooner or later find that they have overestimated their ability. They learn through distress and trouble that they have excluded from their company those very members who possess precisely the powers they lack. This is because God had provided them, each for the other, so that they might build one another up in the most holy faith.

Our savior's parting prayer was that his disciples might all be one. The truly regenerate long for this union, and they long for it all the more when they are hindered from participation by others; for they alone realize how important it is. The life and unity that Christ implants in the human heart are deeper than any of the names and creeds of men.

What God Hath Cleansed

"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." - Acts 10:15 by: J. T. Read

The story set forth in Acts chapter ten (Acts 10:1-11:18) is both interesting and significant for gentile believers. This lesson may be considered second in importance only to the sacrifice of Christ upon Calvary. The story is about opening the door of acceptance to gentiles. These could now be called into the grace of God's high calling in Christ Jesus, a blessing available only to those whom God calls. The story centers upon a devout Roman Centurion, his household and the Apostle Peter.

This is the only time Cornelius and his household are mentioned. We are not told how a gentile officer in the Roman army came to be religiously inclined. The record is, simply: *"...being a religious man, who revered God with all his household,, he was liberal in his alms to the people and did constantly pray to God."*

The Romans and Greeks were idolaters who knew nothing about the true God. Nevertheless, here we find a Roman officer who believed in the God of Israel, in spite of the superstitions of his countrymen, and being considered by the Jews as beyond the scope of God's favor or of any hope of salvation. He and his family worshiped, gave alms, fasted and prayed constantly. Such faith in the face of obstacles was indeed wonderful. If God counted Abraham and others prior to the advent of Christ as justified because of their faith [rather than by the works of the law], would not the same be true of believing gentiles when God chose to extend favor to them? The statement, *"...what God hath cleansed,"* subsequently made to Peter indicated that this was true.

Still, Cornelius was not a saved man, nor had he any right to the privileges bestowed through Christ. What stood in the way, seeing that he was abundantly qualified by faith? Primarily, it was the promise of God which stood in his way. God had said to Abraham that *"...in Isaac shall thy seed be called."* This was the barrier. God had set a time for exclusive favor to Israel. This is why, through the prophet Amos (Amos 3:2), God says: *"You only have I known (favored) of all the families of the earth."* This is why Jesus said, *"I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* This is why, in sending forth the twelve Apostles, he said, *"Go not into any way of the*

gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." When that Greek woman besought him to have mercy and heal her daughter (Mark 7:25-29), he at first ignored her; then, because of her importunity he said, *"It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."* Yet, when she replied that *"Even the dogs might eat of the crumbs from the children's table,"* he marveled at her faith and bestowed on her the crumb of healing.

The Effect of Visions

Cornelius was a captain over 100 men in the Italian army stationed at Caesarea to maintain the authority of Rome. About three o'clock in the afternoon, the ninth hour [the same hour at which time Jesus died on the cross], he saw in a vision an angel of God saying to him, "Cornelius!" He stared at the angel in terror, saying, "What is it?" This was an awe-inspiring creature in shining apparel. Why was he here?

We might envy those of Bible times who saw visions. Yet, when we consider the affect of those visions, we may be glad that they have come to us only through the eye of faith. Abraham was cast into a deep sleep and into great horror and darkness (Gen.15). Isaiah, in trepidation, exclaimed, *"Woe is me"(Isa. 6:1)*, and on another occasion he said, *"My loins are filled with anguish ...I am pained so that I cannot hear, I am dismayed so that I cannot see. My heart fluttereth, horror hath affrighted me"* (Isa. 21).

The visions of Daniel affrighted him -- caused him to faint and to be sick for days -- sapped all his strength, and caused those who were with him to quake and flee (Dan. 10:7,8). Paul was thrown to the ground and blinded so that he could not see for three days (Acts 9:4-9); John, due to his vision on the isle of Patmos, testified, *"I fell at his feet as one dead."*

Likewise, Cornelius stared at the angel in terror. The angel, to reassure him, said,

"Your prayers and your alms have risen before God as a sacrifice to be remembered. You must now send some men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is surnamed Peter" (Moffatt).

Why now? Why not at some time in the past since prayer to God and alms for the people had evidently been Cornelius' regular habit? The answer is simple. The seventieth symbolic week of exclusive favor to Israel was ended (Dan. 9:24-27). Believing gentiles could now be accepted into the body of the Christ to complete the number predetermined by God. Jesus intimated this when he told the disciples to preach to all nations beginning at Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

Prophecy foretold that the Messiah would be ushered in at the end of sixty nine symbolic weeks (a day for a year, equaling 483 years). This occurred when Jesus was baptized at Jordan. In the midst of the week [three and one half years later], he was cut off as a sacrifice to make an end of sin and to -- bring in everlasting righteousness. Another three and a half years would end the seventieth week, at which time God caused this episode to be enacted to mark the end of exclusive favor to Israel and to open the door of opportunity to believing gentiles. Therefore, we have reason to believe that God manifested his acceptance of Cornelius' household to show this dispensational change.

Why send Peter?

True, he was near at hand. We think, however, that the real reason was Jesus' promise of the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:18). He had opened the door to Israelites at Pentecost and now he performed a like service to the gentiles. So, Cornelius must send for Peter.

"When the angel had left, Cornelius called two of his men servants and a religiously minded soldier who belonged to his personal retinue, and after describing the vision to them, he sent them to Joppa. Next day they were still on the road and not far from the town when Peter went up to the roof of the house, about noon, to pray" (Moffatt).

Notice what we learn about the disciples in such simple comments as this. They were praying men, men who made prayer a habit of life. They were men who, in the simplicity of their trust, expected direction from above in answer to their petitions.

Evidently Peter had also been fasting, for the next verse (Acts 10:10) says,

"Peter became very hungry and longed for some food. But as they were getting the meal ready, a trance came over him. He saw heaven open, and a vessel coming down like a huge sheet lowered by the four corners to the earth" (Moffatt).

Since it was the Lord who directed the apostles' ministry, the visions given for that purpose usually appeared "from heaven" (Acts 9:3).

"It [the vessel] contained all beasts and creeping things of the earth and wild birds. And a voice came to him, Rise Peter, kill and eat." (Acts 10:12,13)

These instructions were contrary to all of Peter's training, he revolted at such a thing. His reply was, *"No, no my Lord, I have never eaten anything common or unclean"* (Acts 10:14).

The Mosaic law spoke explicitly about what Israelites might eat and what should be considered unclean, and they became typically unholy if they touched things designated unclean. Even pots that had contained such things had to be destroyed (Lev. 11).

A voice came back to Peter a second time saying, what God hath cleansed, you must not count common. This happened three times; then the vessel was at once raised to heaven.

The details of this vision become more meaningful in the light of things we now know. The vessel, appearing like -- a sheet, presumably white and linen, would indicate justification, the imputed righteousness that all believers experience.

Rev. 19:8 shows that linen indicates righteousness. This righteousness comes down from heaven from God, because *"It is God that justifieth"* (Rom 8:33).

The animals formerly classed as unclean, would represent believing gentiles. In writing to gentile brethren in Ephesus, Paul says:

"Therefore, do not forget that formerly you were Gentiles. You were called the uncircumcision by those who styled themselves the circumcision ... At that time, you were living apart from Christ, estranged from the commonwealth of Israel, with no share by birth in the covenants which are based on the promises, and you had no hope and no God in all the world. But now in Christ Jesus,

you who once were so far away, have been brought nigh through the blood of Christ.[See RV] For he is now our peace, who made both one and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh; for through him we both have our access in one spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:11-18, Combined Translation).

We see how those who had once been considered unclean were now made clean and how the middle wall of partition was broken down by annulling the ordinances of the Mosaic Law. Had there been sufficient faithful ones in natural Israel to complete the body of Christ then, the gentiles would have been ignored. God foreknowing Israel's rejection of his Son despite all he had done for them said,

"Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block and a recompense unto them: let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow thou down their back always" (Psa. 69:22).

Paul warns his Jewish hearers to beware of the prophets words where he says: "*Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your day which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*" When contradicted and blasphemed by their countrymen,

"Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. But seeing that ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Moffatt).

Therefore, in the story recounted in the tenth chapter of Acts, God gave Peter a vision that, as soon as understood, would override his prejudice and cause him to declare an open door to gentile believers.

Possibly the four corners of the sheet might represent the four attributes of God by which the great plan of salvation is upheld (Rom. 3:22). The instructions for Peter to kill and eat signify the imparting of the message that would bring about the sacrificial death of believing gentiles and result in their being absorbed into the body of Christ.(Rom. 12:1,2)

Remembering that this is a vision given for the purpose of extending God's favor to gentiles, its three repetitions might correspond to the instructions voiced by Jesus (Matt. 28:29) when he said: "*Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" Some, on the basis of this scripture, believe in baptizing three times. We only come into Christ's body once. In doing this, we realize that it is of the Father, by the Son and through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Peter records that the vessel and its occupants were then received back into heaven. This, if intended to be significant, could represent that those pictured therein [the gentiles] were now acceptable to the Father, and must not be considered by their Jewish brethren as being unclean.

At the time, Peter did not comprehend the vision, for Acts 10:17 says:

"Peter was quite at a loss to know the meaning of the vision he had seen, but just then the messengers of Cornelius, who had made inquiries for the house of Simon, stood at the door and called out to ask if Simon, surnamed Peter, was staying there. So the spirit said to Peter who was pondering over the vision, there are three men looking for you; come, get you up and go down, and have no hesitation about accompanying them, for it is I who have sent them."

Here God found it necessary to give definite instructions, seemingly in an audible tone of voice; we see two good reasons for his action. First, the Apostles were special objects of the persecution directed against followers of Christ. Accordingly they might naturally be suspicious of anyone seeking them. Secondly, these men were gentiles sent by a Roman official, people with whom an orthodox Jew would have no dealings. So, without definite instructions, Peter would have flatly refused to have had anything to do with them.

However, following God's instructions, we read that *"Peter went down to the men, saying, I am the man you are looking for. What is your reason for coming"* (Acts 10:21-22)? They said,

"Captain Cornelius, a good man who reverences God and enjoys a high reputation among the whole Jewish nation, was instructed by a holy angel to send for you to his house and to listen to what you had to say" (Moffatt).

Peter now begins to understand the reason for his vision: not fully, but enough to realize that God was preparing him for a very unusual procedure.

Peter invited them in and entertained them. Next day he was up and off with them, accompanied by some (six) of the brethren from Joppa. And on the next day he reached Caesarea. Peter was just entering the house when Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet, and worshipped him; but Peter raised him, saying, Get up, I am only a man myself (Acts 10:23-26).

Cornelius doubtless felt that he should honor Peter as the representative of God. Peter could not accept such homage. Too bad the self styled successors of Peter do not follow him in this matter.

Then, talking to him, Peter entered the house to find a large company assembled. For Cornelius had been expecting him and had called his kinfolk and intimate friends together (Acts 10:27-28).

Cornelius was not only highly regarded by the Jews but was also acquainted with their laws and customs. So Peter said to them, (Acts 10:28-29)

You know yourselves that it is illegal for a Jew to join or accost anyone belonging to another nation; but God has shown me that I must not call any man common or unclean, and so I have come without any demur when I was sent for. Now I want to know why you sent for me?"

Even yet, Peter did not fully understand but eventually realized that something very unusual was about to transpire.

"Three days ago," said Cornelius, 'at this very hour.'" -- According to verse three, it was the ninth hour that Cornelius had been given the vision, and now again it was the ninth hour. This particularity about the hour both times indicates a significance. It would seem to be explained by the fact that Jesus' death on the cross occurred at the ninth hour (Lu. 23:44-46) and was the means by which divine favor could now be extended to Gentile believers.

"At this very hour, I was praying in my house when a man stood before me in shining dress, saying, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard [he was not yet a Christian, but his prayer had been heard], your alms are remembered by God, you must send to Joppa and summon Simon who is surnamed Peter, he is staying in the house of Simon the tanner beside the sea. So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Well now, here we are all present before God to listen to what the Lord has commanded you to say."

How wonderful it would have been to be there, to see and to sense the earnestness and eagerness of anticipation with which they awaited instruction from God by the mouth of his chosen messenger. It was then (Acts 10:3-38) that:

"Peter opened his lips and said, I see quite plainly [no mystery now] that God has no favorites, but that he who reverences him and lives a good life in any nation is welcomed by him."

May God's name be praised! This was the event by which he opened the door of opportunity to you and me; we were there representatively in that group.

Then Peter says to them (Acts 10:3) "You know the message he sent to the sons of Israel when he preached the gospel of peace by Jesus Christ who is Lord of all; you know how it spread over the whole of Judea, starting from Galilee after the baptism preached by John -- how God consecrated [sanctified] Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went about doing good and curing all who were harassed by the Devil; for God was with him."

This would indicate that Cornelius was well informed concerning the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, and had his belief in God resulted therefrom, surely some indication would have been given us.

"As for what he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem," says Peter, "We can testify to that. They slew him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him on the third day, and allowed him to be seen, not by all the people, but by witnesses whom he had previously selected, by us who ate and drank with him after his resurrection from the dead, when he enjoined us to preach to the people, testifying that this was he whom God had appointed to be judge of the living and of the dead. All the prophets testify to it, that every one who believes in him is to receive remission of sins through his name."

Peter not only came to realize that gentiles were to be fellow heirs in the promise made to Abraham, but through this experience he had also recalled that all the prophets testify that everyone, regardless of nationality, who believes in Jesus is to receive the remission of sins. *"And while Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who listened to what he said."*

By this miracle of spirit manifestation, God gave unmistakable evidence that Gentiles were now acceptable to him, and if Peter still held any qualms in the matter, they were now dispelled. The six brethren who accompanied Peter, not having had the revelation given to him, still were evidently uncertain about certain matters, for the next verse (Acts 10:45) says,

"Now the Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had actually been poured out on the Gentiles, for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. At this Peter asked, [evidently of the six who were with him] "Can anyone refuse water for the baptism of these people, these who have received the Holy Spirit just as we ourselves have?" There was not a dissenting word, they could not doubt the evidence. And so he

ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they begged him to remain for some days."

We may well believe that Peter and those with him were kept busy the next few days telling of their association with Jesus and the lessons he had taught them.

Subsequently, "...when Peter went to Jerusalem, the circumcision party fell foul of him. 'You went into the houses of the uncircumcised,' they said, and you ate with them' (Acts 11). We are glad to know that when he and the six who had accompanied him had explained the matter, and had said:

I remembered the saying of the Lord, that John baptized with water, but *you* shall be baptized with the holy Spirit. Well then, if God has given them exactly the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I -- how could I try to thwart God? On hearing this they desisted and glorified God saying, So God has actually allowed the Gentiles to repent and live.

Shoot Upward and Root Downward

by C. H. Spurgeon

Let me remind you all, you faithful believers in Christ, that you are compared to trees -- trees of the Lord's right hand planting. Seek to grow as the tree grows. Pray that this year you may grow downward; that you may know more of your own vileness, more of your own nothingness; and so be rooted to humility.

Pray that your roots may penetrate below the topsoil of truth into the great rocks which underlie the upper stratum so that you may lay hold on the doctrines of eternal love, of immutable faithfulness, of complete satisfaction, of union to Christ, of the eternal purpose of God, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was.

This will be a growth which will not add to your fame, which will not minister to your vanity, but it will be invaluable in the hour of storm. The true value of roots are evident only when the hurricane of life's experience has destroyed the hypocrite.

As you root downward, seek to grow upward. Send out the shoots of your love towards heaven. As trees send forth their spring shoots, so pant after more love and desire after God which will bring you nearer to him in prayer, in the sweetness of the spirit of adoption, and into the intimacy of your fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. This mounting upward will add to your beauty and to your delight.

Next, pray to grow on either side. Stretch out your branches. Let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunity. See to it that you are fruitful, for to increase in leaves without adding fruitage is to diminish the beauty of the tree. Labor this year by God's grace to bring forth more fruit unto him than ever before. Is it not better to be like the Valley of Eschol, whose presses burst with new wine, than to be like the gleanings of the vintage when there is only a cluster here and there upon the uppermost bough?

This is to grow in grace; to root downward, to shoot upward, to extend your influences like far reaching branches, and to bring forth fruit like the Lord's glory.

The Question Box

*Are the "shout," "voice," and "trump" in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 descriptive of the same event?
What do they represent?*

Rotherham's translation is very accurate. *"Because the Lord himself with a word of command, with a chief -- messenger's voice, and with a trumpet of God shall descend from heaven..."*

Even with this exacting translation, these words are hard to interpret. All three can refer to the same event, but more likely they are three phases of the event heralding the advent of Christ.

The "shout," a command or an order to pay attention, Joshua 6:20-21 gives us an idea of how God's power can work through the sound of the "trumpet." This phenomena got the attention of the inhabitants of Jericho as the walls fell.

Scriptures indicate that the "voice" of our Lord is connected with the raising of the dead. *"... all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth..."* (John 5:28-29). *"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth..."* (John 11:44-45).

The sequence appears to be

- (1) a "shout" (command or order) and
- (2) the "voice" of the archangel for the dead to rise.
- (3) The "trump" sounds as a signal for the faithful, both dead and living, to be gathered to the Lord.

For the comprehensive interpretation of Pastor Russell see Vol. 2, *The Time Is at Hand*, pages B142-B150.

-- A. Jarmola

Before dealing directly with the question, we would briefly like to note the Greek word translated "with." It is the Greek *en*, and corresponds more closely to the English "in."

This suggests that the events symbolized by the shout, trumpet and voice do not accompany the returning Lord but are on the earth already at the time of his arrival. He does not bring these actions but comes into the midst of them.

The Greek word *keleusma* rendered "shout" in this verse is an unusual word. Professor Strong defines it as "a cry of incitement" and relates it to *kelleno* meaning to command and *kello* meaning to urge on. In classical Greek, it is used of the galley master's cry to the oarsmen, "Row! Row! Row!"

The Septuagint uses the word only once, as does the Greek New Testament. It is found in Proverbs 30:27, *"The locusts have no king, yet they go forth, all of them, at the shout of command."*

We suggest that this word describes the voices of unrest which elsewhere are associated with the second advent of Christ. Perhaps it may be identified with the clamor of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) and the name associated with the last stage of the Christian church in Revelation 3 -- "Laodicea" - - "justice for the people "

The "voice" is very specific -- "the voice of the archangel." Jude 9 identifies this archangel as "Michael." Daniel 12:1 further identifies this Michael as "the great prince." In 1 Chronicles 5:2, the same Hebrew expression is translated "the chief ruler." In this context, he is noted as the promised one to come from the loins of Judah. The combined evidence of these verses seems to indicate that the archangel -- Michael -- is none other than the "chief ruler" which is to come from the line of Judah -- "the lion of the tribe of Judah" Most scholars agree that this is an identification of Jesus Christ himself.

Returning to Daniel 12:1 we find that work of this great prince, Michael, being that of the deliverer of Daniel's "people" and "the children of thy -- people" -- Israel. Thus the "voice" would seem to have particular reference to the stirring of Jewish hopes which, since the beginning of the *diaspora*, have lain dormant. This revitalizing of Israel's national interests is here indicated to be an ongoing event at the time of the Lord's return.

We note that the "trump of God," the final symbol, refers to the silver trumpets which were only blown by the priesthood of ancient Israel. The obvious suggestion is that the time of the Lord's second presence would be marked additionally by proclamations of truth, and an intense search for truth, by the religious leaders of the people of God -- the antitypical priests.

Thus, taken together, these three symbols identify three concurrent actions in three diverse sections of society -- the "voice" showing the stirring of Israeli hopes and aims, the "shout" identifying the incitements among the people at large, and "the trump of God" portraying the activity in searching for, and the proclaiming of, truth at the time that the Lord descends from heaven.

As we look around us today, it is hard to deny that all three of these areas of endeavor have been specially active throughout the last century as never before in history -- mutely pointing to the fact of the Lord's long awaited descent from heaven for his church.

Finally, we note that all three terms -- "shout," "voice," and "trump" are words usually associated with battles. The shout refers to the war cry of the soldiers as they head into the fray. The trumpeters signal the time of attack, which is reechoed by the commanders shout. However, all three of these actions precede the battle. If, therefore, we see in progress before us "the great time of trouble;" then the "shout," "trump;" and "voice" are historical events.

-- Carl Hagensick

Present and Future Vision

"For now we see through a glass darkly [obscurely]; but then face to face." - 1 Corinthians 13:12

In this context, the Apostle Paul is dealing with the growth of Christian character. He personifies character in the attribute of love because God is love, and those who have been begotten by his spirit as sons must develop a character in harmony with their heavenly Father.

It is in this context that the word "glass" appears. The word is translated from *esoptrou* meaning "a transparent substance through which, because of its imperfect clarity, one could only see faintly or obscurely; something not completely clear"

This is how Paul analyzes love in its everyday appearance: whether seen in a person's thoughts, words, or deeds. Only as a believer develops this godly characteristic can they appreciate the nature of life's experiences from God's viewpoint. One might paraphrase the text this way: "Now in proportion to our growth in grace, we understand that the purpose of our experiences is that we might reflect the character of God." When we grow more loving we will better reflect God's likeness just as when we see him face to face we shall be like him.

"Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). To this end, Jesus interpreted the characteristics of his Father. *"A pupil is not superior to his teacher, but everyone, when his training is complete, will reach his teacher's level" (Luke 6:40, NEB).* Let us look, then, at this course of instruction, remembering that God has called us unto his kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12).

"We see through a glass darkly" -- life sometimes appears to us as an enigma. The monotony of daily activities takes on the aspect of a maze in which we lose sight of the purpose for our experience: our being trained up into the character likeness of Christ Jesus. Men, even those seeking to walk in the Master's footsteps, easily lose consciousness of the unseen presence of God who promises to be our daily companion. With him at our side, our "maze" can be seen for what it is, a plan which is too wise to err and too good to be unkind.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings and yet not one of them is forgotten before God ... are ye not more precious than many sparrows?" Do we forget these sweet words of Jesus when a crisis arises? A molehill, viewed in the smallness of faith, appears to be a mountain which looms so high that we lose sight of all the precious promises of God.

Do you think God gave Moses the details of the Tabernacle's services as a matter of course? Or did he do so just to give Israel as much work to do as possible? No! We find in the Tabernacle the sanctification of life's most commonplace duties. These should be performed with a consciousness of God just as he ordered every detail of natural Jewish life and is as conscious of our living as he was of theirs.

What if Aaron said, "Tomorrow morning I will rest, and I will not offer the burnt offering -- it will not matter if I miss just once; I have offered the same offering so many times." Would God have been too busy to enjoy the sweet incense that accompanied the burnt offering and which was the means of union between him and Israel through Aaron? Aaron's contact with God would have been interrupted, and God made no provision for such a lapse (Psa. 27:4, cf. Heb. 9:3-5). Consider this if you ever feel that your life has become monotonous.

"My times are in thy hands." There is a translation into an Indian dialect which suggests the fullness of the psalmist's idea, "All my hows and whens and whys are in his care."

Continually, growth in grace and love helps keep us in touch with God. Every prophecy that is fulfilled will appeal to us in proportion to our growth and love for God; every inquiry into our Lord's presence will stir up the emotion of our hearts and the prayer will escape, "Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Every evidence of his providence will deepen our appreciation of his love for us, and we come to accept every opportunity for service to our brethren not as opportunities we have recognized but as provisions of his love for us. Each child of God is the special object of our Father's attention, and he has in his care all of our hows and whens and whys.

Some of our problems are obscure. This may be because we lose sight of our objective, God's objective:

O joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace thy rainbow through the rain,
And know the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

Why is it that divine love often wounds in order to heal? *"My ways are not your ways, neither are my thoughts your thoughts."* God's way often leads us through Gethsemane in order to reach Bethany. The reason we have passed through some sorrowful experience is often only seen in panorama from the other side of the experience. Then his footsteps can be seen, and the pains he has taken for our growth may become apparent. He proves his love for us so that we might prove our love for him.

Thorns and Blessings

Have you ever picked fruit? Have you pierced your flesh on a thorn while trying to lift up a prickly branch so as to reach the ripened fruit? You want the fruit. You are even willing to pay the price (in pain) in order to obtain it. Even the grandest and sweetest human characters who have ever graced this earth have caused the heavenly Husbandman pain. Yet, because he saw in them the potential for savory fruit he continued the work of nurturing and cultivation.

On other occasions, we' may feel like the negatives being developed by some master photographer. We know that God is doing something in our life because we are passing through various processes; but in the obscure red light of the darkroom, we are quite unable to tell what he has accomplished. Not until he shines the bright projector lamp upon us can the secrets of the darkroom be understood.

Often, our development experiences are known to only God and ourselves. We are subjected to various experiences so that the Great Photographer might see in us his own likeness. These processes he carries on in the shadow of a red light -- the glowing love of Jesus -- because those faithful followers, of this age are to be his gift to his dear son Jesus as an expression of God's love to him. Indeed, Jesus bestowed his love upon man in giving his life a ransom for all. In our darkroom experiences, we are lead to appreciate the offering of Jesus for us.

There is also the experience of the weaver intertwining the woof and the warp with various colored threads. If we could stand on the reverse side of the cloth, we would see what appears an

unintelligible design and a mass of threads. Only when we look at the opposite side can we see the beauty of the weaver's craft.

Often we view the work of the Divine Weaver from the converse side. His variegated threads seem purposeless to us, bewildering. But when we understand the Weaver's grand design, we find that life's experience is interwoven by divine love, wisdom, justice, and power so that he might be glorified in the end of our life.

We look next at the colors employed by the Divine Weaver. God's glory is compared to a rainbow (Ezek. 1:28). Some of these many colors are highlighted in the Tabernacle. There, on the Second Veil, we see the figures of cherubim woven into the material. God used color to portray the life of his son, from his prehuman existence to the end of the Millennium. He has done this in a design which illustrates his divine plan of the Ages.

White, silver, and green, represent the purity, the spiritual life of the Logos in his creative works and the activities as the Father's agent in the affairs of man. Copper and red represent the *Logos* taking upon himself the "seed of Abraham, human conditions to give himself a ransom for all. Blue, purple, and gold represent the faithfulness of our Lord in his covenant of sacrifice with his Father, his reward to be king of kings and his exaltation to the divine nature.

Individually, these threads mean little or nothing, especially if viewed from the wrong side of the Weaver's pattern. They mean much, however, if we are associated with Jesus. (cf. Psa. 45:13-14; Psa. 139:15; Rev. 3:3; Rev. 14:1; Rev. 21:11 which show the reflection of God's glory by the follower of Jesus. Read also Rev. 22:4, which shows the same ultimate reflection by the world of mankind.) "We see through a glass darkly," obscurely, so long as we look on the wrong side of the Weaver's pattern.

The lapidary is another example of God's style of workmanship. Uncut and unpolished stones come to his attention. In each, he formulates a design, even an ultimate mounting, as in a royal crown. He sets about cutting and polishing each gem until it is fit to be mounted in the kingly crown. Each jewel requires individual attention from the lapidary who is familiar with its peculiarities and knows what treatment it needs.

Are we conscious of the Lord's care over us as prospective jewels in the royal crown? "*He careth for you*" -- even in the cutting and polishing experiences of life. He values the jewels he is preparing; they are his workmanship, precious in his sight -- "*They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I gather up my jewels...*" "*...a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord,*" to show forth his praise.

Go to the potter's shed and watch him mold clay on the wheel. The design of the intended vessel is clear, complete to his own satisfaction. The clay endures several processes after being formed on the wheel -- glazing and hardening -- to make it durable for its future service.

Our experience may be similar. We may have enjoyed the sunshine of God's love for a long time, only to find ourselves placed into circumstances requiring a proof of our faith. Will the Potter's firing be too much for us? Or will we endure as seeing him who is invisible? At such times, we most need to know that he is watching over us. We need learn the faith of Job who said, "*He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth like gold,*" -- a vessel unto honor for the King's palace to please the king with the joy that he saw before the foundation of the world which he created for his own pleasure.

God's Foreknowledge

A Godlike character cannot be developed unless there is an acknowledgment and appreciation for the foreknowledge of God and the predestination of the Christ, head and body (Psa. 139:14-18). This acknowledgment is often the solution to many questions and difficult situations. In fact, this acknowledgment is a dominant factor in our resting by faith in God.

"Until the day break and the shadows flee away" is another way of illustrating our theme text. *"Until the day cools,"* matures in experience after morning light, the heat of noonday and the approaching eventide, when all the shadows, the hazy recollections, the half -- appreciated experiences, flee away and we understand exactly all their true import, because, as we said in another connection, our course of instruction is complete. Studying the Song of Solomon (especially Song of Solomon 2:17 & Song of Solomon 4:6-8) we see that we abide on the mountains which divide him from us *"until the day break,"* and we see him face to face.

A scientist may attempt to explain the riddle of life as he probes the wonders of the universe. One scientist may dare sum up his life's discovery and go so far as to say that "death ends all" -- thereby *maintaining* his disbelief in the purpose of this present life. Another scientist may boldly declare that he has been able to create life in his laboratory, but he is forced to admit that it is not intelligent life -- it can hold fellowship with neither God nor man; so what is^o the use of it? Science will not succeed in explaining the riddle of life until it learns to live a life in constant touch with the creator, the fountain of life and the source of light, and until they acknowledge that the reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. When we reverence God, we can learn to love him and his son, who is the resurrection and the life.

Perhaps the riddle of life appears more perplexing the longer you consider it. Gaze into the eyes of a newborn child and see that mutual recognition which holds silent fellowship. Stand at an open grave and bid farewell to a lifelong friend, a life that was unselfish, patient, loving, gentle, noble in purity, fragrant in virtue, a life of hidden sorrows and shared joys, a life perfumed with the sweet incense of self -- sacrifice which ascends to the presence of God -- What a moment! Jesus has waited through the centuries for just this moment. God foresaw it before the foundation of the world. Each member of the body of Christ has waited patiently throughout his life. What a meeting!

According to Genesis (Gen. 24:63-67) Isaac met Rebekah and saw his bride for the first time -- when the veil was removed from her face. We wonder what the first words spoken by Isaac to his bride might have been and what her first words to him. Equally, we wonder what our Bridegroom's first words will be to his bride when he sees her for the first time beyond the veil and what will be her first words to her adored bridegroom!

Just as Isaac took Rebekah to his home and comforted her, so will Jesus take his bride to his father's home and present her to his Father before his throne faultless, without blemish. Those who are faithful will see him face to face, will abide with God through the ages of glory -- and not for a mere forty days with hidden face as did Moses in the mount. There will be complete happiness in God and pleasure in the Millennial restitution of which the faithful Bride will have her share.

"Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). *"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Cor. 3:18).

Perspectives: The Holy Land Is Steeped in A Complex History

by: Elva. Lanowick

[The following passionate description of the status of the Middle East and of the position of Israel is published even though it does not directly resort to Scripture in its exposition. On this subject we all seem to have some bias. This author is obviously no different. Yet, the reprise of historical events provides a broad context in which to place today's arguments -- and to that purpose we commend it to your attention. -- Editor]

Having lived in the Middle East and having followed events there closely since 1947 I offer some insights to the complex events there unfolding. One of the most glaring mistakes, with misleading connotations, is the statement that "the 1948 war created Israel." Much of the truth of the situation in the Middle East hinges on the fact that the State of Israel was created by a dramatic vote of the United Nations in 1947.

It is equally significant that the Arab nations rejected this vote of the United Nations, five of them violently invading the new state of Israel with vast amounts of troops and armaments -- despite the fact that the United Nations had called for the creation of an Arab State alongside the State of Israel. Had the Arabs accepted their state, as declared by the United Nations in 1947 the Arab Palestinians would have avoided decades of refugee status, Western nations would have been saved billions of dollars to bankroll refugee camps, and both Arabs and Jews of Palestine would have been saved untold misery. Israel immediately accepted the vote for the establishment of an Arab state as called for by the U.N., but the Arab nations not only refused to recognize an Arab state adjacent to Israel but actively set out to destroy the new Jewish state.

Somehow, the public and the media seem to have forgotten these historical facts. Now, when the Palestinian Arabs are clamoring for statehood in the West Bank and Gaza, we must remember that they could have had a larger state, without war and bloodshed and all the intervening forty years of violence.

It should be understandable that Jewish leaders are suspicious and concerned about the true aims of their Arab neighbors. Hours after their creation as a state Israel experienced the swift onslaught of war and invasion by Arab nations; they heard threats that the Jews were to be thrown into the sea, and have seen no diminution of hatred even after forty years. What are the true aims of the Arab nations in general and the PLO in particular?

It should be noted that the Arab nations have supported Arafat's murderous PLO with billions of dollars during recent decades. Even so called "moderate Arab nations" such as Saudi Arabia have given huge financial support to the PLO. *

* Editor's Note: The investment portfolio built by the PLO from Arab state donations produces more than \$200 Million per year in revenue for the PLO, cf. *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, Thomas L. Friedman, Anchor, 1989

So, can we trust a seeming complete reversal made by the likes of Yassar Arafat, at whose hands as leader of the PLO the world has suffered so tragically?

The Israelis surely cannot forget that at Arafat's direction, hundreds of Israeli civilians have been murdered, those being mostly women and children.

Nor have non-Jews escaped the horrendous attacks of the PLO under Arafat. I was in Israel in May of 1972 when many Puerto Rican tourists were mowed down under the gunfire of the PLO

in Tel Aviv airport. Americans surely cannot forget airplane hijackings, bomb attacks, the Achille Lauro ship hijacking and murder of an American citizen, etc., all under the watchful eye of "peaceful" Yassar Arafat?

Nor can an honest comparison be made of the Arab terrorists, who cowardly attack unnamed citizens, to the groups of Jewish Palestinians who struck at British military compounds and units in the days preceding their statehood. Menachem Begin and others like him felt the need to attack the British military because of their oppressive policies in Palestine toward Jews during the British Mandate regime.

What guilt falls on the shoulders of that British administration for closing the doors of Palestine to millions of European Jews? Many of these could have found a way to escape Hitler's death camps had they been allowed into Palestine in conformity with another vote of the nations, the 1922 League of Nations declaration, which appointed Great Britain as administrator of all Palestine as "a homeland for the Jews."

Again, Israel's legal status is based on a vote of the nations. It should also be remembered that there were no Arab nations in the large area controlled by Turkey before World War I. It has only been in recent decades that European nations established Arab nations, such as Syria, Lebanon and Jordan in that area.

Actually, Jordan was created by Great Britain, giving this Arab State almost eighty percent of the area of Palestine which was previously declared as a homeland for the Jews by the League of Nations, ratifying the Balfour Declaration. Therefore, present day Arab Palestinians really had no statehood at any time, though they give the impression that Israel drove them out of their nation. In fact, they became refugees not because they were driven out by the Jews but because they fled the invading Arab armies who attacked the new Jewish state in 1948.

Mankind's Coming Blessings

Christ tasted death for every man, -- Heb. 2:9
And this but once -- no more; -- Rom. 6:9
God willeth all men to be saved; -- 1 Tim. 2:4
He will all things restore. -- Acts 3:21
Soon all the dead shall hear Christ's voice -- John 5:28,29
To wake them from death's sleep; -- Dan. 12:2
And death and hell shall yield their dead -- Rev. 20:13
From earth and ocean deep. -- Isa. 26:19
And Abraham's Seed shall bless the earth -- Acts 3:25
And give to all the light, -- John 1:9
That they may know God's holy will -- Jer 31:34
And learn that which is right. -- Isa. 26:9
But those who will not hear the voice -- Acts 3:23
Of the Spirit and the Bride -- Rev. 22:17
Will be destroyed in Second Death -- Rev. 21:8
Eternal life denied. -- 1 John 5:12
But they "who will" need never die, -- John 11:26
For plain will be the way -- Isa. 35:8
That leads to perfect human life -- Joel 2:28
And joys of endless day. -- Isa. 35:10
With Satan bound a thousand years, -- Rev. 20:2,3
Beneath Christ's chastening rod -- Psalms 89:32
The ransomed race can seek and find -- Hosea 13:14
Full harmony with God. -- Rev. 21:3
A race redeemed, and earth made new, -- Isa 65:17
Riches and wealth untold; -- Num. 14:21
A world where righteousness will dwell -- 2 Peter 3:13
And man God's grace behold! -- Psalms 97:5,6
Where pain and sickness, grief and death -- Isa. 33:22,24
Are memories of the past; -- Rev. 21:4
Where loving faithfulness to God -- Matt. 25:31-40
Forevermore will last. -- Rev. 21:22-26

Face to Face

Face to face with Christ, my Savior,
Face to face -- what will it be?
When with rapture I behold him,
Jesus Christ who died for me.

Face to face shall I behold him,
Far beyond the starry sky;
Face to face in all his glory,
I shall see him by and by!

Only faintly now, I see him,
With the darkling veil between,
But the blessed day is coming,
When his glory shall be seen.

What rejoicing in his presence,
When are banished grief and pain;
When the crooked ways are straightened,
And the dark things shall be plain.

Face to face; oh, blissful moment!
Face to face -- to see and know;
Face to face with my Redeemer,
Jesus Christ who loves me so.

Wise Counsel on Creeds

Is it proper for a Christian to have a creed?

It is not only proper for a Christian to have a creed; it would not be possible to be a Christian without one. We content ourselves here in quoting from C.T. Russell, who wrote on this subject years ago:

"The word creed comes from *credo* and means "I believe." It is proper that every Christian have for himself a creed, a belief. And, if a number of Christians come to a unity of faith upon the lines of the Word of God, their assembling together for fellowship and communion is both proper and helpful, as the Bible declares. The general difficulty is that, when groups of Christians meet as brethren, they either make a written or an understood creed, which goes beyond the Word of God and includes human tradition; or else they ignore all faith, and make morality -- good works -- the only basis of fellowship. But, as the name indicates, Christians are believers in Christ, and not merely moralists. While a creed is necessary and he who has none has no belief, and would therefore be an unbeliever, and while in Christian fellowship harmony of faith is necessary to communion, all should see that the fellowship and faith of the early church, under divine direction, were built upon the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Nothing more or less should be the basis of Christian fellowship here and now.... And since the *credo* or belief of each Christian professes to be built upon God's Word, it follows that each should be not only willing but ready at all times to change his belief for one more scriptural, if such can be pointed out to him." (R1578).

In another discussion Charles Taze Russell raised the question:

"Why not abandon all human systems and confessions, now used for tying men's tongues and consciences, and let each other stand free to study God's Word untrammelled, and to build, each for himself, such a creed as he shall find authorized in God's Word; adding to his creed or subtracting therefrom continually, as he grows in grace and in the knowledge and in love of God. This is the attitude which God designed; this is the liberty wherewith Christ made us all free. Why surrender our liberties and enslave our consciences and tongues to a sect, or the decisions of majorities in sects? If all of God's children were really free, thus, it would not be long before they would be at perfect oneness of heart and nearly at one in faith and work -- the only true union" (R1168).

When men surrender themselves to the Spirit of God, they will learn more concerning God and Christ and the Atonement in a week, than they would learn in a lifetime, apart from the Spirit.

-- John Brown

The only sure way to take fear out of living is to keep a respectful fear of God in our lives, which means to maintain a reverent attitude toward his place and influence in the scheme of things. This brand of fear is a healthy ingredient, a deterrent to want, a spur to courage and confidence, an insurance against loss, a source of comfort and understanding at any age

-- Eugene Asa Carr: "Freedom from Fear"

"What a wonderful God we have -- he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? so that when others have are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us."

-- 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4 TLB

Do not reject what you do not understand; for with understanding comes acceptance.

-- Welmer Rinder

There is more hope for a self convicted sinner than there is for a self -- conceited saint.

We are immortal till our work is done.

-- George Whitefield

Truth does not consist in minute accuracy of detail, but in conveying a right impression; and there are vague ways of speaking that are truer than strict facts would be. When the Psalmist said, Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law,"he did not state the fact, but he stated a truth deeper than fact and truer

-- Henry Afford

If you have a Bible creed, it is well; but is it filled out and inspired by Christian love?

-- J. F. Brodie

The prophet and the martyr do not see the hooting throng. Their eyes are fixed on eternity.

-- Benjamin Cardozo: Law and Literature

Entered Into Rest

Alfred Filip, IL
Alvin Smith, VA