

THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS

by

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Dispensational Truth
The Apostle of the Reconciliation
The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner
Parable, Miracle and Sign
Just and the Justifier
In Heavenly Places
etc.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

Greek and Hebrew.

Words from these languages are transliterated into English, and printed in italic type. No attempt has been made to distinguish the short and long 'o' and the short and long 'e' in the Greek, nor to give an exact phonetic spelling of the Hebrew.

Received Text (Textus Receptus)

This is the Greek New Testament from which the Authorized Version of the Bible was prepared. Comments in this work are made with this version in mind.

Where there are textual variances between the Received Text and the Nestlé Greek Text (or other critical texts) such variances are noted. The phrase 'in the Received Text' is printed in brackets next to the word or words in question.

INTRODUCTORY

The Form of Sound Words

The 'Contents' page of a Book is primarily compiled to enable the reader to discover the page of any particular section, but in most cases it serves another equally useful purpose, viz., that of indicating the trend of the mind of the Author, the line of study that is pursued, and often - by its very omissions - it reveals anything that may be considered peculiar or distinctive in its doctrine or presentation.

It will be observed that while the 'Contents' of the present work does include references to the inspiration of Scripture, the Person of Christ (God manifest in the flesh), and the great doctrines of Sin and Sacrifice, all these are prefaced by a chapter on Apostleship in general, and the Apostleship of Paul in particular.

A little reflection will lead to the conclusion that while the Scriptures must be received *as a whole*, they are nevertheless written to different people, under differing circumstances, and with differing objects; that if we are studying 'The Law' we cannot ignore the ministry of Moses, just as surely as if we are concerned with 'Grace' we must acquaint ourselves with the Epistles of Paul.

Two items of truth that are separated by several chapters in this Book must always be considered together, viz.:

- (1) All Scripture is God's truth (Chapter 2); but
- (2) If we would know or understand the truth, we must put into practice the great principle of 'Right Division' (Chapter 8).

In chapters 3, 4 and 5 the great doctrine of God is considered. The subject is confessedly one that is beyond our comprehension, and even to grasp what has been revealed is the occupation of a lifetime. Nevertheless, the task had to be undertaken, and the reader will find that in adhering to 'The form of sound words' derived from the actual testimony of the apostle Paul, we have had no occasion to attempt to explain, justify, or condemn the language of the Creeds. To have done so would mean that we should have departed from the very 'form' of words to which it was our avowed purpose to adhere.

The Being of God Himself, in His Absolute and Unconditioned Essence, is not a legitimate enquiry for us, for the form of sound words on the matter definitely excludes such an enquiry, saying:

'He that cometh to God *must* believe that He *is*' (Heb. 11:6).

Guided by the writings of the apostle Paul, we are concerned not with the essential Being of God, but with *God Manifest*, and above all with *God manifest in the flesh*. The reader is urged to ponder very prayerfully the implications of the title 'Lord' as given to the Saviour, a 'form of sound words' here being of more value than a theological library.

We believe that all who rejoice in the gospel of the grace of God, will find an echo in their hearts in chapter 6 which deals with 'Sin, and the Sacrifice for Sin'. Here we are at the very heart of God's purposes of grace, and any failure to grasp the awfulness of sin, or the sufficiency of the Sacrifice for Sin, must lead to spiritual disaster and poverty of testimony. The subject of the Cross of Christ, while it does not occupy much of the space devoted to the great sacrifice for sin at our disposal, is one that has attracted - and ever will attract - the deepest consideration of heart and mind. The implications of what the Cross actually stands for in the mind of God that are suggested with so much brevity on pages 64-66, will, if pondered in the light of Scripture, be productive, we believe, of much blessing. It is a theme that has suffered at the hands of a zeal that is not according to knowledge, and its bearing upon the believer has been lost sight of in the preaching of the Cross as a purely gospel message. We earnestly commend the four-fold sequence of the saving work of Christ, set out on page 64, to the reader.

Dispensational truth, which is dealt with in pages 67-114, leads to that most critical of chapters - Acts 28. If the implications of that chapter are fairly faced by the unprejudiced reader, implications that involve the setting aside of Israel and Israel's hope, the cessation of supernatural gifts, the crisis that is associated with the quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10, and what is involved in the statement that 'The salvation of God is *sent unto the Gentiles*', the peculiar nature of the present dispensation will be realized, and the need of Paul's special prison ministry felt.

Under the heading 'Three Spheres of Blessing' the whole revelation of Scripture is distributed according to the aspect of the redemptive purpose that is in view. These aspects or 'spheres' reach from the earth up to the very right hand of God, and reveal not only different spheres of blessing so far as locality is concerned, but different constitutions, viz., A KINGDOM; A BRIDE; A BODY. It is only too easy to confound or confuse these matters, to sweep all distinctions aside; but to do so is neither honouring to the Word, nor manifesting a sober mind.

The believer is urged by the Scriptures to 'try the things that differ'; to 'approve the things that are more excellent'; to 'prove all things'; and 'hold fast that which is good'; to emulate the Bereans, of whom it is written:

'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they:

- (1) Received the word with all readiness of mind, and
- (2) Searched the Scriptures daily; (to see)
- (3) Whether those (these) things were so' (Acts 17:11).

If we can be assured that what has been written in the following pages will receive such 'noble' treatment, we can confidently leave the issues with the God of all grace.

Hold fast the form of sound words!

CHAPTER 1

The meaning of the term ‘Apostle’, with particular reference to the Apostleship of Paul**Why a form of sound words is necessary**

It is enjoined upon believers to be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within them (1 Pet. 3:15), and this reason embraces the gospel whereby salvation was brought to them, the calling and sphere of blessing into which by grace they have entered, and the hope that pertains to that gospel and calling. In other words, the ‘reason’ for the hope entertained by any believer comprises *Doctrinal, Dispensational* and *Practical* truth.

Doctrinal truth may be defined as the teaching of Scripture concerning the Being and attributes of God and the record and revelation of anything He has done, whether in Creation or Redemption, or what He has commanded, done, promised or revealed under Law and Grace.

Dispensational truth supplies a necessary means of discrimination in the personal appropriation of doctrine, and thus a means of deciding whether what has been promised or enjoined pertains to the believer now or belongs to men of other times and callings, whether past, present, or future.

The practical outworking of truth does not arise until this question is decided, for it is obvious that no one can put into practice truth belonging to another and different calling from his own without creating confusion. It is our steadfast belief that a new dispensation followed the setting aside of Israel at Acts 28, with its suspension of Israel’s hope; we believe that to Paul (already the accredited apostle to the Gentiles, and then to become the prisoner of Jesus Christ on their behalf), was entrusted the dispensation of the mystery, a calling and sphere of blessing previously kept secret. We believe that, while certain fundamental doctrines of Paul’s earlier ministry remain unchanged (as, for example, the doctrine of Sin or of Redemption), other aspects (such as that embodied in the phrase ‘The Jew first’, or the distribution of miraculous gifts, as seen in (1 Cor. 12) belong to a dispensation that is past.

These things we desire to examine and exhibit to the reader, and this we propose to do in such a manner as will comply with the injunction to possess ‘a form of sound words’, which we shall presently see was first given to Timothy in Paul’s last message before his ‘departure’.

When Moses knew that the end of his course was near, he called together the children of Israel and thus addressed them:

‘I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan’ (Deut. 31:2).

He then proceeded to exhort the people, calling upon Joshua and giving him a charge; writing the law and delivering it to the priests and commanding them to read it in the hearing of all Israel once every seven years (Deut. 31:7-15). Moreover, because the Lord knew that, after Moses’ death, Israel would follow after the gods of the land, He commanded him to write a prophetic song which the children of Israel were to be taught; it was to be ‘put into their mouths’, that it might be a witness for the Lord against them (Deut. 31:16-19). This occupies the bulk of Deuteronomy 32, and gives the history of Israel’s defection and ultimate restoration. We have called it ‘The Song of Jehovah’s Name’, for the eight occurrences of the sacred name indicate the structure and purpose of the Song.

Deuteronomy 32**‘The Song of Jehovah’s Name’**

- A 1-4. The name of the LORD proclaimed.
- B 5-8. Do ye thus requite the LORD?
- C 9. The LORD the portion of His people.
- D 10-14. The LORD alone led Israel.
(ISRAEL SET ASIDE).
- D 15-25. The LORD abhorred Israel.
- A 26-28. The LORD hath done this.

- B 29-33. The LORD shut up His people.
 C 34-43. The LORD will vindicate His people.

As this structure has been set out in detail in *The Berean Expositor*, Vol. 24, pp. 83 and 84, we give here but the barest outline before passing on to other aspects of the principle employed here.

Upon the completion of the Song, Moses is told to ascend Mount Nebo, for there he was to die. But before his final departure he pronounces a prophetic blessing upon the people (Deut. 33:1-29), and afterwards dies according to the word of the Lord. He is succeeded by Joshua.

What Moses was instructed to do before his death, David, Peter, Paul and the Saviour Himself have done. Psalm 72 appears to be David's 'last word'. It ends with the words, 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended'. The Psalm is 'For Solomon', and was written after Solomon's second investiture (1 Chron. 29:22,23), the year before David's death (see note in *The Companion Bible*).

So also the Saviour gives His last words in John 17, and there, like Moses and David, speaks of 'The name' (John 17:6,11,12,26), and stresses 'The Words' and 'The Word' (John 17:8,14).

In view of his approaching death Peter, in his second epistle, wrote:

'Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance' (2 Pet. 1:12-15).

Again, Paul's second epistle to Timothy is written in view of his imminent death, and contains exhortations, warnings and encouragement, which include the words which constitute the title of this book:

'Hold fast *the form of sound words*, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 1:13).

Briefly, the analysis of 2 Timothy 1:8-18 which contains this exhortation is as follows:

2 Timothy 1:8-18

- 8-12. **a** TIMOTHY.- Not ashamed of testimony of prisoner.
b SUBJECT.- The Gospel.
c TIME PERIOD.- Before age times.
 12-14. **a** PAUL.- Not ashamed of suffering as prisoner.
b SUBJECT.- The good deposit.
c TIME PERIOD.- That day.
 15-18. **a** ONESIPHORUS.- Not ashamed of chain of prisoner.
b SUBJECT.- Service.
c TIME PERIOD.- That day.

We observe that this exhortation to hold fast the form of sound words is preceded and followed by references to something 'committed'. The word thus translated is *paratheke*, and can be rendered by the word 'deposit'. The section 12-14 therefore can be set out as follows:

- A 12. He is able to guard.
 B 12. The deposit.
 C 13. The form of sound words.
 A 14. Do thou guard.
 B 14. The good deposit.

Some explanation is due to the reader of departures in one or two places from the translation of the A.V.

In the original, the words of the A.V., ‘that which I have committed (entrusted) unto Him’ (2 Tim. 1:12) are *ten paratheken mou* whereas in 2 Timothy 1:14 they are *ten kalen paratheken*. It will be seen that, with the exception of the two words *mou*, ‘of me’, and *kalen*, ‘good’, the same words are used in both passages. The R.V. margin informs us that the Greek means ‘my deposit’. In 1 Timothy 6:20 the same word is used: ‘O Timothy, keep that which is (has been) committed to thy trust’ (*ten paratheken*). Further, the verb *paratithemi* is used in 2 Timothy 2:2, where we read, ‘The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same *commit* thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also’. Evidently the apostle has some body of truth in view when he uses the word *paratheke*, with which he associates what he calls ‘things heard of me’, and even the gospel he calls ‘my gospel’ (2 Tim. 2:8). It is in the closest association with this claim that the exhortation to have a form of sound words comes. Let us examine the passage more closely.

The word ‘form’ is *hupotuposin*, and is translated ‘pattern’ in 1 Timothy 1:16, where it occurs once more. This word is used as the name of a figure of rhetoric, its Latin name being *adumbratio*, ‘a shadowing out, a sketching out, in words’. From this it is clear that Paul’s life and doctrine, the manner of his conversion, and the message he was raised up to give, form the preliminary sketch that all must follow who seek to preach a gospel that will be true dispensationally, and make known the truth of the mystery, which constitutes the revelation entrusted to Paul consequent upon the dismissal of Israel at Acts 28, which preceded the commencement of the present ‘dispensation of the grace of God’ for us Gentiles (Eph. 3:1,2).

The intention of this book is to do all that lies in our power, by this means, to provide for any who desire to become acquainted with this ‘pattern of sound words’, and thus lay the foundation of a ministry which will stand the scrutiny of ‘that day’.

Before that ‘pattern’ can be attempted, it will be incumbent upon us to substantiate what we have suggested in the opening paragraphs of this chapter and demonstrate the unique position that Paul holds in New Testament ministry. This being established, the holding of the ‘form of sound words’ which Paul has left will be seen to be not merely useful, but vital to a faithful discharge of the trust committed to us, and to our becoming unashamed workmen, having rightly divided the Word of truth.

The meaning of the title ‘Apostle’, together with a demonstration of the distinctive character of the apostleship of Paul

We have seen that a ‘form of sound words’ was enjoined upon Timothy, and also how necessary that form is for all believers who would give a clear reason for the hope that is in them. Before attempting to construct such a form, it is necessary to demonstrate the scriptural reason for the restriction of its basis to the testimony of the apostle Paul. This we must do in two ways.

First, and briefly, we note that the apostle himself makes this restriction. He does not bid Timothy to range all scripture, though all be inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), for there is a need to ‘rightly divide’ the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), and the first division implied in the words of 2 Timothy 1:13 is the *distinguishing of Paul’s ministry from that of the twelve*.

Secondly, this distinction is found both in the words ‘which thou hast heard of me’ (2 Tim. 1:13), and in the teaching of the Acts and Epistles concerning Paul’s separate and unique apostleship. As a necessary prelude to our study therefore we must now address ourselves to these features.

‘Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard *of me*’ (2 Tim. 1:13).

Already in 2 Timothy 1 this insistence upon his own peculiar ministry is observable in the words, ‘Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor OF ME His prisoner’ (2 Tim. 1:8). No usurpation of the glory of the Lord is here. Christ is Lord, not Paul. Paul is but ‘His prisoner’, yet for all that, the particular testimony of the Lord intended here does not include the testimony of the Lord as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount, the commission to the Twelve as recorded in Matthew 10, the Parables of Matthew 13, the limitation of His ministry to ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ of Matthew 15, or the hope of the Second Coming as recorded in Matthew 24. These indeed form an integral part of ‘the testimony of our Lord’, and will most surely be fulfilled in God’s own time and way, but they do not form a testimony which could be at the same time associated with ‘Paul the Prisoner’,

for the testimony of the Gospel according to Matthew has the King and the kingdom in view; a kingdom on the earth; a kingdom in which the twelve apostles shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; a kingdom in which the distinctive calling of the Gentiles as ministered by Paul has no place.

We have already seen that in 2 Timothy 1 the apostle appears to have been entrusted with some 'good deposit' of truth which was his especial care, and it is to this that he refers when he speaks of the things 'which thou hast heard of me'. This restriction is repeated, when, in the second chapter, Paul gives instruction regarding the equipment and appointment of teachers by Timothy:

'And the things thou that hast heard OF ME among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also' (2 Tim. 2:2).

Here, ability to teach is recognised as essential, faithfulness is stressed, and the theme for teaching safeguarded by the reference to 'many witnesses', though the 'many' bear witness to the 'one'. The doctrine to be passed on and committed to faithful men is still that which Timothy had heard of the apostle himself.

In the first chapter of this epistle, Paul says, 'all they which are in Asia be turned away from ME' (2 Tim. 1:15), which, in the prophetic sequel of the last days, is expressed in the sad words of 2 Timothy 4:3, 'The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine'. They will indeed have many teachers, but, having turned away from the sound words originally give by Paul, the inevitable result is that 'they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables' (2 Tim. 4:3,4).

The Critics and the Modernists have little room for the distinctive teaching of the apostle Paul. They raise the cry, 'Back to Jesus' and trap the unwary, for the movement is retrograde: nor do they so much intend to go back to a full acceptance of all that the Gospels record that our Saviour did and said, but rather to detract from the authority and office of the apostle Paul.

To realise what is intended by Paul when he stresses the personal pronoun 'me' will necessitate an examination of what is involved in his office of 'apostle'. Its study will form the first of a series of 'sound words' which will be fashioned after the pattern provided for us.

APOSTLE.- The word has come straight over from the Greek into the English language, but it is not, except for this adoption, an English word. Its meaning must be sought in the original language of the New Testament, where it is found under the form *apostolos*. This word is found both in the Greek version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint (a translation generally indicated by the sign LXX, and so designated in the present book), and in classical or common Greek used outside the Scriptures.

In classical Greek *apostolos* meant 'a messenger, ambassador or envoy', and, in later usage, 'the commander of a naval force'. This rather limited meaning of the word is further seen in the use of *stolos*, 'a fleet ready for sea, a naval squadron or expedition'. In the LXX, *apostolos* occurs in 1 Kings 14:6 in the phrase, 'I am sent to thee with heavy tidings', where 'sent' translates the Hebrew *shalach*, which immediately connects with such missions as that of Joseph (Gen. 37:13), Moses (Exod. 3:14), and Isaiah (Isa. 6:8); and, generally, with the bearing of 'tidings', whether of deliverance or judgment. The composition of the word is simple. *Apo* is a preposition, and, like nearly all prepositions, carries with it a sense of motion, direction or rest. In this case the translation 'from' indicates origin, motion and direction. *Stello* is the verb 'to send', and so an apostle is one 'sent from another'.

Apostello is used of the 'sending forth' of the twelve (Matt. 10:5); of John the Baptist (Mark 1:2; John 1:6); of preachers generally (Rom. 10:15); of angels (Heb. 1:14); and of Paul (Acts 26:17). There is, however, one other occasion where *apostello* and *apostolos* are used, that gives all subsequent apostles and messengers their true and only authority. Both words are used of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is pre-eminently 'The Sent One' (1 John 4:9,10,14); He is pre-eminently 'The Apostle'.

'Consider the APOSTLE and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus' (Heb. 3:1).

Here therefore is revealed the character of the solemn office denoted by the title 'apostle'. Here Paul's insistence on the use of the word 'ME' in 2 Timothy 2:2 is carried back to another and higher use of the pronoun, 'He that receiveth you receiveth ME' (Matt. 10:40) and, through Him, to the ultimate source of all authority, God Himself.

Having therefore considered the meaning of the term ‘apostle’, we must now take the subject a stage further and enquire into the apostleship of Paul. First we must observe any difference there may be revealed between ‘The Twelve’ and Paul, and then collect all references that throw light upon the claim of the apostle to his office.

First we will see how Paul’s apostleship differs from that of the twelve in one great particular. The twelve were appointed early in the Lord’s public ministry (Matt. 10) before His death, resurrection or ascension, whereas Paul’s apostleship is referred to the time when Christ ‘ascended up far above all heavens’ whence, as the ascended One, He ‘gave gifts unto men ... and He gave some, apostles’ (Eph. 4:8-11). Here is indicated a most decided difference between the calling of these two orders of apostles. The difference is recognized in 1 Corinthians 15, where the apostle gives successive witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, among whom he numbers ‘The twelve’, but from which company he distinguishes his own calling by adding ‘and last of all he was seen by me ... for I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God’ (1 Cor. 15:5-9). This intense humility and sense of undeservedness but heightens the fact that, in spite of all such limitations, Paul had a distinct apostleship, which even humility could not deny.

There is another witness to Paul’s distinct apostleship which should weigh with us all, especially with any who deny or object to emphasis upon his distinctive calling: it is the testimony of Peter, James and John, recorded in Galatians 2:

‘When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen (Gentiles), and they unto the circumcision’ (Gal. 2:7-9).

To complete this outline it remains to observe the other references made by the apostle Paul to his high office, in order that we may possess ‘a form of sound words’ on this most important subject.

In the opening salutations of the epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, Paul speaks of himself as an apostle. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 he indicates the supremacy of the office, saying, ‘God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles’, etc., apostleship taking precedence over all other ministerial gifts and callings. To the Corinthians, Paul said: ‘Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds’ (2 Cor. 12:12). Writing to the Romans, Paul, who never magnified himself, but confessed that he was ‘not meet to be called an apostle’ (1 Cor. 15:9), said, ‘I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office’ (Rom. 11:13), and in both epistles to Timothy the apostle claims to have been appointed ‘A preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles’ (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), adding in the first of these references the solemn words ‘I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not’.

Here then is the evidence that Paul was in the fullest sense ‘an apostle of Jesus Christ’, this office being received directly from the risen Christ, and therefore charged with all authority. When therefore we receive Paul as an apostle, we receive Him that sent him. As we have seen, this apostleship is distinct from that of the twelve: it was not invalidated by the appointment of Matthias, and is specifically called and recognized as an apostleship to the Gentiles. Much doctrine hangs upon the recognition of this fact, but that will be made evident as we proceed with our studies.

CHAPTER 2

The Inspiration of Scripture

We have seen the importance of the office of an apostle, and that Paul’s apostleship was the gift of the ascended Lord to the church among the Gentiles. The office is one of authority, not dependent on either the recognition or sanction of the church. It was a foundation ministry (Eph. 2:20), and has no successors. When Paul knew that his time for departing this life had come, he called upon Timothy, not to do the work of an apostle, but to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). It now behoves us, in the pursuit of our quest, to discover what this great apostle has said concerning a number of fundamental doctrines.

No one can doubt either that Justification by Faith lies very near to the heart of the apostle's doctrine, or that the revelation concerning the Person of Christ, found in his epistles, is of the first importance. The doctrine, however, that seems to call for consideration before all else, is that concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures. We therefore devote this chapter to the discovery of a form of sound words, that shall embrace the apostle's doctrine concerning the Scriptures.

First let us examine that text found in the second epistle to Timothy, where the truth of inspiration is categorically stated; then we shall be in a position to supplement our findings by observing the ways in which the apostle handled the Scriptures:

'From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Observe the scope of this statement. It begins with a 'child', it ends with a 'man of God'; it opens with 'salvation', it closes with 'service'; it leads to both 'faith' and 'good works'. Within this compass the whole pathway of faith can be plotted, and at every step - from the first breathing of repentance to the closing doxology of a life of service - the Scriptures are found to be all-sufficient.

Two words are used by the apostle, which are both translated by the word 'Scripture', the only observable difference is that in the first occurrence the word is in the plural, whereas in the second it is in the singular. There is, however, an underlying difference in the two words used in the original.

'Holy Scriptures' (*Hiera Grammata*), or 'Sacred Letters'. - This deals with the elements of the Book, the 'letters', and fits the reference to the 'child'.

'Scripture' (*Graphe*), or 'Writing'. - This considers the books as a whole and gives to them the name of 'Scripture' or 'writing' *par excellence*. The word occurs fifty-one times in the Greek New Testament and is used in thirteen books, and although 'writing' is such a common subject, and *graphe* could rightly be used of any sort of writing, the fact remains that not one of these thirteen books uses the word *graphe* with any meaning other than that of 'The Scriptures'.

Limiting our investigation to the ministry of Paul we find that he used the word *graphe* 'Scripture', fourteen times in his epistles, where it is found in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. The apostle's citation of Scripture embraces the whole canon of the Old Testament, and includes quotations in full, selected portions, and even isolated words. In Romans 15:3 the apostle quotes Psalm 69:9, introducing the quotation with the formula 'it is written', and following it up in verse 4 by saying, 'For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope'. In Romans 4:3, the words of Genesis 15:6 are quoted as 'Scripture', while in Galatians 3:16 the apostle's whole argument depends upon the very fine point that the word 'seed' rather than 'seeds' is used in Genesis 13:15.

The formula 'It is written' occurs forty-two times in Paul's epistles, and the following summary of those which come in Romans provides a good example of the way the apostle uses the quotation, and the doctrines they are cited to support.

'It is written' in Romans

ROMANS	CITES	DOCTRINE SUPPORTED.
1:17	Hab. 2:4	Justification by Faith.
2:24	Ezek. 36:20	Name of God blasphemed.
3:4	Psa. 51:4	God justified in His sayings.
3:10	Psa. 14:1-3 &c.	Universality of sin.
4:17	Gen. 17:5	Abraham, father of many nations.
8:36	Psa. 44:22	Prevalence of persecution.
9:13	Mal. 1:2,3	Election of Jacob, not Esau.

9:33	Isa. 28:16	The Stumbling Stone.
10:15	Isa. 52:7	Preachers are sent.
11:8	Isa. 29:10	Blindness of Israel.
11:26	Isa. 59:20,21	Salvation of all Israel.
12:19	Deut. 32:35	Vengeance is Mine.
14:11	Isa 45:23	Judgment seat of Christ.
15:3	Psa. 69:9	Christ pleased not Himself.
15:9	Psa. 18:49	Gentiles glorify God.
15:10	Deut. 32:43	Gentiles glorify God.
15:11	Psa. 117:1	Gentiles glorify God.
15:21	Isa 52:15	Paul's preaching among Gentiles.

This list alone, including as it does quotations from the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, would show how fully the apostle accepted Scripture as authoritative. We find, however, in addition to the list already given, thirty-five citations that are not introduced with the formula 'It is written', but are either quoted without reference, or introduced by some such terms as 'What saith the Scripture?' 'According to that which was spoken', 'He saith to Moses', 'Isaiah crieth'.

Even this formidable list does not exhaust the subject. The Scriptures are so interwoven with the epistles of Paul that they are sometimes taken for granted, without quotation, even in connection with the most vital doctrines. For example, it would be utterly impossible to follow the teaching of Paul in Romans 5 to 8, if Genesis 1 to 3 were to be rejected. There, the fall of man as recorded in Genesis is tacitly accepted, Adam being actually named, his one act of disobedience being specifically compared with the one obedience of Christ (Rom. 5). The subjecting of the creation to vanity and the fulfilment of the purpose implicit in the statement that Adam was made in the image of God, are further references to Genesis 1 to 3 which, if Romans 8 is not to be set aside, must be accepted as historic truth.

Paul accepts as veritable history:

The story of Abraham	(Rom. 4:3 and Gen. 15:6).
The story of Isaac	(Rom. 4:18 and Gen 15:5). (Rom. 9:9 and Gen. 18:10).
The story of Esau and Jacob	(Rom. 9:12 and Gen. 25:23).
Pharaoh and the oppression of Israel	(Rom. 9:17 and Exod. 9:16).
Isaiah's reference to Sodom and Gomorrha	(Rom. 9:29 and Isa. 1:9).
Moses' authorship of Leviticus and Deuteronomy	(Rom. 10:5 and Lev. 18:5). (Rom. 10:6 and Deut. 30:12-14).
Endorses the testimony of the book of Kings	(Rom. 11:3 and 1 Kings 19:10-18).
Quotes some of the ten commandments as 'the law'	(Rom. 13:9 and Exod. 20:13-17).

Here on even the partial testimony of *one* of Paul's epistles, it must be agreed that there can be no possibility of doubt that as an apostle, he held the Scriptures to be true, authentic and nothing less than 'the Word of God'.

As to the method of the inspiration of Scripture, there is nothing actually stated in Romans, but the only deduction we can make from Paul's attitude to and the use of the Scriptures is that he recognized them as of full authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. This is indeed all we need, for any *theory* of inspiration is valueless if the resulting inspired Scriptures do not come with all the authority of the living God.

We come therefore to the plain statement of 2 Timothy 3:16 concerning the Scriptures to learn what a form of sound words framed on the teaching of Paul must be.

‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God’

Theopneustos, the word translated ‘given by inspiration of God’, is composed of two words, *Theos*, ‘God’ and *pneustos*, the third person, singular, perfect, passive of the verb *pneo*, ‘to breathe’. From this word is derived *pneuma*, ‘spirit’. The close association between *pneuma*, ‘spirit’, and its figure, ‘breath’, is preserved in such words as pneumatic and pneumonia, where the Greek word is retained; or in such words as ‘inspire’, ‘respire’, ‘perspire’ and ‘transpire’, where the Latin equivalent is used.

We have already seen that the Scriptures are ‘written’ *graphe* coming from *grapho*, ‘I write’. If therefore we credit the apostle with using words with intent and with due regard to the solemn issues that such a pronouncement must surely have, then we must face the fact and all that it implies, that to Paul, all Scripture, namely, what is *written*, is given by inspiration of God, or *God-breathed*. Now if what is *written* by man is what was *breathed* by God, there can be no interval in which the prophet interprets visions of his own heart. However *intelligently* the writer might co-operate with the Divine Spirit, or, on the other hand, however *mystified* he might be by the words given him to write, the fact remains, that what was *written* is what God *breathed*.

The reader of this book will probably never see the author’s actual autograph, neither will the printer nor the proof-reader. To save the time and temper of the compositors the manuscript will be turned into type-script, and the type-script into the printed page. But he would be a quibbler who said that because of the mediation of the machine and the willing co-operation of the mind and skill of others, the writer whose name occurs on the title page did not ‘write’ the book. So with the giving of the Scriptures, ‘GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past ... *by the prophets*’ (Heb. 1:1). Times and manners may be divers, the instruments may differ in rank and ability, but it remains true that it is GOD Who speaks, even though it be *by* the prophets.

To Paul, the Scriptures were ‘The Word of God’; alternatively, they were ‘The Word of Truth’, and to Paul and to all of like precious faith with him it is inconceivable that any revelation given by God could be other than ‘Truth’. Nor can any reason be given why the God of Truth, Who was mighty enough to create heaven and earth, could not or would not so supervise any revelation given to man, that it should not be exactly what He intended it to be. It is not as though we had come into possession of a number of ancient documents which we could examine and whose worth we could estimate, and accept or reject, according to the dictates of our critical faculty. On the contrary the documents abound with unique claims to Divine authority and origin. In view of this it is morally impossible to regard them in the same light as we do other productions. If we elect to sweep aside the claims to Divine inspiration, there is nothing left but to call them ‘erroneous’ or ‘deceptions’, (either wilful or ignorant), and the authority of the documents for us has for ever gone; we cannot even use them as we would other books, for the offensive claim to Divine authority meets us in every book and creates a moral issue that cannot be silenced.

In this book we are necessarily limiting our study to the witness of the apostle Paul, but when we remember that he, in his turn, was ‘sent’ by the Lord, Who endorsed these Scriptures in His life and teaching, in His death and resurrection, and Whose great desire was to fulfil all that they contained concerning Himself; then, we say, that to us as believers, saved by that same Christ, through the ministry of that same apostle, there is no alternative left but to say that the Bible which was accepted and endorsed by both the Lord and His servant Paul, must be accepted without reservation by all who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, and Paul the chosen and equipped earthen vessel for the ministry of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

Our ‘form of sound words’, therefore, must include without ambiguity or reservation the words, ‘*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*’.

CHAPTER 3

Things that are of God

We have seen that the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God; they come to us as a revelation of God; they make known the ways and will of God. Our next enquiry into the pattern set before us in the teaching of Paul therefore must be the form of sound words which we must use when speaking of God.

The Greek word *Theos*, 'God', occurs in Paul's epistles some 700 times, so that a vast amount of material on the subject is available. We have attempted an analysis of its distribution, but time, space and the necessary ability being not ours to command, we offer the reader the following lists by way of a sample which we believe is truly representative of the whole, for we have not consciously omitted any item vital to the presentation of a complete view of Paul's teaching.

God is the Creator.- In concert with the Scriptures which he acknowledged, Paul ascribes the creation of all things to God. In Romans 1:19-25 he uses the title 'The Creator', and declares that by means of the creation of the world and of the things that are made, those invisible things of God, such as His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, so clearly, indeed, as to make all idolatry 'without excuse'.

Paul concludes his indictment of Gentile idolatry with the doxology to the Creator, 'Who is blessed for ever. Amen', a doxology that clearly differentiates 'the creature' from 'the Creator', yet which is repeated and even amplified when ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ in Romans 9:5, a truth that we must remember when seeking a form of sound words concerning the person of the Saviour. Other passages which ascribe creation solely to 'God' are Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10, where the reference back is to the creation of Adam, and 1 Timothy 4:3 and 4, where articles of food, clean and unclean, are under discussion. The remaining reference does not speak of creation by God apart from Christ, but says (if we follow the A.V.), 'which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ' (Eph. 3:9).

We would call the reader's attention to the fact that the statement that creation is the work of 'God *the Father*', is the language of the Creeds, but not of Scripture. If we are intent in our pursuit, and seek to frame our convictions in harmony with the sound words learned from the apostle Paul, we shall be well advised to omit even the most natural extension of the term 'God', if only because we shall be obliged, presently, to record that creation is very definitely attributed to 'The Son'. For the moment let it suffice that Paul teaches that it is 'God' Who is 'the Creator'.

God is the Moral Governor.- He Who is our Maker has the right to assign to us our responsibilities, and inasmuch as, on the one hand, man is a moral agent, possessing a conscience, amenable to law, capable of obedience, faith, and love, and, on the other, alas, is capable of disobedience, unbelief and hatred, unless the whole world is to be abandoned to chaos, God the Creator must be also God the Moral Governor. It will be evident that here is a theme that is too vast to present in its entirety. Instead, we offer the following selections from Paul's epistles, being sure that they are sufficient for our immediate purpose, and will prepare the way for, as well as make it necessary to consider, all features which have been omitted.

'Is God unrighteous Who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?' (Rom. 3:5,6).

Here the apostle makes it clear that God is the Moral Governor of the world, for the words used admit of no other meaning. This governance must embrace all that constitutes true moral government: there must be law, and there must be penalty for transgression as well as reward for obedience. All this is implied in the question, 'How shall God judge the world?' As Creator and Moral Governor, God alone has the right to plan and provide for the salvation of His creatures, on any terms and by any means that His wisdom, love and power may dictate. Further, His governance, whether in creation, law or grace will finally be the outcome of His being and attributes. If He be essentially holy, that holiness will be kept to the fore in all His ways. If He be both a God of righteousness and a God of love, both must be fully satisfied, and neither at the expense of the other. To help to frame a form of sound words on this mighty subject the following is offered as a contribution.

Although, as we have already observed, the word 'God', *Theos*, occurs over 700 times in Paul's epistles, to which may be added another 100 occurrences in Acts 9 to 28, Paul nowhere discusses the absolute being of God: He

is always seen in relation to the creation, the kingdom, the church, the believer or the unbeliever. The nearest approach to the absolute being of God is a series of negatives - what God is *not*, rather than what He *is*.

It is in connection with the gradual unfolding of His purposes in the pages of Scripture that God manifests to us the different attributes of His being and nature, each unfolding being related to the purpose in view at the time. To Moses He revealed some of His glories, to John others. Throughout the Scriptures there is not to be found any attempt to define or analyze the being and nature of God; always its approach to this inscrutable theme is relative: as to His being, its standpoint is that he that comes to God must believe that 'God *is*', and that, as Moral Governor, He is the '*Rewarder* of all them that diligently seek Him'.

Of necessity God Himself is infinitely beyond the sum total of all His attributes as revealed in Scripture. In the revelation given to Paul, God is said to be:

INVISIBLE (1 Tim. 1:17; Col. 1:15).	
IMMORTAL (1 Tim. 6:16).	Essential
INCORRUPTIBLE (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:17).*	Negations
IMMUTABLE, AS TO COUNSEL (Heb. 6:17).	
INCAPABLE OF LYING (Heb. 6:18).	Functional
INCAPABLE OF DENYING HIMSELF (2 Tim. 2:13).	Negations

From these negative statements we move into the realm of redeeming activity, and there we meet with the following positive titles, with which our list must be headed.

The living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9).- This title is used in blessed contrast with the idols of the heathen.

The living God (1 Tim. 4:10; 6:17).- This title is used of the God of Salvation, especially in connection with 'trusting' Him, and trusting Him, rather than in uncertain riches or in bodily exercise, a form of 'idolatry' (which is the worship of something in the place of God) into which it is easy for a believer to fall.

The only (wise) God (Rom. 16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17).- If we follow the R.V. we shall omit the word 'wise' from 1 Timothy 1:17 and read 'The only God'. We note, that in the corresponding passage, 1 Timothy 6:15,16, the words 'only potentate' and 'only hath immortality' are retained by the R.V.. Comment upon the doctrinal significance of these passages will be given when we are considering Paul's testimony to the Person of Christ. Accordingly we add the R.V. text and give the further title THE ONLY GOD (1 Tim. 1:17).

The Blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11), and *The blessed and only Potentate* (1 Tim. 6:15).- There are two words translated 'blessed' that are used of God. Here in these references in 1 Timothy the word is *makarion*, which some derive from *me keru*, 'not subject to fate', applying it to the gods as *immortals*. This happiness is from within. The other word, *eulogeo*, 'to bless', literally means 'to speak well of', referring rather to repute. God is both blessed in His own intrinsic worth, and blessed by reason of all the manifestations of His love. In 1 Timothy 1:11 the gospel is associated with the blessed God, and, in 1 Timothy 6:15, future dominion.

As we have seen, not only does the apostle say what God is, but he names two attributes, saying that He is *faithful* (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13) and that He is *true* (2 Cor. 1:18). These plain statements can be supplemented by such passages as 1 Thessalonian 5:24, 'Faithful is He that calleth you'; 2 Timothy 2:13, 'He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself'; and Hebrews 10:23, 'He is faithful that promised'.

* The word translated IMMORTAL in 1 Timothy 1:17 in the A.V., is the same one as translated UNCORRUPTIBLE in Romans 1:23. It is a different word from that translated IMMORTALITY in 1 Timothy 1:16. See pages 41 and 42 for further detail.

The Father.- In this dispensation of grace, however, the most characteristic title of God is ‘The Father’. From God, as Father, come the salutations of ‘grace, mercy and peace’ in the epistles, and to God, *the Father*, the thanks of the apostle and of the Church ascend.

The title occurs in several forms and in several associations:

- (1) God the Father (1 Thess. 1:1);
- (2) God our Father (Rom. 1:7);
- (3) God, even the Father (1 Cor. 15:24);
- (4) God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:3);
- (5) The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3).

To this series might be added the titles ‘The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Eph. 3:14), and ‘The God of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Eph. 1:17), which fall to be discussed when dealing with the teaching of Paul concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with which must also be included such passages as 1 Corinthians 8:6; Romans 11:36; 9:5 and 1:25. At the moment we are confining ourselves to plain, unambiguous statements.

A further extension in the revelation of God is found in that series of statements where God is said to be the ‘God of’ something, using the genitive, ‘of’, to indicate God as the Author of the specified blessing.

THE GOD OF PEACE (Rom. 15:33; Phil. 4:9;
1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20).

THE GOD OF HOPE (Rom. 15:13).

THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION (Rom. 15:5).

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT (2 Cor. 1:3). To which may be added

THE FATHER OF MERCIES (2 Cor. 1:3).

These titles have particular reference to the outworking of the purpose of redemption, sometimes looking to the end of the conflict, sometimes to the things endured by the way.

More frequently, the fact that God is the Author and Originator of all the blessings of the Gospel is set forth by stating that certain blessings are ‘of God’.

It lies beyond our understanding to attempt to decide in what order of precedence these things that are said to be ‘of God’ should appear. We therefore follow the order in which the statements appear in Romans and subsequent epistles. We do not suggest, however, that there is any spiritual significance attached to this order.

Things that are said to be ‘of God’

The GOSPEL of God	(Rom. 1:1).
The WILL of God	(Rom. 1:10).
The POWER of God	(Rom. 1:16).
The RIGHTEOUSNESS of God	(Rom. 1:17).
The WRATH of God	(Rom. 1:18).
The GLORY of God	(Rom. 1:23).
The TRUTH of God	(Rom. 1:25).
The GOODNESS of God	(Rom. 2:4).
The JUDGMENT of God	(Rom. 2:5).
The NAME of God	(Rom. 2:24).
The ORACLES of God	(Rom. 3:2).
The FAITH of God	(Rom. 3:3).
The LOVE of God	(Rom. 5:5).

The GRACE of God	(Rom. 5:15).
The GOODNESS and SEVERITY of God	(Rom. 11:22).
The WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE of God	(Rom. 11:33).
The MERCIES of God	(Rom. 12:1).
The KINGDOM of Christ and of God	(Eph. 5:5).
The KINGDOM of God	(Col. 4:11).

While it is not claimed that this list is complete, it is fairly representative. Obviously such expressions as ‘The *fear* of God’ cannot be listed here, as the fear is felt by *man*. Again, such terms as ‘The Son of God’ come under a special category, as also do ‘heirs of God’ and similar references. One or two principles seem to be made evident by this collation of references.

- (1) The epistle to the Romans stands out as a basic epistle, for while some of the references could have been taken from other epistles, no other contains within itself so great a number.
- (2) The philosophical approach to the being and nature of God is entirely absent. All is in the realm of the manifest and relative; what God *is* in Himself, and considered independently of the conditions of time and space, is not discussed. This is a word that all who seek to hold a form of sound words that do not go beyond the Divine pattern will acknowledge.
- (3) In nearly every case the things said to be ‘of God’ are those which relate to His moral government, either in judgment or in mercy, in wrath or in grace.

Theology has often stepped beyond these bounds, and sometimes by reason of the pressure of attack and criticism, men, in the construction of a Creed, have put out their hands to stay the ark of God, and while silencing one objector have but raised up a legion of new opponents. Happily our quest demands no such attitude. We feel no responsibility to supplement what the apostle has revealed, being sure that, had any such addition been necessary, it would have been included in the pattern and not left for uninspired followers to amend and enlarge.

Of necessity every item listed in these pages has a context, *and the lists given will be of little value unless such contexts are examined and the references seen in their scriptural setting*. In some instances this will be done as we follow the pattern before us, but neither time, space nor ability will permit us to attempt a tithe of what should be done to make these truths personal and experimental. In all these studies, therefore, the true *Berean* spirit is enjoined; first of all to receive gladly whatever may be put forward in the word of ministry, and then to search the Word itself to see whether the things stated are so.

We perceive that references to ‘God’, as such, are comparatively simple. As he goes through the lists in this chapter, no reader will be conscious of any strain on his understanding. But when we come to the teaching of the apostle on the Person of Christ the case is different. As Matthew has revealed, ‘No man recogniseth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him’, but concerning ‘The Son’ he says, ‘No man recogniseth the Son, but the Father’, and significantly omits any revelation by the Father concerning the Son, thus suggesting that *the mystery* of God is Christ, and that *the mystery* of godliness is God manifest in the flesh. To this wondrous theme we now address ourselves with mingled feelings, conscious of the sublimity of the subject, the august nature of the Person, the frailty of the seeker, and yet the all-sufficiency of grace.

CHAPTER 4

God Manifest

We have been obliged to divide our study of the deity of Christ into two main sections. Here in chapter 4 we propose to deal with the subject under the heading ‘God manifest’, and in chapter 5 under the heading ‘God manifest in the flesh’. As our study will prove, the distinction is of vital importance.

While the study of the Scriptures that relate to the being and attributes of God embraces the greatest theme that can occupy the mind of man, on the whole, the aspect of it presented through the ministry of the apostle Paul is simple. No abstruse problems are propounded, except where the subject matter relates to God as 'The Father' and to 'the Lord Jesus Christ', whether keeping these titles separate and predicting different actions and states to each, or so intimately associating them together that it becomes a problem of the first magnitude to avoid turning to one of two extremes in interpretation. While we still keep in mind that the form of sound words we seek embraces the things taught by Paul, we also remember that before Paul took up his pen to write at all, certain words had fixed meanings. Prominent among them, and of supreme importance in our present quest is the title 'Lord', a title repeatedly used of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our first consideration must be the meaning of the word translated 'Lord' as fixed by Scriptural usage. The Greek New Testament uses the word *kurios* as an equivalent for the Old Testament 'Jehovah', and in this adoption the LXX (Septuagint) has played a decisive part. On only a few occasions does the LXX depart from its custom and translate the Hebrew 'Jehovah' *Despotes* (Prov. 29:25), and *Theos* (Exod. 4:2, and seven other references). In the majority of instances 'Jehovah' is rendered by the Greek *Kurios*.

The meaning of the name 'Jehovah' finds its fullest explanation in Exodus 3. At the burning bush 'God' called unto Moses, declaring Himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and when Moses was afraid to look upon 'God', then we read 'The LORD (i.e., *Jehovah*) said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people ... I will send thee ...'. Moses thereupon declared that the people of Israel would demand the name of God Who had sent him, and asked, 'What shall I say unto them?' and received the reply, 'I AM THAT I AM'. 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you'. This is expanded as follows:

The LORD (*Jehovah*, Heb., *Kurios*, Gr.) God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever (unto the age) (*l'olam* Heb., *aionion*, Gr.), and this is My memorial unto all generations (*l'dor dor*, Heb., *geneon geneais*, Gr.).

This very special and exclusive use of the verb 'to be' indicates not only that 'He is', that is, that He exists, but that He is, in a sense that can be true of no other being: it is a claim to underiving and independent existence. The name *Elohim*, 'God', speaks rather of *power*; *Jehovah* of *personality*. Dr. Duncan H. Weir says of this name, *Jehovah*:

'It is everywhere a *proper* name, denoting the personal God and Him only; whereas *Elohim* partakes more of the character of a *common noun*, denoting usually, indeed, but not necessarily nor uniformly, the Supreme. *Elohim* may be grammatically defined by the article or by having a suffix attached to it, or by being in construction with a following noun. The Hebrew may say *the Elohim*, the true God, in opposition to all false gods; but he never says *the Jehovah*, for *Jehovah* is the name of the true God only. He says again and again *my God*: but never *my Jehovah*, for when he says *my God* he means *Jehovah*. He speaks of the God of Israel, but never of the *Jehovah* of Israel, for there is no other *Jehovah*. He speaks of the living God, but never of the living *Jehovah*, for he cannot conceive of *Jehovah* as other than living ... *Jehovah* is eminently the *God of redemption*, under the old covenant, the God of Israel. The correlative of *Elohim* is *man*; God in nature; *Jehovah* is God in *grace* (Exod. 34;6,7); *Elohim* is the God of *providence*; *Jehovah* the God of *promise and prophecy*. "Thus saith *Jehovah*" are the words with which the prophet always introduces his message; never "Thus saith *Elohim*"'.

Here the Scriptures reveal one God under two economies, Nature and Grace.

Having seen the peculiar meaning that is attached to the name *Jehovah*, we must next prove that when translating the title the LXX used the Greek *Kurios*.

In Exodus 3. we find the name *Jehovah* in verses 2,4,7,15,16 and 18. There, in the expressions 'The LORD God' and 'The LORD our God', it is rendered simply of the title *Theos*. This plainly shows that in the estimation of these translators 'Jehovah' was so evidently the 'God of the Hebrews' that there was no necessity even to use the Greek equivalent. This matter is not debatable, and there will therefore be no need to fill our pages with 'proofs' of a fact so generally admitted. We turn instead to the more pointed enquiry, What is the usage in Paul's epistles? Does the apostle adhere to the LXX translation, *Kurios*? The answer is that he does.

In Romans 4:7,8 Paul quotes Psalm 32:1,2, and in Hebrews 7:21 he quotes Psalm 110:4, and in both cases follows the LXX rule. This is true, not only of Paul, but of other New Testament writers. Matthew quotes the words from the prophet Isaiah, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord (Jehovah)' by, 'Prepare ye the way of *Kurios*' and with this agree Mark, Luke and John. If we enquire whether, in Paul's witness, the titles 'God' and 'Lord' are interchangeable the answer is still in the affirmative. Before he was converted, and while yet a zealous Pharisee, Paul, on his arrested journey to Damascus, used the title *Kurios* when addressing the One Whose glory eclipsed the noon-day sun. He cried 'Who art Thou, Lord?' (Acts 9:5) and most certainly believed that he was addressing 'God', and Ananias, who visited him after his arrival in Damascus, used the expanded title 'The Lord, *even Jesus*'. Peter, too, uses the title when addressing God (Acts 10:14), yet does not hesitate to use the self-same title of the Saviour, as did all the apostles. Preaching to the philosophers at Athens, Paul plainly taught that the 'God' Who had made the world, was 'Lord' of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24).

Not only does the apostle say of Christ, the Son, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him' (Heb. 1:6), but he unreservedly gives Him the title 'God', saying, 'But unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever' (Heb. 1:8), yet, still speaking of the Son, follows this by 'God, even Thy God', and further concludes with 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth' (Heb. 1:10). The apostle was writing to Hebrews, who, even by the outside world, were known to be jealous of the truth that there is One God, yet, as Paul and every Hebrew knew, he was quoting Psalm 102, where the address of the afflicted is to 'God' (Psa. 102:24), saying:

'Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end' (Psa. 102:25-27).

Here, in this short chapter of Hebrews, worship, creation and deity are unreservedly ascribed to 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever'.

Are we to accuse Paul of muddled thinking, when we find in Romans 10:9 and 16 that Jesus Christ is 'Lord', yet it was to the 'Lord' that Isaiah spoke when he addressed the God of Israel in reference to the coming Messiah and said 'Lord, who hath believed our report?'

Are we to believe that there is any intended connection, or acknowledgment of error, when we compare the following:

'For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God' (Rom. 14:11).

'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil. 2:10,11).

Moreover, Romans 14:10 will show that Paul intended both the titles 'Lord' and 'God' to refer to Christ, for he had said, 'we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, for ...'.

Among those who reject the doctrine of the deity of Christ, God the Father is looked upon as the One and Only God, whereas the 'Lord' Jesus Christ is His messenger, representative and inferior. We have, we believe, established beyond dispute that when the apostle Paul uses the title *Kurios* of the Saviour, he purposely and consciously gives Him the title *Jehovah*. Now it is said of 'God', Who is also the 'Lord' in Romans 11:33-36, that 'Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen'. Yet writing to the Corinthians, and, as we believe, sometime before the writing of Romans 11, the same apostle had said:

'To us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and One Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him' (1 Cor. 8:6).

As the context shows, this is in opposition to the Pagan conception of ‘gods many, and lords many’, nevertheless the passage is truth given by inspiration of God. Yet what are we to understand by this revelation? Are we to declare that there are two deities, One called ‘God’ Who is the Father; the other called ‘Lord’, Who is the Son? One ‘God’, ‘out of Whom’ are all things and we ‘for Him’ and the other God, ‘The Lord’, ‘through Whom’ are all things and we through Him?’ If we demure, and say ‘No there is but one God, the Father’ then we must believe from this passage that, while ‘God’ originates all things and that these find their goal in Him, He has no hand in the purpose of the ages, yet, when writing Romans 11, we find that to ‘the Lord’ is ascribed not only that all things are ‘by Him’, as is found in 1 Corinthians 8:6, but ‘of Him’ and ‘for Him’, which is separated by the apostle in 1 Corinthians 8:6 from ‘The Lord’ and exclusively indicated of ‘God’.

Either Paul is contradicting himself or he intends to indicate deity by both the titles ‘God the Father’ and ‘The Lord Jesus Christ’. Again, in Romans we find further confirmation that, to Paul, ‘God’ and ‘The Lord’, even when referring to the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, must be considered as One. First when speaking of the witness of creation to the deity of the Creator and the inexcusability of idolatry, he speaks of ‘The Creator, Who is blessed for ever. Amen’ (Rom. 1:25). The words of Bishop Wordsworth on this expression are so well chosen that we quote them here:

‘From this text a strong argument may be derived against:

- (1) The Arians, who assert Christ to be a creature, and yet profess to *worship* Him; and
- (2) Against those who pay religious *worship* to any *creature*; According to *Scripture*, *no one* is to be *worshipped* who is *not* God by nature (Gal. 4:8); no creature but the *Creator* only (Rom. 1:25). From whence it is evident that there is no *middle* between *Creator* and *creature*, Creator and creature being opposites; so that a creature cannot be Creator, nor Creator a creature. *Scripture* knows nothing of *creature-worship*, nothing of *inferior*, *relative* or *mediate* worship distinct from Divine; nothing of *two worships* of different kinds,- either before the Gospel or after. The one fundamental rule of worship, from Genesis down to Revelation, is to worship *God alone* - *The God of Israel*, the *Jehovah*, the *Creator*, *Sustainer*, *Preserver* of all things’.

We feel no argument is necessary to prove that the words in Romans 1:25, ‘Who is blessed for ever’, can refer to none but God only.

In the same epistle, the same apostle uses the same words when speaking of Christ:

‘Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever’ (Rom. 9:5).

These words should be compared with those of 2 Corinthians 11:31:

‘*Ho on epi panton Theos eulogetos eis tous aionas, Amen*’ (Rom. 9:5).

‘*Ho on eulogetos eis tous aionas*’ (2 Cor. 11:31).

The former passage speaks of Christ, the latter of the Father. In the former the added words occur, ‘over all’, words used of the Father in Ephesians 4:6 and translated ‘above all’. Moreover, every student of the Talmud or of Israel’s religious language, knows that the term ‘The Blessed One’, as Bishop Pearson observes, ‘of itself elsewhere signifies the supreme God, and was always used by the Jews to express that one God of Israel’.

Unless we are going to include every reference made by Paul to this great subject to the exclusion of other fundamental doctrines, we must bring this phase of our study to a conclusion. But before we consider other aspects of this great revelation, let us summarize what we have found so far:

- (1) The title ‘Lord’ in the New Testament (*Kurios* in the Greek) is the equivalent and translation of the Old Testament title, *Jehovah*.
- (2) *Jehovah* is the title assumed by God ‘unto the age’, and is His memorial unto all generations.
- (3) Everywhere the title refers to the God of Redemption, Promise and Prophecy.
- (4) This title is indubitably and consciously used of the Lord Jesus Christ, both by Paul and other writers of the New Testament.

- (5) Christ, moreover, is also most definitely called 'God', and with the most impressive adjuncts 'over all' and 'blessed for ever'.
- (6) The titles 'God' and 'Lord', with their correlatives, are used by the apostle, sometimes in apposition, sometimes as interchangeable and he never seems at all conscious that an explanation is due, or that there is any contradiction in his use of the terms.

We must now assemble other statements of the apostle that throw greater light upon the question of the Lord's deity and relation to the Father, and then, we believe, we shall have given sufficient data to enable the earnest student to go forward and compile a form of sound words on this most wonderful theme.

On three occasions the apostle uses terms in his epistles that are vital to a due appreciation of the Saviour's Person and office.

- (1) 'He is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature' (Col. 1:15,16).
- (2) 'He is the express Image of His (God's) person' (Heb. 1:3).
- (3) 'He was in the form of God' (Phil. 2:6).

God is invisible. This is a statement of revelation that lies behind most of the glorious truth concerning Christ, and most of the misunderstandings that have become solidified into creed and dogma. To be visible is to be limited and circumscribed. The Greek word *aoratos*, 'invisible', is made up of *a*, a negative, and *horatos* 'visible'. In its turn this word is allied with *horizo*, 'to set by boundaries', hence our 'horizon', *horos*, 'a bound or limit', *aphorizo*, 'To separate, as by boundaries'.

'Things which are seen are transient, but things which are unseen are age-lasting' (2 Cor. 4:18 author's translation).

It was the evident purpose of God, that by an act of selflimitation He should step into the realm of the *manifest*, hence as a result, in the first instance, the act and purpose of Creation.

'For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead' (Rom. 1:20).

Creation, however, provides only a partial means of manifesting God. 'That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them', but 'that which may be known', by such means, was not His Fatherhood, nor His personal Godhead (*Theotes*, as in Col. 2:9), but His eternal power and His abstract deity (*Theiotes* Rom. 1:20). But God is not merely the Almighty, He is a God of love. Creation indeed prepared the way for a fuller revelation of Himself, but, in its completeness, this is seen in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

'There is nothing more certainly taught in the Word than these great facts, that, *not from eternity*, but from *before creation*, the Son had a visibility which the Father and the Holy Ghost did not possess; but they had their visibility in Him, for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"' (W Marshall).

No one less than Deity could be the dwelling place of 'All the fulness', but God, in the absolute and unconditional sense, could not possess all the fulness of the Godhead '*bodily*'. The enigma is gloriously and completely solved in the Lord Jesus Christ, 'The Image of the invisible God', or, as John reveals the same truth, He Who was in the beginning - 'the Word' and 'God', Who made all things - 'became flesh, and dwelt among us'. For creative and mediatorial ends - prior to creation and in preparation for redemption - the Son became the Image of the Invisible, the express Image of His person, the form of God.

Should any reader feel that some of these observations are not entirely in line with the creeds of Christendom, the words of Principal Gore may not be without steadying weight:

‘The dogmatic decisions of the church have been greatly misused. And how? By being treated as sources of our positive information about Christ, practically overriding the gospel picture. It is well therefore to test all that councils have said, by Scripture’.

We mistake the teaching of Colossians 1:15,16 if we limit it to the days of Christ’s flesh. Paul is referring to pre-creation times, for the One Who is the Image of the invisible God created all things, is before all things, and by Him all things consist. In the fulness of time, this same blessed One laid aside His glory, stooped to the fashion of a man and to the form of a slave, and humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross. We must keep clear in our mind the difference intended by the Image of the invisible God necessitated for the purpose of creation, and the body, in fashion as a man, in the likeness of sinful flesh, which He assumed in order to accomplish our redemption.

Before leaving this passage and passing on to Hebrews 1, ‘a form of sound words’ will include, wherever possible, the underlying structure of the passage before us, and we submit the following, not as perfect, but as an approximation to that underlying structure which is discoverable in all parts of the inspired Word.

Colossians 1:13-22

- A 13,14. Rescue, Translation, Redemption,
‘Through His blood’
- B 15-17. C 15. a Image of invisible God.
FIRST-. b Firstborn of every creature.
BORN.
D 16,17. c ‘By Him’ Heaven and Earth.
CREATION d He is before all.
e In Him all things consist.
- B 18-20. C 18. a The Beginning. Head of the Church.
FIRST-. b Firstborn from the dead.
BORN
D 18-20. d In all things pre-eminent.
RECONCIL- e In Him all fulness dwells.
IATION c Through the blood of His cross
Earth and Heaven.
- A 21,22. Reconciliation, Presentation, ‘Through death’.

When we compare Hebrews 1 with the passage in Colossians 1 we discover that, while the terms used in the two passages differ, they nevertheless move along similar paths. This we will demonstrate before examining the opening verses in detail.

Colossians 1	Hebrews 1
The Image.	The express Image.
The invisible God.	The substance (Person).
All things created by Him.	Ages, Heaven and Earth made by Him.
Pre-eminent in all.	Superior to angels.
All the fulness.	Heir of all things.
All things by His counsel.	All things upheld by Him.
Firstborn.	Firstborn.
The blood of His cross.	Thy throne, O God!

The word ‘Image’ in Colossians 1 is the Greek *eikon*, from *eiko*, ‘to be like’. It is a likeness, and its very essence is visibility. In Hebrews 1:3 Christ is said to be ‘The express Image of His person’. Here the Greek word for ‘express image’ is *charakter*, from *charatto*, ‘to engrave’. It is used in secular Greek of letters imprinted in wax, and the stamping of coins. *Charagma* is used in Acts 17:29 where it is translated ‘graven’, and occurs eight times in The Revelation, where it is translated ‘mark’. ‘The express Image’ refers not so much to visibility as to *the character* of something otherwise unrevealed and unexplored.

Where creation and redemption are concerned, God, conceived of as 'invisible', needs Christ as His 'Image' (Col. 1:14-16). God, when expressed by Christ as His 'equal', necessitated 'the form of God' (Phil. 2:6). God, as regards His 'substance', required the 'express image' of His Son to complete His 'manifestation' in the realm of the conditioned and the visible. The reader may wonder why we use the word 'substance' as the A.V. of Hebrews 1:3 uses the word 'Person'. The A.V., however, translates this same word 'substance' in Hebrews 11:1, where the translation 'person' would be impossible. The R.V. reads 'The very image of His substance', reading in the margin, 'The impress of His substance'. In the Greek the word is *hupostasis*. It is a compound of *hupo*, 'under', and *histanai*, 'to stand'. The Latin equivalent is similar, *sub* meaning 'under' and *stare* meaning 'to stand', hence 'to stand under', 'substance'. Philosophers distinguish it from 'accidents', i.e., shape, colour, weight, texture, etc., all or most of which can be removed without altering the hidden reality. A brick is red, but the redness can be removed; the brick is solid, but it may be reduced to dust, yet the 'substance' will remain. This substance, however, *underlies* all phenomena, but is itself invisible and intangible. We do not handle or see 'matter' itself, we are only conversant with its many manifestations. So God is invisible and intangible, no one has ever seen Him or heard His voice, but Christ is the 'express Image' of His hidden 'substance', bringing the invisible into the realm of the visible; the intangible into the realm of the ponderable.

It will readily be understood therefore that when conflict and error caused the great Creeds of the church to come into being, this word *hypostasis* was used with regard to the *being* of God, the divine nature or essence, in respect of which the three Persons of the Trinity are one.

Hypostasis is that which underlies all outward manifestation. The word occurs in the LXX and must be taken into account:

'My *substance* was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth' (Psa. 139:15).

Verse 13 of the Psalm speaks of the period of birth, but verse 15 of something far more mysterious. The secret thing wrought in the lower parts of the earth the LXX calls 'my *hypostasis*', and this hypostasis is to birth (verse 13) what the 'substance' of Hebrews 1:3 is to the 'express Image'.

We return to Hebrews 1 to learn another lesson.

'God in times past spake to the fathers *by the prophets*' (verse 1).

'God in these last days has spoken to us *in Son*' (verse 2).

'In Son' does not seem to give good sense: 'in His Son' or 'in the Son' sounds correct, but 'in Son' does not sound English. The truth is that, not English, but Hebrew, comes to the fore here. In Exodus 6:3 the Hebrew reads *B'el Shaddai*, 'in God Almighty'. To Abraham, Isaac and Jacob God appeared 'in God Almighty': to their New Testament descendants He speaks 'in Son'. Here in Hebrews 1:1 and 2, 'the prophets' are contrasted with 'the Son'. The prophets were messengers sent by God, but in the person of the Son, God became incarnate, *He came Himself!*

After the humiliation and death of the cross, comes the resurrection and the glory. The Saviour ascends up where He was before (John 6:62); He returns to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), but, beyond that, as the Redeemer, He receives from the Father added glory; glory which may be seen and shared by His own (John 17:22-24).

We do not speak of the 'divinity' of Christ but of His *deity*.

'He is not the most eminent and ancient of the creatures, decorated by the necessities of a theological controversy with That Name which a serious piety can dare to yield to One Being alone. Ascribe to the Christ of Arius an antiquity as remote as you will from the age of the Incarnation, place him as high as can be conceived, above the highest archangel; still, what, after all, is this ancient, this super-angelic being but a creature who had a

b The King, immortal, UNSEEN.

On either side of the passage which declares that God was manifested in the flesh, are two sets of statements that reveal both the nature of God and the necessity for a medium of manifestation. The first passage reads:

‘Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen’ (1 Tim. 1:17 A.V.).

‘Now unto the King eternal (margin Gr. *of the ages*), incorruptible, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen’ (Gr. *unto the ages of the ages*.) (1 Tim. 1:17 R.V.).

The second passage reads:

‘Keep ... until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in His times He shall shew, Who is the blessed and only Potentate the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen’ (1 Tim. 6:14-16 A.V.).

‘Keep ... until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in its (margin *His*) own times He shall shew, Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings (Gr. *them that reign as kings*), and Lord of lords (Gr. *them that rule as lords*); Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power eternal’ (1 Tim. 6:14-16, R.V.).

In both passages, God is referred to as a King, showing that we are dealing with God relatively and not unconditionally; in the first passage He is spoken of as being ‘incorruptible’ (R.V.) and ‘invisible’, whereas, in the second He is spoken of as being ‘immortal’ and One ‘Whom no man hath seen, nor can see’. Four different words are used here in the original, and their differing meanings must be understood.

Aphthartos occurs seven times in the Greek New Testament and is translated ‘incorruptible God’ (Rom. 1:23); ‘incorruptible crown’ (1 Cor. 9:25); ‘dead raised incorruptible’ (1 Cor. 15:52); ‘The King, incorruptible’ (1 Tim. 1:17); ‘Inheritance incorruptible’ (1 Pet 1:4); ‘incorruptible seed’ (1 Pet. 1:23); and ‘the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible’ (1 Pet. 3:4). *Aphtharsia* is translated ‘immortality’, ‘incorruption’ and ‘sincerity’. While death is sometimes in view, it is not necessarily so, for it is evident by the above references that corruption can be moral as well as physical.

In contrast, we find in 1 Timothy 6:16 the Greek word *athanasia* which occurs nowhere else except in 1 Corinthians 15:53,54 where it is translated ‘immortality’. Here the word has reference to death and to death only. It envisages resurrection; it supposes the possibility of coming under the dominion of death.

In 1 Timothy 1:17 Christ, as the Image of the invisible God, is the manifestation that fulfils every condition, but in 1 Timothy 6:15,16, it is Christ in resurrection, the One over Whom death can have no dominion; the One Who is living and was dead and is alive for evermore; Who at His second coming will be acclaimed as ‘The King of kings and Lord of lords’, the One Who still retains the title held in the beginning, namely, ‘The Word of God’ (Rev. 19:13-16).

In 1 Timothy 1:17 the word translated ‘invisible’ is *aoratos*. The Greek word *horao*, ‘to see’, is used in John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 11:27, and refers primarily to a boundary, something defined and marked out. In 1 Timothy 6:15,16, however, the word ‘to see’ is *eidon*, which implies, ‘not the mere act of seeing, but the actual perception of the object ... referring to the mind and thought of him who sees’ (*Dr. E. W. Bullinger*). The second coming of Christ will not make the invisible God visible to the eyes of the flesh, but men will ‘see’, as they have never seen before, what God is, and they will see it in the glorious Person Who shall come as King of kings and Lord of lords, the mighty victor over death. If the words ‘dwelling in unapproachable light, Whom no man hath seen, nor can see’ refer also to the Lord Jesus Christ, then we must understand that such glory is His present habitation, and that, consequently, He must have a future apocalypse (unveiling, revelation, appearing), when it will again be possible for every eye to see Him.

‘In His Own times’ His ransom was attested by the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 2:6), and ‘in His Own time’ He Himself will reveal His Own sovereign Lordship (1 Tim. 6:14-16). Midway, therefore, between the manifestation that took place *before* creation, and the manifestation that will usher in the *new* creation, this glorious and blessed One

stooped lower still, and took upon Him a body of flesh. It is necessary, therefore, if we would hold the form of sound words concerning the nature of Christ, that we acquaint ourselves with what is written in the epistles of Paul concerning His entry into the realm of flesh and blood.

In Paul's great basic epistle to the Romans, three passages demand our attention, viz., 1:1-5; 8:3; and 9:5. Romans 1:1-5 has been subdivided into the following headings by *Liddon*:

'(1) The writer of the epistle describes himself as

- a A slave of Jesus Christ.
- b A (divinely) called apostle.
- c A man separated from his fellows for a special work.

(2) His life-work - the propagation of the Gospel of God. This Gospel he more specifically describes by

(i) Its relation to earlier religious history. It was

- a Promised by God in preceding ages;
- b By the agency of God's prophets;
- c In sacred Scriptures.

(ii) Its subject, The Son of God. Who

- a In respect to His manhood (*kata sarx*) was born of the race of David.
- b In respect of His holy, superhuman Being (*kata pneuma hagiosune*) was decisively marked out as the Son of God with power, as a result of His resurrection.
- c Is known by the

a	Human name	{	Jesus
b	Official designation	of {	Christ
c	Title of authority		our Lord.
- d Conveys from God the Father to the writer (*di' ou elabomen*) whatever graces and powers he has received'.

The fact that the apostle places in contrast the descent of Christ 'according to the flesh', and the declaration of His Sonship, with power, 'according to His holy spiritual' nature, is of itself evidence that no mere man is here in view. Here is a Being, both human and superhuman; the seed of David, yet the Son of God; the one He entered by birth, the other is declared in resurrection; the former is associated with weakness, the latter with glorious power (2 Cor. 13:4). Two separate but vital questions raised by this passage are not answered here, but dealt with in the following references:

- (1) The title 'Son of God', combined with the reference to 'the seed of David', marked out the Lord Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah (Psa. 2:7,12; Luke 1:35). This is demonstrated in Romans 9:5, and belongs to a section which demonstrates the peculiar privileges that belonged to the people of Israel.
- (2) The unqualified statement that Christ came 'according to the flesh' is qualified in Romans 8:3, where any thought that He partook of 'sinful' flesh is repudiated.
His humanity was real, yet His humanity was sinless.

The structure of Romans 9:3-5 is as follows:

- A According to the FLESH. Kinsmen.
- B Who are Israelites.
- C To whom pertaineth the adoption.
- D And the glory.
- E And the covenants.
- E And the giving of the Law.
- D And the service.
- C And the promises.
- B Whose are the fathers.
- A According to the FLESH. Christ, Kinsman-Redeemer.

When used by Paul of his own kinsmen the word 'flesh' needs no explanation, and we accept it. It must be just as real when used of Christ. Again, His humanity is asserted, and, in this connection, both His Messiahship and His office of Kinsman-Redeemer.

In regard to Romans 8:3, it remains for us to consider how unique is this One Who stooped so low. He was truly of the seed of David, for Mary His mother was a descendant of Nathan, the son of David (Luke 3:23-38), but He was, moreover, more than man, He was the Son of God, and declared so by His resurrection. He was also sinless, and that not only in act but in nature: 'God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3).

We have already established the fact that the human nature of Christ was real. The 'likeness' refers here not to the question of 'reality', but to that of 'character'. It was 'sinless'; it was flesh, but only in the 'likeness' of *sinful* flesh *Homoioma*, 'likeness', has a negative relation to *hamartia*, 'sin'.

In Colossians 1:22 and 24 we have two references to the 'flesh'. The apostle speaks of himself and his ministry thus:

'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh' (Col. 1:24).

He speaks of Christ and His gracious work thus:

'In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight' (Col. 1:22).

Paul in his flesh could 'suffer'; Christ in His flesh could 'die'. He Who thus came in the likeness of sinful flesh, is declared to be the Son of God.

We must now give consideration to this title of 'The Son of God'. It occurs in Romans 1:3,4, but was not dealt with while the references to being 'in the flesh' were engaging our attention.

The first title by which the apostle Paul addressed Christ was, as we have seen, the great name 'Lord' (Acts 9:6), but the first title found in his public testimony is 'The Son of God':

'And straightway he preached Christ ("Jesus" according to revised texts) in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God' (Act 9:20).

If we compare this passage with one immediately following - where we read that Paul confounded the Jews at Damascus proving that 'this is (the) very Christ' (Act 9:22) - we shall have an inspired comment on the title 'The Son of God'. The reader will remember that John's testimony is directed to this too (John 20:31), even as was Peter's earlier confession (Matt. 16:16). The riches of the grace of the gospel are expressed by the apostle in the words of Romans 8:32, 'He that spared not His own Son', where the words 'spared not' are the same as those used of Abraham in the great typical chapter Genesis 22, where in verse 12 they are translated 'not withheld'.

The words 'Son' and 'Father' are mutually coextensive; unless used relatively they have no meaning. No juggling with words, or beclouding the issue with mysteries, can alter the fact that, however far back into the past eternity we may push the 'begetting' of the Son, the Father must have been in existence before the Son was begotten, and if so, then it goes without saying, that the Son, *as 'Son'*, must derive from 'the Father', even as the Son Himself gladly acknowledged His Father was of necessity 'greater'. The problem is not solved by adopting the unexplainable doctrine known as 'The eternal generation of the Son', for such a term cannot be apprehended either by reason or faith. But the problem does not exist in the Scriptures; it is man-made and consequently can be ignored. If we will but see that 'God' became 'The Father' at the same moment that His only begotten Son was born, we shall see that both the titles of 'Father' and 'Son', even as we have already seen of the great title 'Jehovah', are relative and for the age. It has been assumed that from all eternity 'God' was 'The Father'. This is nowhere stated in Scripture. Indeed, apart from one or two allusive references such as, 'like as a Father', or 'If I be a Father', found in the Old Testament, the Fatherhood of God awaited the advent of the Son. In the opening of his Gospel, John does not say:

'In the beginning was the Son, and the Son was with the Father, and *the Son was the Father*',

which is impossible; he says:

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’,

which is gloriously true.

The reference to the ‘Father’ in John’s gospel awaits verse 14 of Chapter 1. There ‘The Word’ is said to have been made ‘flesh’, and there the Word is spoken of as ‘The only begotten’, and ‘God’ is revealed as ‘The Father’.

It may be that some reader will feel that the language employed in Isaiah 9:6 contradicts what is here brought forward. We affirm that there can be no confusion between the persons of the Father and of the Son, yet Isaiah says that the ‘Son’ shall be called ‘The everlasting Father’. Further, we have here taught that the title ‘Father’ does not pertain to a past eternity, yet Isaiah uses the word ‘everlasting’. The explanation is that the Hebrew word translated ‘everlasting’ is *ad*, a word that looks forward, not backward, and the order in which the words stand demands the translation: ‘The Father of the Ages’.

The Biblical use of the title ‘Father’ as a term indicating pre-eminence, and not paternity, can be seen in Genesis 4:20,21. It does not follow that because Jubal is there called ‘the *father* of all such as handle the harp and organ’ that the Organist of your local meeting place is a direct descendant of Cain, nor that the cattle rearers of this country must trace their pedigree to Jabal!

In two passages in the epistle to the Hebrews where the A.V. reads ‘worlds’, the word *aion* is found in the original, and when Hebrews 1:2 is translated: ‘By Whom also He made the Ages’, and Hebrews 11:3 is translated: ‘Through faith we understand that the ages were adjusted by the Word of God’, we are reading passages that indicate the pre-eminence of Christ in the Ages, or, as the Hebrew would frame the idea, He is the ‘Father’ of the Ages, for as the Saviour, Sacrifice, and Mediator the attainment of the purpose of the Ages is in His blessed keeping. Rightly understood, therefore, Isaiah 9:6 confirms the truth here stated.

In 1 Corinthians 15:28 we read, ‘Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all’. In the minds of many this stupendous verse is made to read ‘Then shall the Son ... that the Father may be all in all’. This, however, is denying that the title ‘God’ is used by this same apostle Paul of both the Father and of the Son.

In Hebrews we have already seen that, with the advent of Jesus Christ, God had now ‘spoken *in Son*’. If we can but see that the sonship of Christ is a title that belongs to His mediatorial and messianic offices, we can readily perceive that such a title must have had a beginning; that it must have, or may have, an end, without touching the question of His deity, and that when these voluntarily assumed limitations have accomplished their divine purpose, He Who once laid aside His glory and stooped to manhood can and will resume the glory that is His by right, when *God* - not the ‘Father’ or ‘The Son’, but God - shall be All in all.

The same chapter in Corinthians that speaks of the Son being subject *at the end* of the ages in His mediatorial capacity, refers also to His manhood in connection with the first man, Adam, and *the beginning* of this same great age purpose:

‘For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ... the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit ... The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven ... and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly’ (1 Cor. 15:21-49).

When once we learn from the sound words of Paul’s doctrine the true relationship of ‘The Father’ and ‘The Son’, there will be no incongruity in the thought that ‘The Son’ learned obedience by the things which He suffered; there will be no robbing Him of His divine dues because, for our sakes, He laid His glory aside.

Where is the sense of teaching in the same chapter, that ‘the Son’ is the express image of the substance of God; that, as God, His throne is for ever and ever; that He is the Lord Who created heaven and earth; that angels worship Him, yet for all this He has ‘fellows’; that He has obtained, by inheritance, a more excellent name than angels; that He was begotten of the Father on some particular ‘day’, and that He is called the ‘First begotten’? God, *as such*, has no fellow; God, *as such*, cannot be said to have been begotten on any particular day. No revelation is needed to tell

us that God, *as such*, is better than the angels. No process of thought could enable us to understand how God, *as such*, could obtain by inheritance a more excellent name than angels. These are all His by sovereign right. But when we learn that God was manifest in the flesh, and that by stooping to the sinner's place, He could and did obtain a glory in which the saved sinner can share, these apparent contradictions become most blessedly true. *As the Son*, He must necessarily be subject to the Father, but, *as God*, He owns no superior.

While more necessarily remains to be examined and collated, we trust that sufficient has been assembled to enable the reader to proceed with the blessed labour of attaining to a form of sound words concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as 'God manifest in the flesh'.

CHAPTER 6

Sin, and the Sacrifice for Sin

In viewing the Bible as a whole, we are impressed by two related features. First, that there is unfolded in it 'the purpose of the ages', the revelation going back to its inception - to a period 'before the foundation of the world' - and reaching forward to its completion at 'the end of the ages' and secondly, that the bulk of the Bible is taken up with one aspect of this great unfolding, namely, the entrance of sin and death, and the plan of deliverance from sin and death by the provision of an acceptable Sacrifice. Measured by time, the period which deals with sin and its redemption is brief - some six thousand years - but, measured by its evident importance, it is vast for it monopolizes the whole canon of Scripture.

We have therefore before us a twofold quest: the discovery of a form of sound words as to Sin and Salvation, and the discovery of the purpose of the ages, so far as it is revealed, together with the various subdivisions into which it has been cast. The greatness of the subject almost intimidates. Had we unlimited space and exceptional knowledge the task would be in the nature of the superhuman, but the contemplation both of the limits of our space and the exceeding limitations of our ability, makes the task an impossible one, apart from all-sufficient grace.

Our first subject therefore will be an examination of the apostle's teaching concerning 'Sin'. After that a further examination of the divine method of putting away sin, and then an examination of the purpose of the ages and the dispensations into which it is divided, with particular reference to the dispensation of the grace of God which was entrusted to the apostle Paul.

What is Sin?- In the New Testament the basic word for 'sin' is the Greek word *hamartia*, which means 'To miss the mark'. This word is the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew *chattath*, as in 'every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss' (*chata*), (Judg. 20:16). From this initial failure spring all the subsequent phases of evil.

A number of words used in the New Testament commence with the prefix *para*, meaning 'beside'. They are 'transgression', *parabasis*; 'transgressor', *parabates*; 'disobedience', *parakoe*; 'fall away', *parapipto*; and 'trespass', *paraptoma*. As a result of this 'overstepping the mark' come enmity, error, evil, fault, guile, guilt, iniquity, lawlessness, offence, unrighteousness and wickedness, all of which present some particular development of the initial failure of man to conform to the divine standard.

The apostle states this most emphatically when he declares that 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). An analysis of this pregnant sentence will practically provide a form of sound words on this important doctrine. Three aspects of sin are indicated:

- (1) Its universality.- 'All have sinned'.
- (2) Its essential character.- 'Come short'.
- (3) The standard of judgment.- 'The glory of God'.

The sentence comes at the conclusion of a long argument. Romans 1:17 makes clear that the saving power of the gospel lies in the fact that it supplies man's greatest need - a righteousness before God; 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith', but, instead of developing this great theme along the lines of Romans 3:22 ('even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ'), the apostle turns aside to demonstrate man's utter need of such a provision. First he indicts the Gentile world, and concludes that they are

'inexcusable' (Rom. 1:19-32). With this, his Jewish readers would agree, probably with vehemence. But in chapter 2 he turns to the Jew, who, with all his boasted knowledge and privilege, was equally inexcusable (Rom. 2:1), so that whether a Gentile, in nature's darkness, or a Jew, in the light of revealed truth, it could still be written, 'There is none righteous, no, not one'; consequently every mouth 'was stopped' and 'all the world may become guilty before God' (Rom. 3:19). This universality of sin is not only true in the sense that 'there is none that doeth good', but in the deeper and more radical sense, that 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (Rom. 5:12).

In Romans 1:1 to 5:11, the apostle deals with *sins*, i.e., individual transgressions of law, but in Romans 5:12 to 8:39, he deals rather with *sin*, the fallen condition of the whole race, irrespective of personal transgressions. Sin is a crime against which the wrath of God is revealed. Sin is also a disease that made the apostle say, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. 7:24).

A form of sound words therefore will include the doctrine of the universality of sin.

The essential character of sin is next before us. We have already indicated that both the Greek and Hebrew words for 'sin' mean 'to miss the mark'. The apostle, who was a Hebrew and who also spoke Greek, knew this, and crystallizes its meaning in the two languages by saying 'come short', *hustereo*.

Husterema is translated 'penury' (Luke 21:4); 'want' (2 Cor. 8:14); 'lack' (Phil. 2:30); and 'that which is behind' (Col. 1:24).

Sin is essentially failure. Where it is defined in the New Testament, the definitions are negatives, 'what it is NOT'.

Sin is INiquity or Lawlessness (1 John 3:4).

Sin is UNrighteousness (1 John 5:17).

Sin is whatsoever is NOT of faith (Rom. 14:23).

It is well to use such terms as 'sin', 'crime', 'vice', etc., with discrimination.

- (1) Vice . . . is against our own nature.
- (2) Crime . . . is against collective humanity.
- (3) Sin is against the righteous will and holy love of God.

It is impossible to rest satisfied with the words, 'Sin comes short of', as a definition; the sentence must be completed; we must say 'what' sin comes short of. Sin comes short of the glory of God. At first this may not be obvious, but examination yields its fruit.

'*The glory of God*.' - The Greek word for 'glory', *doxa*, has come into our own language in such words as doxology. Mere splendour or magnificence are but adjuncts; the essential meaning of *doxa*, 'glory', is the passing of a test. *Doxa* is allied to such words as *dokimazo*, 'to try', *dokime*, 'approve' and *dokimos*, 'prove and test'. For example:

'The trial of your faith ... more precious than of gold ... though it *be tried* with fire ... found unto ... glory' (1 Pet. 1:7).

'Lest ... I myself should be (become) *a castaway*' i.e. unrefined, unfit, dross (1 Cor. 9:27).

When heaven opened and the voice was heard saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am *well-pleased*', *eudokeo* is the word used, indicating that the Saviour had been proved, and that nothing but pure gold was found in Him. The human race, however, has been put to the acid test, and has 'come short'.

Here then is Paul's summary of the question of sin. To consider it in its fulness is beyond the scope of this book. The relationship of sin to the flesh, the law, the conscience, and death must all be studied before a full understanding is possible. What we have seen, however, is fundamental. Sin embraces *all*; sin is radical *failure*, sin cannot pass the acid test of God's *glory* and approval. It therefore goes without saying that no one can hope for salvation as a result of his own self-righteousness, faith, obedience, service, promises or prayers. All stand condemned, and if

there is to be salvation from sin and death, the work must be an intervention, coming from without. In other words, God alone can be the salvation of men.

We now turn to the witness of the apostle to discover what infinite wisdom, infinite righteousness, and infinite love have wrought.

If all have sinned and rendered themselves helpless and undone, and yet, in spite of this universal fact, the Bible has been written, God has been made known, worship and prayer are possible, then some gracious intervention on the part of God must have taken place. Even the first occurrence of *hamartia*, 'sin', is connected with salvation, the birth of Christ, and the fulfilment of the Old Testament idea of a Kinsman-Redeemer, for, though the name of the Saviour is given as 'Jesus', He is also Emmanuel 'which being interpreted is, God with us' (Matt. 1:21-23). The very passage we have examined, namely Romans 3:23, does not stop at the statement that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, but immediately goes on in the next verse to say that without any inward change or external improvement this race of beings can be 'justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'.

Here, therefore, is the divine plan, and it falls into two great sections: (1) Justification; (2) Redemption. While justification is mentioned first, it is 'through redemption', which, as it is the obvious cause, must be considered first.

Redemption. What is it? To be understood at all, redemption must be considered as embracing the following, each of which, if studied fully, would demand a volume to itself.

- A PERSON.- This person is known as the Kinsman Redeemer.
- A TYPE.- The outstanding Old Testament type is the Passover.
- A RANSOM.- A price has been paid, and that a life.
- A RELEASE.- The effect of redemption is expressed in terms of a release.
- A DISTINCTION.- There is a difference between redemption and atonement.
- A WORD FOR EACH.- Redemption is expressed by *exodus*, atonement by *eisodus*.

A threefold result of this great offering for sin is (1) Forgiveness; (2) Justification, and (3) Sanctification, which must be considered, and, to conclude, a fourfold presentation of this great redemptive work is required to encompass its glorious results.

- (1) It was a death.- This meets all men, whatever they believe.
- (2) It was a shedding of blood.- This meets the individual need for cleansing.
- (3) It was suffered on a cross.- This touches the curse of the law and the old man.
- (4) It was crowned by resurrection.- This gives the ground of newness of life and service.

Let us look at the witness of Paul, to discover a form of sound words as touching these far-reaching issues.

The Kinsman-Redeemer.- A *person* is most surely predicated, for the apostle says that it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin; therefore a *body* was prepared in order that the one, great, all-sufficient Offering could be made. This body was none other than the body of the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 10). The book that sets out most clearly the office of the Kinsman-Redeemer is the book of Ruth, and the law that is seen at work there is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. According to the testimony of Isaiah, the Redeemer is none other than God, the Lord of hosts, the Creator, and the prophetic reference to the 'Child' that was born, who should nevertheless be 'The mighty God' and bear the name 'Emmanuel', reveals the glorious fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the promised Kinsman-Redeemer.

Paul writing to the Hebrews speaks of Him thus:

‘Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage’ (Heb. 2:14,15).

The Type: The Passover.- Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said, ‘Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us’ (1 Cor. 5:7). We read in Exodus 1 and 2 that Israel suffered ‘bitterness’, ‘bondage’ and ‘burdens’, fit types indeed of sin and sinners. At Exodus 12, with the introduction of the Passover, a fresh start is made: ‘This month shall be UNTO YOU the beginning of months’. So must it be spiritually. New life, whether it be a new birth or a new creation, commences at the altar of sacrifice, the once-offered Sacrifice of Calvary. The lamb set apart for sacrifice was kept from the tenth to the fourteenth day of the month, so that no imperfection should escape notice, for of the sacrificial animal it was written, ‘It shall be perfect to be accepted’. So the great Antitype is examined on four different occasions, as recorded in Luke 23, and the Lamb of God was found to be ‘without blemish’. In our English mind, the translation of the Hebrew word *pesach* by ‘passover’ suggests the thought of ‘transit’, or ‘passing over’, whereas the translation of the word in 1 Kings 18:21 by ‘halt’ and the illustration used in Isaiah 31:5 gives the thought of protection or ‘hovering’. The sense would therefore be better expressed if we modified the word ‘passover’, to ‘*pause-over*’. The essential feature of the Passover was, not the unleavened bread, not even the passover lamb roasted and eaten according to the commandment, but the ‘blood’ *that* was the token, for the testimony of Paul, as of all Scripture, is that ‘without the shedding of blood there is no remission’.

The Ransom.- The Old Testament word ‘atonement’ is the translation of the Hebrew word *kopher*, which primarily means ‘to cover’. The word does not, however, mean the ‘covering up’ of sin. The Psalmist says, ‘Blessed is the man whose sin is covered’, and this is endorsed without alteration by the apostle in Romans 4:7.

In arriving at a form of sound words, therefore, we shall not alter the primary meaning of the word, but endeavour to ascertain precisely in what way the covering was made. Used without reference to sacrifice, *kopher* is translated ‘pitch’ in Genesis 6:14, and ‘village’ in 1 Samuel 6:18, but in both cases ‘mere covering up’ is not all that is implied. The covering is for the purpose of *protection*. When we come to the usage of the word in connection with the sacrifices of the law, we find it advances yet another step, and means ‘To cover by compensation’, consequently we find this same word translated ‘a sum of money’ (Exod. 21:30); ‘ransom’ (Job 33:24) and ‘satisfaction’ (Num. 35:31,32). The Greek version of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint, and indicated by the letters LXX), uses the words *hilasterion*, and *hilaskomai* to translate the noun and verbal forms of *kopher*. These are found in Paul’s epistles, as follows:

‘A *propitiation* through faith in His blood’ (Rom. 3:25).

‘Shadowing the *mercyseat*’ (Heb. 9:5).

‘To make *reconciliation* for the sins’ (Heb. 2:17).

In 1 Timothy 2:6 we learn that a very special feature of the testimony entrusted to Paul, as a preacher, apostle and teacher of the Gentiles, was that Christ ‘gave Himself a ransom for all (many)’.

The Release.- The effort of this ransom is release. The word *aphesis* is translated ‘set at liberty’ in Luke 4:18 and ‘forgiveness’ in Ephesians 1:7. Moreover, it is used in the LXX in connection with the Jubile (Lev. 25:10) where release from bondage and from debt are prominent. Forgiveness as taught by Paul is connected with justification and acquittal in a court of law. Though the enjoyment of it may be clouded by unwillingness to confess, it can never be rescinded. In this, forgiveness as taught by Paul differs from that taught in the gospel of the Kingdom, where, both in the ‘Lord’s prayer’ and in the parable of the unforgiving servant, forgiveness is seen to be conditional in the words, ‘if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses’ (Matt. 6:15; see also 18:35).

A Distinction.- This seems to be a good place to draw attention to the need, when speaking of the Sacrifice of Christ for sin, to distinguish between that redemptive aspect that delivers from bondage, and the atoning aspect that gives access to God. Both are necessary to present a complete picture of the work of Christ. Redemption without atonement would be as though Moses, at the time of the Exodus, had led the children of Israel out of Egypt and then abandoned them in the wilderness. On the other hand atonement put before redemption in the preaching of the

gospel would be as though Moses had ignored the passover and erected a tabernacle in Egypt. He who led Israel *out* from bondage, led them *in* to His presence, a redeemed and reconciled people.

A Word for each aspect.- Two words are found in the New Testament that exactly fit these two aspects of the one great work of Christ; *exodos* and *eisodos*. The former is translated 'decease' in Luke 9:31; the latter is found in the phrase 'boldness to *enter*' in Hebrew 10:19. The epistle to the Ephesians contains the fulfilment of both these aspects:

Redemption, or the *exodos* aspect, is found in 1:7, and Atonement, or the *eisodos* aspect, in 2:13.

Similarly 1 Peter 1:18,19 and 3:18 can be compared, as also the words 'redeem *from*' and 'purify *unto*' of Titus 2:14.

As before stated, the threefold result of this great Offering is given by Paul as (1) Forgiveness, (2) Justification, and (3) Sanctification.

FORGIVENESS is a taking away, a removal.- 'Take away the filthy garments' (Zech. 3:4).

JUSTIFICATION is a bestowal, something imputed.- 'I will clothe thee with change of raiment' (Zech. 3:4).

SANCTIFICATION is righteousness manifesting itself in holy life and consecrated service.- 'I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by' (Zech. 3:7).

Justification is the keynote of Paul's evangel. To appreciate it we must have some conception of (1) the place and purpose of law, (2) the nature of righteousness, and (3) the meaning of, and reason for, faith.

The place and purpose of law.- The apostle asks the question, 'Wherefore then serveth the law?' (Gal. 3:19), and his epistles contain the following answers:

'It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to Whom the promise was made' (Gal. 3:19).

'If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law' (Gal. 3:21; cf. 2:21).

'As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse' (Gal. 3:10).

'The law, which was 430 years after (the promise to Abraham), cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect' (Gal. 3:17).

'The law worketh wrath' (Rom. 4:15), and entered that sin 'might abound' (Rom. 5:20).

Unconditionally and of set purpose, the apostle sets aside the law as having no place in the plan of the gospel of grace. The law of Moses was a covenant made with Israel (Exod. 19:1-7; 24:3-8), but destined to fail because of Israel's inability to fulfil its terms, thus demonstrating for all time that 'by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God'.

In his great speech at Antioch, Paul sums up the matter in these words:

'Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses' (Acts 13:38,39).

The nature of righteousness.- Because the Greek language had been in existence for centuries before the New Testament was written, it is sometimes dangerous to take a New Testament Greek word and build a doctrine on its mere etymology. For instance, the Greek word for 'righteousness' is *dikaioisune*, and is derived from *dike* which originally meant 'Right established by custom or usage'. But this is not sufficient for the Scriptural conception of righteousness. We cannot conceive that the righteousness of God is in any way associated with custom and usage, and for a true conception we must, therefore, go to the equivalent Hebrew word, which is *tsadaq*. This is derived from a root which means 'straight', 'balanced', 'equivalent'. The meaning is expressed in the words 'an eye for an eye'; it is illustrated by the 'plumbline' (Amos 7:7,8), and the 'just weights' and 'just measures' enjoined by the law (Lev. 19:36; Deut. 25:13,15).

Because they have to do with the law court, the Roman 'Forum', righteousness and justification are called 'forensic' terms. In the Epistles we have:

THE JUDGE.-	God Himself (Rom. 8:33).
THE PRISONER.-	Who is 'guilty', exposed to 'judgment', and without a 'plea' (Rom. 1:32; 3:9).
THE ACCUSERS.-	(i) The Law (John 5:45); (ii) Conscience (Rom 2:15); (iii) Satan (Zech. 3:1,2; Rev. 12:10).
THE CHARGE.-	Drawn up in legal handwriting (Col. 2:14).

'When a man is tried before an earthly tribunal, he must be either CONDEMNED or ACQUITTED; if he be condemned, he may be PARDONED, but he cannot be JUSTIFIED; if he be acquitted, he may be justified, but he cannot stand in need of pardon' (*Scott's Essays*).

In the Court of God, however, a wondrous change takes place. The gospel provides the guilty man with an all-sufficient plea (Rom. 3:23-26), a plea provided in love by the Judge, Who could and did condemn sin in the person of the Saviour, the Lord Himself being the Advocate (1 John 2:1,2). The sinner who believes the gospel receives complete remission, justification and acceptance, together with a title to life and inheritance (Rom. 8:33,34; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Justification includes:

- (1) The remission of sins, viewed as a debt.
- (2) The pardon by a Sovereign of a condemned criminal, whose offence is blotted out of His book.
- (3) The 'covering by cancellation' of his guilt.
- (4) The imputation of a righteousness.

Justification is a change in regard to our standing before God:

'Our justification is not a righteousness performed, but a righteousness received' (*Dewar's Elements*).

'Justification changes our state; sanctification changes our nature' (*Dewar's Elements*).

If we enquire as to the *grounds* of our justification in the gospel, we discover the following:

- (1) We are justified by His (Christ's) blood, through redemption (Rom. 5:9; 3:24).
- (2) We are justified freely, by grace (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7).
- (3) We are justified by faith (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:28).
- (4) Negatively: no flesh can be justified by the deeds of the law, or by works of any kind (Rom. 3:20,28; 4:2; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 4:4).

Free grace is the *source*, the atonement is the *meritorious cause*, and faith the only *recipient*.

'Justification may therefore be ascribed, either to the *source*, to the *meritorious cause*, or to the *recipient* of it: even as (to use a familiar illustration) a drowning person may be said to be saved, either by *a man* on the bank of the river, or by *the rope* thrown out to him, or by *the hand* laying hold on the rope' (*Scott's Essays*).

The meaning of, and reason for, faith.- The Scriptures speak of justification *by faith* (Rom. 5:1), and of justification *by grace* (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7). Faith is not a work. It merits nothing. Grace, *charis*, means 'favour' (Luke 1:30), and the way in which the word is used in the epistles of Paul shows that grace is favour shown to the *unworthy*. Grace is at the other extreme to either 'reward', 'debt' or 'work'.

'The reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt' (Rom. 4:4).

'If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace' (Rom. 11:6).

To be under law and to be under grace at the same time is impossible (Rom. 6:14). To be 'justified' by law is to fall from grace (Gal. 5:4).

Now, in order that salvation should be by grace, the only medium for its reception that could claim no merit, was faith:

‘Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed’ (Rom. 4:16).

Faith, *pistis*, means credit given to a report or testimony:

‘If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater’ (1 John 5:9).

‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God’ (Rom. 10:17).

We cannot, however, merely ‘have faith’; we must believe something or someone:

‘Apart from the testimony believed, faith has no existence. In other words, belief can have no subsistence apart from *what* is believed. Saving or justifying faith is the belief *of that* which justifies.

‘The difference between our belief in human testimony, and our belief in divine testimony, consists *not in the act of believing*, but in the difference of the *thing believed*’ (Dewar).

Faith is a *comprehending* belief in the testimony which God has given concerning His Son (Rom. 10:14). Faith is the *reception* of Christ as Sacrifice, Saviour and Mediator (John 1:12). Faith is a *trust* in God with respect to all His promises made in Christ and the gospel; ‘The just shall live by faith’.

Sanctification.- Sin falls under two heads. It is looked upon as a crime to which a penalty is attached. Its background is a court of law, and its remedy justification. Sin, however, is also a defilement; it is the very opposite of holiness. In this respect, it is not looked upon so much as a crime to be dealt with in a court of law, as a pollution that needs cleansing in relation to the service and worship of tabernacle or temple. The remedy is sanctification.

Like justification, sanctification is ours through Christ and by grace. It is ‘through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ’ (Heb. 10:10), and is complete (Heb. 10:14). Christ has been ‘made unto us’ sanctification in exactly the same way that He has been made unto us righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). Sanctification is not only complete and unalterable, by grace; it is also progressive and experimental:

‘He that *hath been bathed* (complete and unalterable) needeth not save *to wash* his feet, but is clean *every whit*’ (John 13:10).

These aspects of sanctification are set forth in the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing (Lev. 14).

First, we read, ‘He shall pronounce him clean’ (Lev. 14:7). This cleansing is by ‘blood’. In this aspect of the work the leper was passive. This is the basic aspect.

Secondly, ‘He shall be clean’ (Lev. 14:9). This second pronouncement follows the personal cleansing of the leper in ‘water’. Here is symbolized the ‘washing of the water by the Word’. This has to do with experimental sanctification; ‘clothes’.

Thirdly, ‘He shall be clean’ (Lev. 14:20). This typifies the personal consecration of the cleansed leper to the Lord’s service, ‘oil’ being used ‘upon the blood’, showing the true place of sanctification by the Spirit. Consequently, holiness can be ‘perfected’ (2 Cor. 7:1) or, as the word ‘perfected’ indicates, ‘taken to its logical conclusion’.

Lastly, in this summary of a great subject, we observe that there is a fourfold aspect of the saving work of Christ that needs to be considered:

- (1) He died.
- (2) He shed His blood.
- (3) He endured the cross.
- (4) He rose from the dead.

To go to the ‘man in the street’ and preach ‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified’ may be blessed of God, but it is not at first usually recognized as a divinely appointed instrument for salvation. To preach the cross thus is to present to *sinner*s an aspect of the sacrificial work of Christ which the apostle presented to *believers*, and, as an examination of

the usage of 'cross' and 'crucify' will reveal, is contrary to the apostle's example. Whatever the man in the street may believe or disbelieve, *he knows that he belongs to a mortal race*. For this knowledge he needs neither revelation nor religion, but only plain common sense. Whether he speaks in terms of evolution, of fate, or of mysticism, he knows that he must die. Here therefore the preacher of the gospel can speak of the *death* of Christ. He can show from the record that this One Who died, died as the 'Just for the unjust' that He might bring us to God, and that the death that has come through to the whole human race has been put away by Him Who is the second Man, and the last Adam (Rom. 5:12-21).

For a time this may satisfy, but presently the fact of personal sin, the consciousness of guilt, the defilement of sin, begin to have their effect. Cleansing and forgiveness are a felt need; something more is demanded than deliverance from the *consequences* of a sin done by a man named Adam, of whose existence we should not be aware apart from the record of Genesis. Here is the moment for the preacher to reveal the efficacy of 'the *blood* of Christ', and link it with justification, forgiveness, cleansing and access.

Again the convert is temporarily satisfied, but again we must expect him to seek yet further and fuller deliverance. He may admit that he now realizes that in the death of Christ he sees the cancellation of the sin and death brought in by Adam, and in the shed blood he perceives the provision for his redemption and forgiveness, but he is now troubled by the presence of 'the old man', 'the flesh'; the fact that, though forgiven and redeemed, he is still conscious of a conflict between flesh and spirit. He is now ready to hear the message of the cross. In 1 Corinthians Paul places the cross of Christ in opposition to the wisdom of the world, and the boasting of the flesh. In Galatians the cross is spoken of as an 'offence' to those who desire to make 'a fair show in the flesh'. In Hebrews the cross is associated with running the race, and the joy that lies before. By the cross Paul declared that the world was crucified to him and he to the world. In Romans the cross strikes the death blow to the 'old man'.

Here, in the death, the shed blood, and the cross of Christ, the sinner finds complete deliverance, cleansing and release. *But he is left dead*.

This threefold effect of the sacrifice of Christ has left the believer dead indeed, and the dead can neither do nor devise anything. The resurrection, therefore, must now be brought to bear, and here, at last, 'newness of life' and 'newness of spirit' are found to be the spheres in which life and service can be enjoyed.

Doubtless there are other aspects of this mighty work; the 'sufferings', the 'burial' the 'betrayal', all have their place, but they will be found to fit in with this great fourfold presentation.

If we found it difficult to compress within a small compass the wonderful doctrine of the *deity* of Christ, we have found the great *work* of that same Christ no less difficult to summarize in these pages. But again we say, we trust that enough has been brought out of the Scriptures to enable the earnest student to construct a 'form of sound words' that will harmonize with the teaching we have received through the apostle Paul.

CHAPTER 7

Dispensational Truth and the Importance of Acts 28 considered

We have considered some of the outstanding doctrines of salvation, and now pass on to the dispensational aspect of our study. Let us first of all make sure that we understand the term 'Dispensational Truth'.

The word translated 'dispensation' in the New Testament is *oikonomia*, made up of *oikos*, 'a house' and *nemo*, 'to administer'. Luke 16:1,2 shows the primitive meaning of the word, for we read:

'A certain ... man ... had a steward', *oikonomos*.
'Give an account of thy stewardship', *oikonomia*.

So, in 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul says:

'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards (*oikonomos*) of the mysteries of God'.

One very special ‘dispensation’ claims our attention (and will be treated in fuller detail presently); it is the dispensation that came into being upon the dismissal of the Jew at Acts 28:28, and the assumption by the apostle Paul of the title, ‘The prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles’ (Eph. 3:1).

‘If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward’ (Eph. 3:2).

‘Unto me ... is this grace given, that I should ... make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery’ (Eph. 3:8, A.V. 9, R.V.).

‘His body ... the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you’ (Col. 1:24,25).

Scripture comes to us in three forms; Doctrinal, Dispensational and Practical.

DOCTRINAL	DISPENSATIONAL	PRACTICAL
What God has revealed about Himself, and what He has done, commanded, promised or foretold, in Creation, Law and Grace.	<i>By noting the different callings, spheres of blessing, and unfoldings of the purpose of the ages, we can answer the question, ‘Does this particular act or word pertain to my particular calling?’</i>	When doctrine has passed the discrimination of the dispensational test, then, and then only, can such doctrine become the legitimate subject of practice.

It must now be asked, and, if possible, answered, ‘What guiding principles have we in this endeavour to decide whether any particular portion of revelation is, or is not, for us, and about us?’ The answer is twofold:

- (1) There is such a principle of interpretation, it is known as ‘Right Division’ and the words are taken from 2 Timothy 2:15.
- (2) There is a people whose presence or absence is an indication of a change in dispensation.

Let us first take the record of this people. Who or what are they? The answer is Israel. From the call of Abraham until we reach the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles ‘salvation’ has been ‘of the Jews’ (John 4:22). Across the pages of the Old Testament and across the bulk of the New Testament could be written the words, ‘To the Jew first’.

When the Son of God commenced His public ministry, He purposely limited it to this one people, saying, ‘I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Matt. 15:24). This is recognized by the apostle in the epistle to the Romans when he says:

‘Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers’ (Rom. 15:8),

and Peter, after Pentecost, takes the same line when he says:

‘Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities’ (Acts 3:26).

While it may need no proof that the Jew holds first place in the Old Testament, it is the fact that the average interpretation of the New Testament is that, with the Gospels, Christianity as we know it, had its beginning. A re-reading of Romans 15:8, together with Matthew 15:24 (already cited) should, however, cause us to pause. During the period of the Lord’s earthly ministry the twelve apostles were likewise limited (Matt. 10:5,6). We must therefore consider some of the doctrines on the subject that have gained currency, and put them to the test of Scripture. Among them are the following:

- (1) The words of Christ are all sufficient. We do not really need the epistles of Paul. We should rally round the call, ‘Back to Jesus’.

- (2) The appointment of Matthias, as recorded in Acts 1, was a mistake. The apostles should have waited for the conversion and commission of Paul. He was the real twelfth apostle.
- (3) The Church began at Pentecost. There, Jew and Gentile were baptized into one body.

Let us consider these statements. Afterward we can turn our attention to the positive teaching of the Word on such important matters as, the ministry of Paul, the place of the Gentile during the Acts, the twofold character of Paul's commission, the dispensational importance of Acts 28, the dispensation of the Mystery, the three spheres of blessing, and the principle of right division.

The statement that the words of Christ are all-sufficient.- This is the statement of a blessed truth, but often the intention of those who use these words must be expanded before we see their true import. They are really a limitation of the 'words of Christ' to the four Gospels; they imply that the further revelation given in the epistles of Paul are to be considered as on a lower plane, if indeed they be not Paul's own personal opinions. Were we logical however, the argument that would rule out the writings of Paul, would also rule out the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We are as dependent upon the human ministry of the four Evangelists for a knowledge of the 'words of Christ' which He spoke on earth, as we are on the human instrumentality of Peter, James, John and Paul, who recorded what the same Christ spoke from heaven. Inspiration is not limited to any book or cluster of books of the Scriptures; it extends equally and fully to the whole. It can be said equally of the Gospels and the Epistles, as it was said of Old Testament prophecy, that 'no Scripture is of any private interpretation'.

There is however, one saying recorded in the Gospel which, if believed and acted upon, would compel us to prosecute our search beyond the pages of these narratives; we refer to John 16:12-14:

'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you'.

It is evident that if we are to attain unto 'All truth' we shall have to reach and understand that subsequent revelation here spoken of. Where will this added truth be found if it be not in the epistles, which record the gracious activities of the risen Lord?

We trust, therefore, that it has been made evident that the cry, 'Back to Jesus', may not be an acceptable slogan for the believer to adopt today. In confirmation of this, let us turn for a moment to the epistle to the Hebrews. There the apostle tells the believers that when for the time they ought to be teachers they stood in need of someone teaching them all over again 'the first principles of the oracles of God' (Heb. 5:12). He goes on to liken them to babes, in contrast with those who are of 'full age', or 'perfect' (see margin); and then gives the exhortation, 'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection' (Heb. 6:1). This exhortation looks back to Hebrews 5:12, but should be read as in the margin, 'Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ'. In the estimate of the apostle, anyone who remained satisfied with 'the word of the beginning' was a babe, and 'perfection', or full adulthood, was associated with believing the words that pertain, not to the beginning, but to the glory of Christ, and these are to be found in the Epistles and the Revelation.

The Appointment of Matthias.- It is the considered opinion of a number of commentators that the appointment of Matthias was a mistake, and that it was the result of the Jewish predilections of the apostles. This itself is a serious proposition, but when it is seen that it also touches the peculiar commission of the apostle Paul, it calls for the most careful attention. Let us examine the facts:

'In those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus' (Acts 1:15,16).

First we note the strange intrusion of the fact that there were 120 gathered in that upper room. This agrees with the reference to the twelve in Acts 1:26, and the twelve nations represented at the feast (Acts 2:9-11). Moreover, the appointment of Matthias forms an integral part of the Acts, as the following structure will demonstrate.

Acts 1:15 to 2:13

- A 1:15,16. **a** In those days.
b The 120.
c Together (*Epi to auto*).
d The Holy Ghost (*To pneuma to hagion*).
e Spake by mouth of David.
- B 1:17-19. **f** Dwellers in Jerusalem (*Katoikeo*).
g In their proper tongue
(*Te idia dialekto auton*).
- C 1:20-26. The appointment of Matthias.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

- A 2:1-4. **a** The day of Pentecost.
b All (i.e. the 12).
c In one place (*epi to auto*).
d Holy Ghost (*pneuma hagion*).
e Began to speak.
- B 2:5-8. **f** Dwellers at Jerusalem (*katoikeo*).
g In our own language (*te idia dialekto hemon*).
- C 2:9-13. The representative Countries.

THE TWELVE COUNTRIES.

Israel were not set aside at the crucifixion of the Lord. The apostles were enjoined to tarry at Jerusalem and bear witness to His resurrection. Should Israel repent, it was necessary that there should be twelve apostles to occupy twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Had the number of the twelve not been made up, the apostles could not have said 'all things are ready' (Matt. 22:4). Was Peter right when he declared that the Psalm he quoted spoke of Judas? Here is the answer:

'I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He' (John 13:18,19).

Here the Lord not only quoted the Psalm as of Judas, but emphasized the point that the object of informing them before it came to pass was that their faith in Him might be strengthened at the accomplishment of the event. Now it had come to pass, and they believed; so must we.

In addition to this we have recorded in Luke 24:44-48 the fact that the Lord not only passed in review the Old Testament Scriptures, including the Psalms, and dealt with those passages that spoke of Himself, but that He also 'opened *their* understanding, that they might *understand* the Scriptures'. When therefore Peter said, 'This scripture must needs have been fulfilled', he was but repeating the lesson of Luke 24:26 and 46 (Received Text), for they are the self-same words there rendered, 'ought' and 'behoved', that are translated 'must needs be' in Acts 1:16.

Though it may not be agreed that Peter's quotation of the Psalm was appropriate, it is possible that some may entertain the suspicion that in selecting but two men the apostles were manifesting prejudice, and limiting the Lord. We shall, however, find that there was an important reason for this limitation. Referring once more to our Lord's own instructions, we read:

'But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father ... He shall testify (bear witness) of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because YE HAVE BEEN WITH ME FROM THE BEGINNING' (John 15:26,27).

Evidently the apostles were acting with this qualification in mind, for Acts 1:21,22 reads:

‘Wherefore of these men which have companied with us ALL THE TIME that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, BEGINNING FROM THE BAPTISM OF JOHN, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection’.

It was, therefore, not only a matter of piety, learning, or fitness of character: what was essential was capacity to bear personal testimony.

It is generally taught that the words, ‘that he might go to his own place’ (Acts 1:25), mean that Judas had been consigned to hell, or perdition, but the passage bears another sense and should read:

‘shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship (from which Judas by transgression fell) that he might go to his own place ... and he was numbered with the eleven’.

The further fact that the Holy Spirit made no difference between Matthias and the rest of the apostles should silence all objection. That Paul himself speaks of ‘The twelve’ as separate from himself is eloquent, and additional testimony to the rightness of the inclusion of Matthias among the twelve (1 Cor. 15:5).

In face of these facts we believe that the appointment of Matthias was in complete harmony with the will of God, and that of necessity, therefore, Paul was an apostle of an entirely distinct and independent order.

Did The Church begin at Pentecost.- It is often assumed that because mention is made in Acts 2 of Parthians and Medes, and other non Jewish names, and that each man of the gathered throng heard the apostles speak ‘in his own language’, that a great number of Gentiles were included among the assembled throng at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and that upon this assembled multitude of both Jews and Gentiles the spirit fell, baptising them into one body. This, however, is far removed from the fact. The Parthians, Medes, and others mentioned in Acts 2:9-11, are but a detailed enumeration of those dwelling at Jerusalem who were ‘*Jews*, devout men, out of every nation under heaven’, and it is ‘*they*’ who were amazed and marvelled, it is ‘*they*’ who said, ‘How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?’ It is ‘*they*’ who went on to describe themselves as Parthians and Medes, and under the names of the other nationalities whence they had come, who did ‘hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God’.

How did Peter address this gathered multitude? When he stood up to explain the meaning of Pentecost to the assembled multitude, he ‘lifted up his voice, and said’:

‘Ye men of *Jud -a*, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem’ (Acts 2:14).

‘Ye men of *Israel* ... among you ... in the midst of you’ (Acts 2:22).

‘Therefore let all the house of *Israel* know assuredly’ (Acts 2:36).

‘The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call’ (Acts 2:39).

‘Men of *Jud -a*,’ ‘the Jews who dwelt at Jerusalem’ (Acts 2:5), ‘*Israel*’, and then, together, ‘the whole house of *Israel*’, are those to whom Peter addressed his words. Peter’s own recorded act and word, given in Acts 10:28, and the attitude of the apostles and brethren that were in *Jud -a* (Acts 11:18), together with the exclusiveness of Acts 11:19, are sufficient to prove that the presence of a Gentile at this feast of *Israel* would have been intolerable, while the attitude of the Jews as recorded in Acts 21: 26-36 shows what is likely to have happened had Gentiles been present at this feast of Pentecost. As Zechariah 14:16-19 reveals, one day the nations of the earth shall go up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, but that event awaits the time when the Lord descends, and His feet once more touch the Mount of Olives. The feast of Acts 2 takes place after He had ascended from the Mount of Olives, and the difference is great and far-reaching.

There can hardly be found in human language more explicit words than Peter’s explanatory ‘This is that’. Such specific language makes it imperative that we understand, at least in measure, the teaching of the prophecy of Joel, and found our idea of Pentecost upon his teaching. If, as most will admit, the ‘church’ cannot be imported into Joel, then that alone should, if we still hold it, shake our faith in the tradition that the church began at Pentecost. We trust

the reader will honour the Holy Spirit at this point, and, leaving the comments of men, turn to the short prophecy of Joel and read it through^{*}. Upon reading the book through the following two verses stand out:

^{*} Seven minutes is all the time it will occupy.

‘That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten’ (Joel 1:4).

‘I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you’ (Joel 2:25).

‘I will restore’ are words that find their echo in the question of the apostles: ‘Wilt Thou ... restore?’ (Acts 1:6), and in the testimony of Peter as to ‘the times of restitution’ (Acts 3:21). Repentance is premised. ‘Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God’ (Joel 2:13), and the resulting blessing is not only likened to the restoration of the land from plague and famine, but to the restoring of Israel’s access and acceptable worship under the figure of a new wine and drink offering (Joel 1:13; 2:14; 3:18). Prominent also is the ‘great and terrible day of the Lord’, a prophetic period of no uncertain value, the object of much Old Testament prophecy, and one which certainly has no connection with the ‘Church’. The following outline may help the reader:

Joel

- A **a** 1:7. New wine cut off.
- b** 1:8-13. Israel’s harvest spoiled.
- B 1:14 to 2:14. Israel a desolation.
- C 2:15-20. The gathering of Israel.
- D 2:21 to 3:1. I will restore.
- C 3:2. The gathering of the nations
- D 3:2-8. I will plead.
- A **b** 3:9-17. Gentile harvest.
- a** 3:18. New wine restored.
- B 3:19-21. Egypt and Edom a desolation.

The whole prophecy deals with *the* nation and the nations. It looks to the Day of the Lord, and has no room for, or reference to, a church in which there is neither Greek nor Jew.

Peter’s specific reference is to Joel 2:28-32. Where Joel reads ‘afterward’ Peter says ‘in the last days’; the words come to the same thing, and *Kimchi*, one of the most famous of Jewish rabbis, makes the same observation when dealing with Joel 2:28. The quotation made by Peter is divided into two parts. The first was actually fulfilled on the day of Pentecost: the second would have followed had Israel repented. They did not repent, and consequently the signs in heaven await the Day of the Lord, with which the book of Revelation is prophetically concerned. What should intervene between the two parts of Joel’s prophecy it was no part of Peter’s ministry to explain. He confessed later, when writing to the same dispersion, that they would find help regarding this interval in the writings of Paul (2 Pet. 3:15,16).

We must now indicate the relation of the two parts of Joel’s prophecy, quoted by Peter, showing the present interval. This of course was not mentioned by Peter, for the times and the seasons which the Father had put in His own power had not been revealed to him. We, too, only know that a new dispensation fills the gap, because Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, has made known the fact.

Joel 2:28-31

- A I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT:
 - (1) Upon all Flesh.
 - (2) Sons.
 - (3) Daughters. The last days. Seven-fold
 - (4) Old men. beginning at Pentecost. ‘The
 - (5) Young men. powers of the age to come’.
 - (6) Servants.
 - (7) Handmaids.
- B PRESENT INTERVAL.- Israel not repentant
- B FUTURE DAY.- Israel repent and look upon Him whom

they pierced.

A I WILL SHOW WONDERS:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) Heavens. | |
| (2) Earth. | |
| (3) Blood. | Seven-fold conclusion. |
| (4) Fire. | Wonders as spoken of in the |
| (5) Pillars of smoke. | Apocalypse and Isaiah 13:9,10. |
| (6) Sun. | |
| (7) Moon. | |

It is essential to the understanding of the theme that we notice the statement of Acts 2:30:

‘Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ...’.

Although to stay here breaks the statement of the apostle, we pause to draw attention to the pertinent fact that Pentecost, instead of speaking of Christ as the Head of the Church, focuses attention upon His right to the throne of David. What possible meaning, other than a literal one, can be given to this passage or to the Psalm that is quoted? If Pentecost sets forth Christ as King in connection with the throne of David, in what way can it be connected with the Church?

Continuing our quotation at Acts 2:33 we read:

‘Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost (Spirit), He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear’.

‘*He hath shed forth THIS*’: ‘THIS is that’.- Peter is still maintaining his theme. He is still explaining Pentecost: it is the evidence that Christ is King, and that the kingdom will one day be restored. Further proof is given by quoting from Psalm 110. David’s son is David’s Lord (Matt. 22:41-46). The Lord is now there at the right hand of God, ‘from henceforth expecting’ (Heb. 10:13). The heaven must receive Him until the times of restitution (Acts 3:21).

The first thing that Peter commanded his awakened hearers to do was to ‘repent’. In this he was continuing the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2), and of the Lord (Matt. 4:17). As already shown, the interval between the two prophecies of Joel is a consequence of Israel’s non-repentance. Baptism for the remission of sins is not church truth. Not a single passage in any one of Paul’s epistles can be found to countenance such teaching. How can we therefore speak of ‘continuing stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine’ when the very first principles of that doctrine are by us set aside?

‘Save thyself’ is *Soson seauton* as in Luke 23:37, but in Acts 2:40 the Greek reads *Sothete*, ‘Be ye saved’. The ‘untoward generation’ is but another description given to ‘that wicked and adulterous generation’ to which no sign, but the sign of the prophet Jonah, was to be given. Here, that sign is evident. The apostles were witnesses of His resurrection: Pentecost was a witness to ‘Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God’, ‘This Jesus’, ‘That same Jesus’. This Son, yet Lord, of David, was ‘Lord and Christ’. The Day of the Lord was His day. The name of the Lord upon which they called, was His name, the miracle of the next chapter enforcing the fact that ‘there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12).

We have now examined three orthodox interpretations, and found them wanting, for: (1) The Epistles are as much inspired as the Gospels; (2) The appointment of Matthias was according to the will of God; (3) The church, as we understand the word today, did not begin at Pentecost.

We must now turn to more positive testimony.

First, let us consider the ministry of the apostle Paul. In chapter 1 of this book we have dealt with apostleship and, in some measure, with the apostleship of Paul. We must now take the subject further, and turn to Acts 9, where Paul’s conversion and commission are first recorded.

Ananias was told that Saul was to bear the name of the Lord Jesus 'before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel' (Acts 9:15). The word 'Gentile' is used in a bad sense in the two occurrences in Acts prior to chapter 9. 'Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles' (Acts 4:27). 'The Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers' (Acts 7:45). The Jew is prominent in the early chapters of the Acts, and it is not until the stoning of Stephen that the first definite step *Gentileward* is taken.

The persecution in Jerusalem drove the believers into Jud -a and Samaria, where they preached the Word, but in no sense is it indicated that those scattered believers preached to the Gentiles; such a thing was undreamed of by them. For confirmation of this statement of fact we have only to read Acts 11:19:

'Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the Word to none but unto the *Jews only*'.

(The 'Grecians' of 6:1; 9:29 and 11:20 refer to Greek-speaking Jews, Hellenists. They used the Septuagint instead of the original Hebrew).

Peter and his associates were 'astonished' to find that the holy spirit was poured out upon Cornelius and his household; the ministry of Peter was strictly to the circumcision (Gal. 2:7,8), the case of Cornelius being exceptional, and for a special purpose. Cornelius, however, was not a Gentile in the sense in which the name is used by Paul in his apostleship; he was a 'Proselyte of the Gate', he gave alms and prayed, and was held in good report 'among all the *nation of the Jews*' (Acts 10:1,2,22).

For Saul of Tarsus - a man who was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, who would sooner have died than associate with a dog of a Gentile - was it reserved that he should be the chosen vessel of grace to the Barbarian and the Scythian, the bond and the free, the Greek as well as the Jew. That which would have been looked upon as his lowest degradation he came to regard as his highest glory:

'I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office' (Rom. 11:13).

'That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles' (Rom. 15:16)

'He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles' (Gal. 2:8).

'Unto me ... is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ' (Eph. 3:8).

'I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity (truth)' (1 Tim. 2:7).

The last reference to the Gentiles in the Acts is in that solemn passage, where, quoting the sixth of Isaiah to the elders of Israel at Rome, Paul closed the door of the kingdom, and opened the door of the mystery. 'The salvation of God is *sent* unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it' (Acts 28:28). Henceforth he was the 'prisoner of Jesus Christ *for you Gentiles*'. In view of his approaching death, he wrote to Timothy his last message, thanking the Lord Who had stood with him and strengthened him to finish his course, that *by him*, Paul, 'the preaching might be fully known, and that all the *Gentiles* might hear' (2 Tim. 4:17). Have we thanked the Lord for His gift to men? He gave some apostles, and in Paul we have the chiefest sinner made to be the chiefest of the apostles, and the champion of grace.

Not only does the passage in Acts 9 tell us of Paul's commission to the Gentiles, it also adds, 'and kings'. Paul, as we well know, was brought before king Agrippa, and nobly testified to the saving grace of the name of Christ. His appeal to C -sar gave him audience with the Emperor at Rome, and although we have no record of his witness, we can be sure that he delivered himself of his testimony in the power of the name of his Lord. That his witness was faithful is evidenced by that marvellous expression in Philippians 4:22, 'The saints salute you, chiefly they that are of C -sar's household'. Saints in C -sar's household! Saints in the employ of that monster! How this rebukes us! If there could be saints *there*, saints can be found *anywhere*. Dear troubled brother or sister, surely your business, your home, your surroundings are not *quite so* bad as was the case of those slaves of C -sar! Let us take courage from their example.

The last clause of the commission which we will consider here is ‘and the children of Israel’. One has but to read the record of the Acts, or the Epistles written during that period, to see how large a place Israel had in the heart of the apostle to the Gentiles. Such passages as Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:2; 18:4,19; 19:8; 26:20, and 28:17 will demonstrate how faithful the apostle was to the terms of Romans 1:16, ‘to the Jew first’.

The prominence given to the Jew in Paul’s early epistles may be demonstrated as follows:

Before Acts 28. (Six Epistles)	After Acts 28. (Six Epistles)
Number of Occurrences	Number of Occurrences
Jew 25	Jew (neither ‘Jew nor Greek’) 1
Israel..... 14	Israel (Eph. 2:12; Phil. 3:5) 2
Israelite..... 3	Israelite..... 0
Abraham 19	Abraham..... 0
Total..... 61	Total..... 3

Paul’s peculiar dispensation of the grace of God to the Gentiles depended, humanly speaking, upon the foreseen defection of Israel, and had a gospel whose terms did not commend it to Jewish exclusiveness. This laid him open to many bitter attacks. His sensitiveness is everywhere apparent. They said his gospel was of his own invention, hence the moment he mentions it in Romans 1:1,2 he adds, ‘which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures’; so also in Romans 3:21. This accounts for the solemn introduction to Romans 9:

‘I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (for I used to wish myself to be a cursed thing from Christ)’ (Rom. 9:2,3 author’s translation).

His own experiences taught him to pity rather than chide. His own experiences, typical of Israel in each case, figure also in Romans 10:1-4 and 11:1,2. The next few verses of Romans 9 bear witness to the pre-eminent position of Israel. See structure on page 45.

The time for the cutting down of the olive tree of Israel’s favour was seen by the apostle to be approaching nearer and nearer. But he tells us that God’s purposes are by no means thwarted. That while but a remnant believed during the transitional period, Israel shall yet be righteous:

‘For the gifts and calling of God are not subject to a change of mind; for as indeed ye were formerly not believing in God, but now have been objects of mercy, by reason of the unbelief of others (Jews), so they, too, have now become unbelieving, that they may also obtain mercy, by reason of the mercy shown to you’ (Rom. 11:29-31 author’s translation).

Here the apostle witnesses to a mystery of grace and magnificence of mercy beyond our wildest dreams. Truly, our God *delighteth* in mercy. The Jews gave occasion for greater mercy by their unbelief; the Gentiles by their faith. The promises are yet to be fulfilled. God hath not cast away His foreknown people. All Israel shall yet be saved; ungodliness shall be turned away from Jacob. ‘As regards the gospel they are enemies on your (Gentiles’) account: but as regards the election, *beloved because of the fathers*’ (11:28). Here are God’s own words. Here are the words of the One Who is working out His mighty purpose. ‘Blinded’, ‘hardened’, ‘broken off’, ‘scattered’, wanderers for centuries, yet ‘*beloved* because of the fathers’. They were not forgotten, ‘for God hath shut up *all* in unbelief’. Why? Orthodoxy would say, ‘In order to pour out upon them His wrath’, but God says ‘That He might show mercy upon *all*’- and the ‘all’ is the same in each case. No wonder that in such a sea of grace the apostle should feel out of his depth. It was beyond him, he could not trace it out, but he rejoiced in it, and added his hearty, Amen:

Romans 11:33-36

A ‘O the depth of the riches (*riches*)

- B Both of the wisdom (*wisdom*)
 C And knowledge of God! (*knowledge*)
 D How unsearchable are His judgments, (*unsearchable*)
 D And His ways past finding out! (*untraceable*)
 C For who hath known the mind of the Lord? (*knowledge*)
 B Or who hath been His counsellor? (*wisdom*)
 A Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (*riches*)
 For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom (Him) be glory for ever. Amen’.

The twofold ministry of Paul.- Not only was Paul, from the outset, the apostle of the Gentiles, but, after Israel had been set aside, as we shall see took place in Acts 28, he, as the ‘Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles’, enters into that peculiar ministry of the mystery that belongs exclusively to the present day.

In Acts 20 we discover the apostle giving a survey of the ministry already fulfilled, looking forward to a ministry associated with bonds, and telling the Ephesians that they would see his face no more.

‘Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind’ (Acts 20:18,19).

While we might have expected that the apostle would have put foremost the preaching of Christ, or doctrinal purity, we observe that he speaks first of his personal integrity. To this aspect of the subject he returns in verses 33-35. His reason for reminding his hearers of his unselfishness and lowliness may have been the desire that they should realize that in leaving them and entering another phase of ministry he was not following a course of self-seeking. Indeed, so far was such a thing from his mind that he said later, ‘I count not my life dear unto myself’. His wish was to inculcate in these believers the self-same spirit, making them willing, though sorrowful, that the Lord’s service should deprive them of his presence. From beginning to end of his ministry the apostle was able, with a good conscience, to bring together his ‘doctrine’ and his ‘manner of life’.

After this reminder, the apostle passed on to the outer circumstances in which he had triumphed, by grace:

‘And with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews’ (Acts 20:19).

He summed up his ministry as that of ‘testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Acts 20:21).

At verse 22 we are conscious of a change:

‘And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me’ (Acts 20:22,23).

‘I go bound in the spirit’.- The fact that in verse 23 the apostle speaks of ‘the Holy Ghost’ suggests that the earlier phrase should be interpreted in the sense that, though still, outwardly, a free man, he was, nevertheless, already ‘in the spirit’ anticipatively entering into the bonds and afflictions that awaited him. Either directly in relation to the immediate Person of the Holy Ghost, or by the answer of his own spirit to the leading of the Lord, his missionary journeys were always under the leading or constraint of the Spirit. He had been ‘separated’ by the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:2), and had been ‘sent forth by the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 13:4). Sometimes, also, he had been ‘forbidden of the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 16:6,7). Furthermore, we read in Acts 17:16 that Paul’s spirit was ‘stirred within him’, and in Acts 19:21 that he ‘purposed in the spirit’ the journey that was now leading him to Jerusalem and Rome.

So here, having arrived at Miletus, we find that he was already the prisoner of the Lord ‘in spirit’. He was definitely bound for Jerusalem. On occasions in the past he had planned to visit some particular church or country, but had been ‘let’ (hindered), as he told the Romans. Now, however, Jerusalem is most definitely his goal. As in the case of his Lord, there came a time when he had to set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, even though well-meaning disciples should urge to the contrary.

‘But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God’ (Acts 20:24).

The Received Text here reads: ‘That I may finish my course *with joy*’, but the Revised Text omits the last two words (*meta charis*), and there does not appear to be sufficient evidence for their retention. The apostle might well have wished that the end of his career would be ‘with joy’, but he was far more concerned that he should ‘finish’, whether with joy or otherwise. Another point to note about this verse is that it provides us with a case in which the Greek *logos* so often translated ‘word’, claims its fuller meaning, ‘account’. Also, in the phrase: ‘so that I might finish my course’ the word *hos* is not, strictly speaking, ‘so that’, but rather ‘as’. The rendering given by Alford seems to recognize these various features:

‘I hold my life of no account, nor is it so precious to me, as the finishing of my course’.

The use of the figure of a ‘course’ or ‘race’ is one that is characteristic of the apostle, and, at the close, he was able to say: ‘I have finished my course’. The word ‘course’ (*dromos*) is borrowed from the Greek sports, and is found in verbal form in 1 Corinthians 9:24 and Hebrews 12:1 :

‘They which run in a race run all ... So run, that ye may obtain’.

‘Let us run with patience the race that is set before us’.

In his desire to ‘finish’ his course the apostle manifests once more his conformity to his Lord, Who, near the beginning of His ministry said: ‘My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work’ (John 4:34), and at the close declared: ‘I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do’ (John 17:4). It is encouraging to remember that not all the injustice represented by Rome could prevent either the Lord or His servant from finishing the course.

In 2 Timothy 4:7, the finishing of the course is associated with keeping the faith, or as expressed in Acts 20:24, ‘The ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God’.

Resuming the description of his ministry, the apostle says, in verse 25:

‘And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men’ (Acts 20:25,26).

A more specific reference to the twofold character of his ministry is found in Acts 26 where Paul makes his defence before King Agrippa.

This vindication is the fullest of which we have any record. He was no longer on trial, and he availed himself of the great opportunity to give a complete testimony.

Paul before Agrippa (Acts 26)

- A 1-3. Agrippa acknowledged as an expert.
- B 4-7. Paul’s manner of life from his youth. A Pharisee.
- C 8. Personal appeal to Agrippa. ‘Incredible’ (*Apistos*).
- D 9-15. Contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. Jerusalem. Damascus.
 - E 16-18. Paul’s
 - a Stand (*Histemi*).
 - Commission. b Witness.
 - The two c Both ... I have ... I will.
 - Commissions. d People and Gentiles.
 - e Forgiveness. Inheritance.
- D 19-21. Obedience to heavenly vision.
 - Damascus. Jerusalem.
- E 22,23. Paul’s
 - a Continue (*Histemi*).
 - Commission. b Witnessing.

The first *c* *None other things.*
 Commission *d* *People and Gentiles.*
 re-stated. *e* *Suffer. Rise.*

C 24-28. Personal appeal of Festus,
 and of Paul to Agrippa (*Pisteuo*).

B 29. Reference to present manner of life. Except bonds.

A 31,32. Agrippa gives his opinion.

We will not repeat the statements made by the apostle in his former defences, but deal rather with those things which are brought into prominence in the speech before Agrippa.

The apostle begins by going over the ground already covered in Acts 9 and 22 - his early life, his persecuting zeal, and the vision on the road to Damascus. At verse 16, however, he breaks new ground. Truth hitherto unrecorded is now revealed, and as this new revelation is of vital importance to all who rejoice in the dispensation of the Mystery, verses 16-18 must be given the closest attention.

We begin by noting that it is here for the first time that we are told what the Lord Himself said to the apostle on the road to Damascus. It may, perhaps, be objected that this statement is not true, and that in Acts 9 we can read for ourselves what the Lord said. To verify the point, let us turn to Acts 9:

Verses 1 and 2 record the journey to Damascus.
 Verses 3 and 4 record the vision and the voice.
 Verse 5 reveals that it is the Lord Who speaks.
 Verse 6 tells Paul to go into the city and wait for instructions.
 Verses 15 and 16 record what the Lord said *to Ananias about Paul*,

but that is all.

It is clear, therefore, that what the Lord actually said to Paul is not recorded in Acts 9, and the same is also true of Acts 22. Chapter 22 records *the words of Ananias* (verses 13-15), and that Paul was to be a witness of all that he had seen and heard, but it is to Acts 26 that we must turn to learn *for the first time* what the *Lord* actually said to Paul at his conversion and commission.

Two of the new features contained in this record are found in the words '*both*', '*I will appear unto thee*', and '*now I send thee*' in verses 16 and 17, and in the summary of doctrine contained in verse 18:

'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me'.

The close association between these words and the doctrine of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians will be obvious.

In contrast with this new commission, recorded here for the first time, is the old commission to which the apostle returns in verses 20-23. In these verses he preaches 'repentance', and proclaims 'none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come', which obviously could not refer to the mystery 'hid in God'.

We have already seen from Acts 20:24 that Paul had received some commission from the Lord that was intimately associated with 'bonds', and now, having appealed to C -sar, the apostle is at liberty to reveal the fact that, from the beginning, he had known that his commission was two-fold:

- (1) Witnessing to Israel and the Gentiles the things which he had seen and heard, while
- (2) Awaiting a future appearing of the Lord, when the terms of the new ministry associated with prison would be made known to him.

At last the further appearing had taken place, and the terms of the new commission had been given. Verse 18 anticipates, in a condensed form, the doctrine that is more fully expressed in Ephesians and Colossians (*see* Eph. 1:7,13,14,18, and Col. 1:12,13).

The word 'both' necessitates a two-fold witness. Just as a believing and intelligent reading of John 16:12-14 compels us to seek for a subsequent revelation after the Spirit of truth had come, so, equally, a believing and intelligent reading of Acts 26:16-18 compels us to seek for that subsequent revelation of truth that was given after Paul had become the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles. This revelation is found in those epistles that bear the stamp of prison, namely: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 2 Timothy. These contain the revelation of the Mystery, and give dispensational grounds for the Gentiles' right to the blessings summarized in Acts 26:18.

The Dispensational Importance of Acts 28.- This chapter of the Acts is of such importance that no pains should be spared in its examination. If we once see that it is here (when Israel as a nation is set aside, where the olive tree, together with all grafted into it, was cut down to the roots; when the hope of Israel was suspended; when evidential miraculous gifts come to an end; when the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles; and when Paul becomes the prisoner of Jesus Christ for us Gentiles) that the church of the one body, with its spiritual blessings, its heavenly places, and its call under the terms of the dispensation of the mystery came into being, we shall appreciate its dispensational importance. Acts 28, and not Pentecost, is the dispensational boundary that matters most to us today.

It will be remembered that, when writing the epistle to the Romans, the apostle expressed his great longing to meet them (Rom. 1:10-12), telling them that when he did come he would come 'in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ' (Rom. 15:29). It is of great importance, therefore, to notice, that when at last the opportunity is presented, those whom the apostle first saw, and that by his own request, were the 'chief of the Jews' (Acts 28:17). The primary object in this is patent. He knew by bitter experience what an influence the Jew, in his fanatical obstinacy and religious pride had, even over temperate and just Roman rulers, and the character of the Emperor before whose tribunal he was to appear made it imperative that the Jews in Rome should not be permitted to weight the scales of justice. The apostle did not cover this very human purpose under a cloak of false piety, but manfully told these Jewish leaders his object:

'Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto C-sar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of' (Acts 28:17-19).

Let us observe the following features:

Paul still addressed the chief of the Jews as 'Men and brethren', a title which, as he explains in Romans 9, belonged to Israel according to the flesh. The great change, wherein 'the twain' were created 'one new man', had not yet been announced, and Israel as a nation still stood before God. From Acts 13:15 it is clear that this form of address was not necessarily a Christian one, for it was used by the ruler of the synagogue. When for the first time Paul used it in the Acts, he added, by way of explanation, 'children of the stock of Abraham' (Acts 13:26); the added words 'and whosoever among you feareth God', being, not an expansion, but addressed to a secondary company. So, in Acts 13:38, 'Men and brethren' is the mode of address to those who in verse 41 were to be called 'despisers', and, as verse 42 makes clear, who were 'Jews' as distinct from 'Gentiles'. We find Peter and James using the same form of address at the Council of Jerusalem, where none but Hebrew Christians were present. We meet with the expression no more until Paul addresses the Jews in Acts 22:1; 23:1, and for the last time in 28:17.

To those who have learned to love and appreciate the hidden beauties of the Scriptures, it is no surprise to discover that this form of address occurs in the Acts just twelve times, twelve being most evidently the number of Israel.

The apostle declared that he had committed nothing against 'the people' or the customs of the fathers. Who, in Paul's estimate, were 'the people'? There is but one answer; Israel. In the same verse where we found the ruler of the synagogue using the title 'Men and brethren', we find the first occurrence in the Pauline section of the Acts of the term 'the people'. When the appellation is first used by Paul he expands it, as he did the other title. He says, 'The God of this people of Israel' (Acts 13:17), and, with the exception of two references, namely Acts 15:14 and 18:10, every one of the remaining occurrences, twelve in number, refers exclusively to Israel. In Acts 28 the references are pointed:

‘Nothing against the people’ (Acts 28:17).

‘Go unto this people’ (Acts 28:26).

‘For the heart of this people’ (Acts 28:27).

What of ‘the customs’?- *Ethos*, ‘customs’, occurs in the Acts seven times. In Acts 16:21 and 25:16 it is the ‘custom’ or ‘manner’ of the Romans that is intended, but in the remaining passages it is used of the peculiar customs of Israel. It is of great interest to realize that the first occurrence of *ethos* in the Acts is found in the charge which brought about the stoning of Stephen, to which Paul had consented.

‘That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us’ (Acts 6:14).

In more passages than one, the apostle makes it clear that those dreadful, persecuting, days of his earlier life never left his memory, and it would be with humbled heart that he now defended himself against the very charge that had been laid against the man to whose death he had consented years before. That the *ethos* of the fathers was not to be confined to superficial customs is made clear from its use in Acts 15:1, where ‘circumcision after the *manner* of Moses’ is in view. Paul’s present imprisonment had been brought about because he had sought to rebut the charge made against him that he taught:

‘... all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs’ (Acts 21:21),

and Paul acted as he did so that all might know that, as the elders said to him, ‘those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law’ (Acts 21:24).

These most explicit statements reduce the issue to two heads. Either Paul did walk orderly and kept the law, or he did not. If he did, then the truth of the Mystery could not have been made known during the period of the Acts. If he did not, then his statements are false and ‘we are of all men most miserable’.

‘*The fathers*’. *To whom do these words refer?* - Again, and for the third time, we return to the synagogue at Antioch and hear the apostle speak:

‘We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled’ (Acts 13:32,33).

His own written testimony in the epistle to the Romans is conclusive, ‘My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites ... whose are the fathers’ (Rom. 9:3-5). In Acts 28, immediately before he said ‘this people’, the apostle exclaims, ‘Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers’ (Acts 28:25). Further on in his statement to the chief of the Jews the apostle used another expression, ‘My nation’ (Acts 28:19). The word translated ‘nation’ is *ethnos*, and is frequently rendered ‘Gentiles’, when found in the plural, as it is in Acts 28:28. Paul mostly uses the word to designate the Gentiles, but when he said:

‘I came to bring alms to my *nation*’ (Acts 24:17).

‘*Mine own nation* at Jerusalem’ (Acts 26:4),

it is evident that he speaks of Israel, ‘*the nation*’, as distinct from the rest of the ‘nations’. At Acts 28:19, *Israel* was still Paul’s *nation*.

Up to this point, however, what has been brought forward is negative in character, e.g., Paul had committed *nothing against* ‘this people’ or its customs. But lest his testimony should be misconstrued, he recapitulates, introducing a positive note:

‘For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because *that for the hope of Israel* I am bound with this chain’ (Acts 28:20).

In his defence before Agrippa, who was expert in all ‘customs’ of the Jews, and therefore able to appreciate the apostle’s definite avowal, he said:

‘And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come’ (Acts 26:6,7).

This was none other than the promise which formed the burden of the apostles’ question in Acts 1:

‘When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6).

It was to this Peter referred when he said that the times of restitution of all things, which God by the mouth of all his holy prophets had spoken, would commence upon the repentance of Israel (Acts 3:19-26). Moreover, the apostle could have shown these Jews his own written statement in the letter he had sent to the church at Rome touching their hope, that it was the hope of Israel.

‘There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust (hope *elpizo*). Now the God of (that) hope (*elpis*) fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost’ (Rom. 15:12,13).

Once we admit that these are the words of truth and soberness, we must also admit that the hope of the church, up till the writing of the epistle to the Romans, was the hope of the *Kingdom*, for what other meaning can attach to the words ‘reign over the Gentiles’? It is, moreover, the hope of Israel, for if not, why introduce the title the ‘root of Jesse’? and why say ‘reign over’ the Gentiles? If any one should object to this translation of *archo* (‘reign over’) let him turn to Mark 10:42. Moreover, this hope was associated with the power of the Holy Ghost.

It is therefore impossible to dissociate the hope of the early church from the hope of Israel without impugning the veracity of the apostle Paul, and denying the inspiration of Romans 15.

From the first chapter of the Acts right on to the moment when Israel were set aside, one hope is before the church, as it was then constituted. But then, for the very sufficient reason that a new calling had been revealed, it became necessary to pray that the church might perceive afresh ‘what is the hope of His calling’.

When Paul met the Jews by appointment in his lodging, ‘he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening’ (Acts 28:23). After their rejection, and the quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10, we read:

‘And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him’ (Acts 28:30,31).

Let us now return to Acts 28:23 and give our closest attention to the record of this interesting and critical day.

The Chief of the Jews appointed a day, and the apostle occupied the time ‘from morning till evening’, ‘expounding and testifying the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets’, and we can well believe that that all-day exposition would have made the heart of any believer to ‘burn within’ him, even as in the case of the two disciples when they listened to the Lord on the way to Emmaus. It may not be given to us to expound the Scriptures as did the apostle, but we can and do point out that which the Lord has shown us, and pray that it may find a lodging in the heart of many a true ‘Berean’.

Paul ‘expounded’ and ‘testified’. What do these words mean and what do they teach us? The word translated ‘expound’ is *ekthemi*, literally, ‘to put out’. The first occurrence of the word is in Acts 7:21, where it speaks of Moses when he was ‘cast out’. In English, ‘to expound’ is rarely used in this primitive sense, although Butler in 1678 wrote, ‘First he *expounded* both his pockets’; then, too, an alternative name for an Exhibition is an Exposition, e.g., the Exposition of 1868. While what we usually intend by ‘expound’, or ‘exposition’, is the art of setting forth an argument, a commentary, or a detailed explanation, we should remember that in both the Greek and English words, the primitive meaning is never quite lost sight of.

This was one part of the apostle’s method of teaching, but there was another, which supplemented it and made the exposition live. He ‘testified’ (*diamarturomai*). This is the ordinary word ‘to bear witness’, *marturomai*, with

dia added, as though to indicate ‘a thorough witness’, *dia* meaning ‘through’, and in composition not always so translated, but giving added emphasis.

The Lord had appeared to Paul in a vision and had said: ‘As thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome’ (Acts 23:11). Here, in the next occurrence of the word, we find the fulfilment of the promise. ‘Witness’ differs from ‘exposition’.

It is conceivable that an unbeliever might be able to give some sort of an exposition of the teaching of the Old Testament scriptures concerning their prophetic utterances and their fulfilment. With certain reservations, he might even be able to compare the ‘more perfect’ way of the gospel with that of the law, but it would be an academic effort and lifeless; he would not be able to add his personal testimony. Paul on the contrary not only gave a masterly analysis of the Old Testament in that characteristic manner of his ‘confounding the Jews ... proving that this is (the) very Christ’ (Acts 9:22), but he would go over his life from his youth, speak of his conversion, his commission, and of the grace that had been granted him. He would speak of Christ as ‘The Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me’.

This exposition and testimony was twofold. It was about ‘the kingdom of God’, and it was ‘concerning Jesus’. Whatever we may think is the meaning of the phrase ‘the kingdom of God’, we must remember, according to Paul’s exposition here that:

- (1) It was found in the law of Moses and the Prophets.
- (2) It was something most intimately connected with the hope of Israel.
- (3) It was closely associated with the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Jesus.

Turning to the Acts of the Apostles we find that the Lord’s teaching in the days after His resurrection is summarized as, ‘speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God’ (Acts 1:3), and, as a direct outcome of this teaching (as indicated by the word ‘therefore’ in verse 6), the apostles seize the first opportunity to ask whether the restoration of the kingdom again to Israel would take place ‘at that time’.

Paul had before ‘disputed and persuaded’ concerning the kingdom of God, notably in the synagogue of Ephesus (Acts 19:8), and summed up his ministry during the Acts as ‘preaching the kingdom of God’, in other words ‘testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’ and as a declaration to them of ‘all the counsel of God’ (Acts 20:21,25,27).

It is apparent, therefore, that if the apostle could honestly say that his teaching was ‘none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come’ (Acts 26:22), we must so interpret his use of the term, ‘the kingdom of God’, as to include the restoration again of the earthly kingdom which constituted part of the hope of Israel. The term, however, is much wider than anything found in the Gospels, the Acts or the early Epistles. We find it used after Israel were set aside, and when Luke would describe Paul’s prison ministry he wrote, ‘Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him’ (Acts 28:31). The revelation of the mystery must therefore be included in the kingdom of God, and Colossians 4:11 does not hesitate to use the term to define the goal of Paul and his fellow-workers. It would appear, therefore, that we must understand the kingdom of God to refer to that all-embracing sovereignty which includes all spheres of blessing, all callings, and all inheritances, and that dispensational truth, seeking to observe the sub-divisions in that all-embracing kingdom, speaks of the Church, of Israel and of the Bride, as the case may be. The direct object of Paul’s exposition and testimony was the kingdom of God; the direct object of his persuasion was concerning Jesus. In Acts 28:23 the word *peitho* is translated ‘persuade’, but is rendered ‘believe’ in verse 24. It is the word used by Agrippa and by those who charged the apostle with having ‘persuaded and turned away much people’ at Ephesus. The way in which the word is used of the centurion in Act 27:11 - ‘The centurion *believed* the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul’ - is rather a foreshadowing of the attitude of Paul’s own people, the Jews, in Rome, for it is recorded of them that ‘some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not’.

One further point must detain us at verse 23: Paul persuaded them concerning ‘Jesus’. When the apostle refers to the Saviour in his epistles, it is his general practice to give Him His title, ‘Jesus Christ’, ‘Christ Jesus’, ‘Jesus Christ the Lord’, etc., but, on occasion, he uses simply the name ‘Jesus’. This he does in Hebrews eight times, and

in Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians, where the name occurs eight times, the subject concerned being associated with the resurrection. Romans and 1 Corinthians contain one occurrence each, and in the seven Epistles written after Acts 28, Paul uses the name 'Jesus' but twice. When we compare verse 23 with verse 31 of Acts 28 we are struck by two things.

- (1) To the Jews, before their rejection, Paul used the name 'Jesus'.
- (2) After their rejection the name is augmented and, while the term 'the kingdom of God' is retained, the teaching is concerning 'the Lord Jesus Christ'.

When Paul bore his testimony to the Jews, it was 'concerning Jesus', and its basis was 'the Law of Moses and the Prophets', which he 'expounded'. But when Paul turned from the Jew and addressed himself to 'all that came in unto him', the Law and the Prophets are not mentioned, the name 'Jesus' is exchanged for the full title 'The Lord Jesus Christ', and 'preaching' and 'teaching' take the place of 'witnessing' and 'expounding'. There must be a reason for these changes, especially as we are aware how fully the Scriptures are quoted in Paul's earlier ministry.

If we turn the page and look at the first epistle that follows the Acts, that to the Romans, we observe that the gospel of God is that 'which He had promised afore by His prophets *in the Holy Scriptures*' (Rom. 1:2), and that the very doctrine of justification by faith is '*as it is written*, The just shall live by faith' (Rom. 1:17). Indeed '*What saith the Scripture?*' (Rom. 4:3) might well be taken as epitomizing Paul's attitude in these early epistles. Altogether Paul uses the word, *graphie* 'scripture', fourteen times. Seven of the occurrences are in Romans, two in 1 Corinthians and three in Galatians, leaving only two in the epistles written after the setting aside of Israel, namely 1 Timothy 5:18 and 2 Timothy 3:16. But neither of these two latter references has anything to do with the teaching of the mystery, the former having reference to the recognition of service, a matter of practice that is quite inter-dispensational, and the latter being the apostle's testimony to 'All Scripture', which precludes the possibility of its being a reference to any particular doctrine.

In his early epistles the phrase 'It is written' is used by Paul some forty times, but it is entirely absent from the epistles written after Acts 28:28. Let us then examine Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, and see the manner in which the Old Testament Scriptures are used, or referred to, in them.

We read the whole of the first chapter of Ephesians down to the twenty-second verse before we come to such a reference. We then have this: 'And hath put all things under His feet' (Psa. 8:6). If the reader will compare 'what' are there said to be put under his feet, with 'what' are said to be under His feet in Ephesians 1:21-23, he will agree that the apostle owed nothing to the Old Testament for what he writes in Ephesians 1:21-23. We read on through chapter 2, through chapter 3, through chapter 4 to verse 8 before we meet with another quotation. Again, if the reader will turn to the Psalm quoted, viz., 68, he will see that while the ascension of Christ is there revealed, not the remotest indication is given as to what were the 'gifts' that He gave to men. For that information we are indebted to the apostle, and he received it by revelation, not by reading Psalm 68. We therefore continue our quest for a quotation from the Old Testament by the apostle in making known the truth of the mystery. In Ephesians 5:30 we read, 'For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones'. The Revisers omit the words 'of His flesh, and of His bones', as do the Companion Bible and the Numeric New Testament. The passage therefore is too debatable to be admitted. The next verse is a direct quotation from Genesis 2:24, but the words following 'but I speak concerning Christ and the church' (Eph. 5:32) bring back the subject from the general relationship of man and wife to the particular relationship of Christ and His church, which, though *illustrated* by the quotation is not thereby *revealed*.

In chapter 6 we meet the first direct quotation from Old Testament Scripture upon which a doctrine or precept is made to depend.

'Honour thy father and mother ... that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth' (Eph. 6:2,3).

But to whom is this addressed? Not to members of the Body but to 'children', who are exhorted to obey their parents in the Lord, 'for this is right' - not because they were fellow-members of the Body.

The apparent quotation of Zechariah 8:16 in Ephesians 4:25, 'Speak every man truth with his neighbour', is explained by the fact that Paul's whole phraseology was tinged with Old Testament language, but even if this be included as a direct quotation, nothing can be made of Zechariah 8 that constitutes any doctrine connected with the subject-matter, except by general analogy.

Philippians contains not one Old Testament quotation. In chapter 2 verses 10 and 11 there is an allusion to Isaiah 45:23, but it refers to the Person of the Lord, not to the mystery.

Colossians has no reference.

2 Timothy has one, namely, Numbers 16:5 and 26, in chapter 2:19. As we have seen, 1 Timothy uses the law concerning the muzzling of the ox, to which we have already alluded (1 Tim. 5:18): but there is no other quotation.

This leaves only Titus and Philemon, neither of which makes any reference to the Old Testament.

Here, then, we have seven epistles, and they contain not more than eight quotations from the Old Testament, possibly but seven, and of this number, not one can be said to teach or reveal any doctrine peculiar to the testimony of Paul, the prisoner of the Lord.

We return therefore to Acts 28:23 and 31 and perceive that the emphasis upon the Law and the Prophets in verse 23, and the pointed omission of any reference to the Scriptures in verse 31, entirely harmonizes with the two dispensations that find their 'landmark' in Acts 28:25-28. Before we go further it may be well to exhibit the structure of this section, which is as follows:

Acts 28:23-31

The Dispensational Landmark

- | | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|--|
| A | a | 28:23. | Chief of the Jews come to Paul's lodging. The day. |
| | b | 28:23. | Paul 'expounded' the Kingdom of God. |
| | c | 28:23. | 'Persuading' concerning Jesus. |
| | d | 28:23. | Out of the law and prophets. |
| | e | 28:23. | From morning till evening. |
| B | f | 28:24,25. | They agreed not among themselves. |
| | g | 28:24,25. | They departed. |
| C | h | 28:25. | The word of the <i>Holy Ghost</i> . |
| | i | 28:26. | Go unto this people. |
| | j | 28:26. | Hear ... not understand. |
| D | 28:27. | { | k¹ l Heart waxed gross. |
| | | | m Ears dull. |
| | | | n Eyes closed. |
| | Isa. 6:10. | { | k² n Eyes see. |
| | | | m Ears heard. |
| | | | l Heart understand. |
| | | | k³ Be converted. |
| | | | k⁴ I should heal them. |
| C | h | 28:28. | The salvation of <i>God</i> . |
| | i | 28:28. | SENT unto the Gentiles. |
| | j | 28:28. | They will hear it. |
| B | g | 28:29. | The Jews departed. |
| | f | 28:29. | Great reasoning among themselves. |
| A | a | 28:30. | All come to Paul's hired house. The two years. |
| | b | 28:31. | Paul 'preaches' the Kingdom of God. |

- c* 28:31. 'Teaches' concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.
- d* 28:31. With all confidence. No reference to O.T.
- e* 28:31. Unhindered.

We draw attention to the way in which this last section of the Acts is a unity, and to the fact that if we detach its last two verses, not only is the perfect correspondence of the structure ruined, but, more seriously still, the intentional contrast between what took place among the Jews in Paul's lodging on one day, and what took place in Paul's hired house during two years is lost, together with the double reference to the Jews' 'departure' and their 'agreeing not' and 'reasoning among themselves'.

Then we have the word of the 'Holy Ghost' balanced by the salvation of 'God', the one associated with the verb 'Go', the other with the verb 'Send'; the one connected with 'This people', i.e., the Jews, the other with 'The Gentiles'. The effect of the one was that, though the Jew 'heard', he did not understand; the effect of the other, that the salvation of God was 'heard', and that believingly. And so the structure leads on step by step to the crisis, the quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10, the Dispensational Landmark of the New Testament.

The citation of Isaiah 6:10 by the apostle marks a crisis, even as the citation of the same passage marked a crisis in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ while on earth.

The first quotation of this passage in the New Testament is in Matthew 13, and an examination of the context and what leads up to its quotation by our Lord will throw light upon its use by Paul in this great climax of the Acts. The Gospel according to Matthew is purposely limited in its scope. In face of the unambiguous words of Christ in Matthew 10, no one who believes the inspiration of Scripture can deny this:

'Go *not* into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye *not*: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 10:5,6).

This limitation was reaffirmed in Matthew 15 where the Lord said, in the hearing of the Syro-phoenician woman:

'I am *not* sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 15:24).

That a woman of Samaria and another of Canaan were, nevertheless, blessed, does not alter the fact that neither the apostles nor the Lord were, at that time, 'sent' to any other than Israel. This restriction is endorsed by the apostle Paul in Romans 15:8.

The Lord's public ministry was heralded by a great succession of miracles which were witnessed throughout the Land from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem and Jud -a to beyond Jordan. The divine purpose of these miracles is indicated in Matthew 11:20: 'Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, *because they repented not*'. It is obvious that the repentance of the people was the prime object before the Lord in these miracles, but in this they failed. In Matthew 12 the shadow of rejection deepens: One 'greater than the temple', 'greater than Jonah', 'greater than Solomon' was in their midst, and they knew Him not (Matt. 12:6,41,42). Here we see the growing rejection of Christ as Prophet (Jonah), Priest (Temple), and King (Solomon). Then comes parable, mystery, and the quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10 in Matthew 13:14,15.

Upon hearing the parable of the Sower, the apostles asked the Lord the question: 'Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?' (Matt. 13:10). The Lord's answer (partly postponed until verse 35, when Matthew adds his own inspired comment) introduces for *the first time in the New Testament* (1) The word Mystery; (2) Allusion to the foundation of the world, and (3) The quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10. In answer to the question, the Lord explained:

'Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given ... Therefore speak I to them in parables ... and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias. which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; etc' (Matt. 13:11,13,14),

and in verses 34 and 35 the added explanation is given:

'All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world' (Matt. 13:34,35).

The parables were spoken 'unto them' (13:10,11,13,34), 'in them' (13:14), 'this people' (13:15), and to him that 'hath not' (13:12), referring to the multitude in contrast with the disciples, who are referred to in the passages which say, 'It is given unto you to know' (13:11), 'whosoever hath' (13:12); 'blessed are your eyes ... ears' (13:16). The position of the disciples is even favourably compared with that of 'prophets and righteous men' (13:17). The 'mysteries' of the kingdom of heaven were not revealed until it became evident that Israel were going to reject their King, and that the manifest, open, course of the kingdom would be suspended while a secret aspect, hitherto unknown, would supervene.

The 'secret' phase of the kingdom of the heavens has its effect upon Gentile dominion, which was also running its course. By the time our Lord came to Bethlehem, the prophetic period of 490 years (Daniel 9) was well-nigh exhausted. The fourth kingdom was ruling the habitable earth and would easily have produced the Monster with which Gentile rule will close (Rev. 13). If Israel had accepted their King, Tiberius, Caligula and Nero had all the making of the Beast, and Herod (Acts 12) exhibited characteristics that could easily have become the Antichrist. The Lord had definitely said, 'The time is fulfilled' (Mark 1:15), and Peter declared that if Israel would but repent the times of refreshing and restitution would begin which had been the theme of all the holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-26). It is impossible to think that had Israel repented, God would have failed to respond. But Israel did not repent, and the kingdom, in all its phases, including Nebuchadnezzar's line and successors, entered on its 'mystery' phase.

Associated with these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is the time period, 'The foundation of the world'. The full expression, 'From the foundation of the world', occurs seven times in the New Testament and is associated with the following aspects of truth:

Matt. 13:35. The secret, associated with the parables of Matthew 13.

Matt. 25:34. The kingdom, prepared for those of the nations who were kind to the Lord's brethren, even though their service was not consciously directed to Him.

Luke 11:50. The shedding of the blood of the prophets, for the truth's sake, commences with Abel; therefore the expression 'From the foundation of the world', goes back at least to the days of Adam.

Heb. 4:3. Speaks of the institution of the Sabbath and its fulfilment, and the finishing of the work of God in connection with this period.

Heb 9:26. An argument is used in which this period is introduced in order to show the folly of the reasoning in question in the passage.

Rev. 13:8. The book of life of the Lamb slain, which had been written from the foundation of the world.

Rev. 17:8. Names not written in this book of life.

The first time the Gentiles are mentioned with approbation in Matthew (*see* 4:15; 6:32; 10:5,18; 12:18,21; 20:19,25), is in chapter 12, that is, upon the Lord's rejection:

'Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him ... should not make Him known: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying ... He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles ... and in His Name shall the Gentiles trust' (Matt. 12:14-21).

In the immediate context of this first quotation from Isaiah 6:9,10 in the New Testament we have, therefore, the following suggestive features:

- (1) The rejection of Christ as Israel's Messiah and King.
- (2) The introduction of a contingency into the problem of John the Baptist.
- (3) The first occurrence of the word 'mystery'.
- (4) The first occurrence of the phrase 'From the foundation of the world'.

- (5) The first reference to the Gentile as an object of blessing. (In Matthew 10 the word was, 'Go *not* unto the Gentiles').

A note concerning the word 'mystery' may be acceptable here. The word has been simply brought over, untranslated, from the Greek into the English language. In the original it is written *musterion*, the change of 'u' into 'y' following a general rule, as for example, *hupokrites* becomes 'hypocrite'; *hudor* becomes 'hydro'. No unintelligent, occult, or mysterious meaning is associated with the 'mysteries' of Holy Scripture, for they simply refer to truths that up to a certain time were 'secrets' known only to God, but when revealed were clearly understood by those who were initiated, or were believers. The Greek word is derived from *mueo*, 'to instruct' (Phil. 4:12), which in its turn comes from *muo*, 'to shut,' viz., the mouth. In combination with *kata*, *muo* is found in Matthew 13:15, 'their eyes they have *closed*', a pointed passage in connection with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

The 'mysteries' of the kingdom of heaven were not a subject of revelation until it became evident that the King and the kingdom itself were about to be rejected. Then for the first time, and to the favoured few, the Lord reveals the hidden course this kingdom purpose must take, until the day His manifest glory shall fulfil all that had been foretold concerning the Throne of David, and His Dominion from sea to sea.

So, when at the end of the Acts, Israel as a nation was dismissed, God revealed, through Paul the prisoner, another secret part of His purpose, a secret going back 'before the foundation of the world', and calling the far-off Gentile into a place and nearness and blessing hitherto unsuspected and unknown. The endeavour to 'make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery' (Eph. 3:9 R.V.) is the chief reason for the publishing of this book.

Another explanation may also be acceptable before we proceed. We have listed several 'suggestive features' on page 106, and having touched upon the meaning of the word 'mystery', we add a note on the second item in the list, viz., 'The introduction of a contingency into the problem of John the Baptist'. What do we mean by this statement?

It is a matter of prophecy that 'Elijah the prophet' is to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5,6), and when the birth of John the Baptist was announced to his father Zacharias, the angel said, 'He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Luke 1:16,17). When John himself was questioned by the priests, 'Art thou Elijah?' he said, 'I am not' (John 1:21).

The Lord Jesus Christ endorsed the teaching of the Old Testament prophets saying, 'Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things' (Matt. 17:10,11), but added the somewhat cryptic statement, 'But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already ... then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist' (Matt. 17:12,13). The apparent contradiction is solved by referring to Matthew 11:14, where the Lord introduces the contingent 'IF':

'If ye will receive it, this is Elias (Elijah), which was for to come'.

Had Israel repented at that time, John - who had been sent in the spirit and power of Elijah - would have fulfilled the prophet's words. The Lord, however, from Whom nothing is hid, knew that they would not at that time repent, and the interval is filled with the mystery phase of the kingdom, and later with the great mystery of the church of the present dispensation, leaving the literal fulfilment of prophecy to take place according to the testimony of Malachi.

The reader who has already entered into the blessedness of the dispensation of the mystery made known through Paul, the Lord's prisoner, will need no lengthy exposition of the close parallel that exists between Matthew 13 and Acts 28. At the latter:

- (1) Israel, who reject the Lord, are themselves rejected.
- (2) 'The mystery' is made manifest for the first time in those epistles written by Paul from prison.
- (3) Those thus blessed are 'Gentiles', particularly (Eph. 3:1-13).
- (4) And they were chosen in Christ *'before* the foundation of the world'.

The two passages are parallel, but they deal with vastly different parts of the great kingdom of God: the one with the mystery phase of the kingdom of the heavens, the other with the dispensation of the mystery, which has its sphere 'far above all' where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Just as Christ turned from the multitude and began to speak of secrets to His disciples - secrets which had been kept since the foundation of the world - so Paul, the

servant of Christ, no longer free and therefore unable to speak openly to the multitude, made known to the saints secrets that were hid in God from before the foundation of the world.

We therefore appreciate the aptness of the quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10 at this great juncture of Israel's rejection.

We do not believe that the reader who has pondered these things will need any argument by us to justify the title we have given to Acts 28, namely,

'The Dispensational Landmark'

As in Matthew 13, Israel did not hear. The Gentiles, who, up till then, had been kept outside ('Go not', 'Aliens', 'Strangers'), now become the objects of grace.

When the apostle could utter the words, 'The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles', then, the dispensation of the mystery began and, then, Israel became *lo-ammi*, 'not My people'. But when this day of matchless grace shall close, with every member of the Body safely brought into living relationship with the exalted Head, then the thread of prophetic truth shall once more be taken up by God. Israel will look upon Him Whom they pierced, the Day of the Lord will set in, the purpose of the kingdom will be accomplished, Gentile dominion will cease, all Israel shall be saved, and the two aspects of the kingdom be realized - on the earth and in the heavenly city.

As we have seen, the quotation of Isaiah 6 marks a crisis of the first magnitude. This we shall now consider, together with its context.

'And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word' (Acts 28:25).

This 'one word' constituted Israel's solemn dismissal, for the word translated 'they departed' is in the passive, and should be translated 'They were dismissed'. The word *apoloio*, used in the original, not only means 'to send away' in a general sense, but in a good sense, 'to release', as in Hebrews 13:23, and, in a bad sense, 'to divorce' a wife, as in Matthew 1:19; 5:31,32, the first four occurrences of the verb. *It is this figure* that must be kept in mind when considering Israel's rejection in Acts 28 for, throughout their history, Israel's relationship with the Lord has been construed in terms of marriage.

'*They agreed not*'.- The word thus translated is *asymphonos*, which is derived from *sumphoneo*, the origin of our 'symphony'. It is used once in connection with the marriage relationship (1 Cor. 7:5), where husband and wife 'agree' to temporary separation for the Lord's sake. The separation of Israel from their Lord, however, was not by consent, but because there was no 'concord' that could make the relationship possible, although there will be when, by grace, the repentance of Israel is brought about.

This 'divorce' of Israel, which had cast its shadow even over the Gospels, and is anticipated in the first miracle of Acts 13, is now pronounced, and the word used to seal the dreadful dismissal is that quoted from Isaiah 6.

Just as Stephen says 'your fathers', not 'our fathers', so the Revised Text (also L T Tr. A.) of Acts 28:25 reads 'your' fathers. Here is a far-off echo of that pronouncement, '*Your house is left unto you desolate*' (Matt. 23:38).

Israel 'heard', but they did not 'understand'; they 'saw', but they did not 'perceive', and the seat of the trouble was not in the eye or the ear, but in the heart:

'For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed' (Acts 28:27).

Pachunomai, 'waxed gross', occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Matthew 13:15. The word is used as early as the prophetic song of Moses, when he described the very symptoms and disease from which Israel ultimately suffered. He spoke of the way in which the Lord had found Israel in a waste and howling wilderness, and how He had kept him as the apple of His eye.

'But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation' (Deut. 32:15).

Derived from *pachunomai* is *pachne*, 'frost', and *pachnoo*, 'to freeze', and *pachos*, 'thick', a condition that described Israel at this time. To describe a specially dull-witted fellow we use the expression, 'He has a skin as

thick as an elephant'; thus we can realize that such a 'thick-skinned' animal is a 'pachyderm', and that the modern figure and the ancient ascriptions are therefore akin.

The threefold goal of the ministry both of our Lord, during His earthly life, and of the apostles after His ascension, was the repentance, the conversion, the healing of Israel. That goal has never been completely set aside. Temporarily, Israel are not God's people, but at last 'All Israel shall be saved'; they shall look upon Him Whom they pierced, and mourn for Him, and at this repentance their conversion will become a fact, and the time of restitution will have come. But that day is 'not yet'. A new dispensation has taken the place of that which obtained throughout the Acts - which, it is important to remember, covered the period of the early epistles of Paul - and that new dispensation is ushered in by the epoch-making words: '*The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it*' (Acts 28:28).

Since the days of Abraham there is no record of any Gentile being 'saved' *independently of Israel*. We say advisedly, 'There is no record', we do not limit the Holy One of Israel, but we are rightly and necessarily limited by the written word. In Galatians 1:9 the apostle made a staggering statement. Having made it he still seemed to fear that it would not be taken literally, so he repeated it; 'As we said before, so say I now again'. We have just made the statement that, 'Since the days of Abraham there is no record of any Gentile being "saved" *independently of Israel*', and lest the reader should miss the challenge to orthodoxy which it contains, we ask for one reference from the Old Testament or the New Testament to disprove it. If this is not forthcoming we must perforce acknowledge the great change indicated in Acts 28:28.

In Acts 13, at the commencement of his separate ministry, the apostle introduced the great doctrine of justification by faith, without works of law, with the words, 'Be it known unto you therefore' (Acts 13:38). At the commencement of his new and separate ministry (that of the mystery) he once again introduced the key thought with the self-same words, 'Be it known unto you therefore' (Acts 28:28). Moreover, in Acts 13 we have a warning, 'Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets' (Acts 13:40). In Acts 28:23-27 the judgment which was the subject of that warning is fulfilled.

On the ground that Paul had announced earlier that he was turning away from the Jews to the Gentiles, there are some who refuse to admit that Acts 28:28 marks a dispensational crisis. Before Acts 28:28 can be proved to be THE CRISIS, the passages which record this earlier turning to the Gentiles must therefore be reviewed. After Paul had spoken in the synagogue at Antioch, the Gentile proselytes desired that they might hear the message the following Sabbath, but this at once provoked the envy of the Jews, and they spoke against the testimony of Paul and Barnabas, who then boldly declared:

'It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles' (Acts 13:46).

But that this was merely a local action can be shown by continuing our perusal of the account until we come to the words, 'And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews' (Acts 14:1). Here, again, the Jews assaulted the apostles who, again, turned to the Gentiles, for in Lystra his hearers were idolators. Here also the nature of their action was as local in character as at Antioch. When the apostle returned to Antioch in Syria, he did not report the setting aside of the Jew and the introduction of a new dispensation for the Gentile, but 'rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles' (Acts 14:27). This is the inspired interpretation of Acts 13 and 14.

A perusal of Acts 15 will show clearly the relative ascendancy of the Jew over the Gentile in the church at that time and in Acts 16, while neither synagogue nor Jew is mentioned, the fact that Paul and his companion joined the women gathered together on the sabbath day for prayer is sufficient proof that those women were Jewesses. In Acts 17 'Paul, *as his manner was*' went into the synagogue. How could Luke say that, if Paul had turned away from the Jews to the Gentiles? Even at Athens, it is the Jews in the synagogue who are mentioned before the philosophers (Acts 17:17,18), and upon his arrival at Corinth, Paul went at once to the Jewish quarter and found a certain Jew, and once again we read: 'He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks' (Acts 18:4). But here, too, the Jews resented the teaching of the apostle, which called forth their condemnation in

the words, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentles' (Acts 18:6).

It may not have particular significance, or it may be typical, that the next verse tells us that he entered into a house which was 'hard by the synagogue', and that Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, and from 1 Corinthians 1:1 we gather that his successor, Sosthenes, also believed (18:17). But the objector may say that Paul's words in 18:6 are final, 'from henceforth'. Yet we have only to read on to verse 19 to find him once again in the synagogue, and reasoning with the Jews.

After his visit to Jerusalem we once more find the apostle speaking boldly in the synagogue, occupying the space of three months in this public ministry (Acts 19:8). Again his testimony was followed by opposition, and for two years he conducted his ministry among the disciples in the school of one, Tyrannus (verse 9), where both Jews and Greeks heard the word of the Lord Jesus. But Acts 20:3 shows us the opposition of the Jews persisting, and, in verse 22, the apostle's testimony as a free man draws to an end. His own summary of this period says nothing of any turning from the Jews to the Gentiles, but, on the contrary, his words are, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks' (verse 21).

It is then clear that no valid opposition can be discovered in the record of the Acts to the position we have reached, namely, that at Acts 28:28 a door was opened to the Gentiles *that had never been opened before*, and that there the dispensation of the mystery was given to the imprisoned apostle; there the high glories of heavenly places were, for the first time, revealed. Acts 28:28 is the dispensational landmark.

CHAPTER 8

Three spheres of Blessing, and the Principle of Right Division considered

By the statement 'Three spheres of blessing' we must be understood to indicate that the Scriptures teach that there are three distinct provinces within which the distinctive callings revealed in the Scriptures are naturally confined.

Our first step will be to enumerate these 'spheres of blessing' in scriptural terms, and then compare and contrast them, so that by trying the things that differ we may avoid confusion and keep each calling in its appointed place. Let us begin with our own calling as revealed in the epistle to the Ephesians:

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ' (Eph. 1:3).

At the moment we are not concerned with the *kind* of blessings here set forth, namely 'all spiritual', but with the 'province', 'range' or 'domain' in which these blessings naturally find their setting, and we have but to record:

(1) *The sphere of blessing found in Ephesians 1:3 is defined as 'in heavenly places'.*

Again, we are not yet concerned to know whether these 'heavenly places' are no higher than the firmament in which birds fly; whether they denote the starry heavens; or whether they refer to a position 'far above all', but that a distinct 'sphere' is indicated by the words 'in heavenly places'.

We now turn to another part of the New Testament, where we read of another sphere of blessing:

'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth' (Matt. 5:5).

Once more, we are not concerned with the character of those here referred to, nor with their inheritance, but exclusively with the 'sphere' of their inheritance, and we therefore record:

(2) *A sphere of blessing is found in Matthew 5:5, which is defined as 'earth'.*

Here, then, are two spheres of blessing concerning which there is no controversy. But, in addition to these two, we discover what appears to be an intermediate sphere of blessing, a sphere above 'the earth', yet not 'in heavenly places'. For this we turn to Galatians 3:14:

'That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ'.

The question which now arises is, Does this passage refer to a distinct sphere of blessing, or is this blessing of Abraham to be enjoyed in one or other of the two spheres already considered? A complete answer can only be given after careful examination, but for the sake of conciseness we note that in this calling 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28).

Such a unity as this is entirely unlike the constitution of a kingdom, which is what is in view in Matthew 5. Rather, it so closely resembles the later revelation of Ephesians that some have adopted the expression, 'All one in Christ Jesus', with the idea that it declares the unity of the spirit of Ephesians 4. Before proceeding to proofs, most, if not all, will agree that Galatians 3:14 does not refer to an inheritance on the 'earth'. Yet on the other hand, when we read on to Galatians 3:29, we are also prevented from asserting that it belongs to the sphere of the mystery made known in Ephesians, for we find it stated: 'and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise'.

So entirely contrary is it to the scriptural teaching concerning the mystery, to make it a fulfilment of any promise to Abraham, that we must hesitate to place this company, which is Abraham's seed, 'in heavenly places'. We therefore search further in this Epistle, and in the fourth chapter find the following statement:

'But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all ... Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise' (Gal. 4:26,28).

'Jerusalem which is above,' is neither on 'the earth' nor 'in heavenly places far above all principality', and as this city forms the theme of Hebrews 11:9-16 and 12:18-23, where the 'heavenly country' is contrasted with the 'earth', we are obliged to record a third sphere of blessing:

- (3) *A third sphere of blessing, differing from that of Ephesians 1:3 and that of Matthew 5:5, is recorded in the Epistles to the Galatians and the Hebrews, and is associated with the heavenly Jerusalem, a sphere distinct, on the one hand, from the earth and its kingdom and, on the other, from the heavenly places which are the sphere of the church of the mystery.*

The order in which these three spheres are placed is immaterial to our immediate purpose. We have taken the highest first, the lowest second, and the intermediate last. Later, when we have established the distinctive character of each sphere, we shall attempt to relate them to each other, and the question of their order will then be discussed. Meanwhile, we submit that we have established that there are 'Three spheres of blessing' revealed in the Scriptures.

Our further studies must be directed to a fuller explanation of the distinctions that Scripture makes between these three spheres, and an examination of what is intended by such expressions as 'in heavenly places' and 'far above all', but no doubt can be entertained as to the existence in Scripture of these separate callings, and their corresponding spheres.

The three spheres of blessing

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) 'The earth' | (Matt. 5:5). <i>The Kingdom.</i> |
| (2) 'Jerusalem which is above' | (Gal. 3 and 4). <i>The Bride.</i> |
| (3) 'In heavenly places' | (Eph. 1:3). <i>The Body.</i> |

We will begin with the lowest, namely the earth, pass on to the second sphere, the heavenly Jerusalem, and conclude with the sphere of the church of the one body, 'Far above all'.

The First sphere, the Earth.- In the near context of Matthew 5:5, which speaks of the meek who shall inherit the earth, we learn of a kingdom which is yet to be set up on the earth:

'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done *in earth*, as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10).

In that prophecy of His second coming, The Revelation, one of the titles of the Lord is:

'The Prince of the Kings of *the earth*' (Rev. 1:5).

The extent of the kingdom is defined in Psalms 72:8 and 2:8 :

‘He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of *the earth*’.

‘Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of *the earth* for Thy possession’.

Yet again, the prophet Zechariah says:

‘He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of *the earth*’ (Zech. 9:10).

Moreover, in The Revelation we read:

‘The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of *this world* are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever’ (Rev. 11:15).

The kingdom on the earth will have an administrative centre:

‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for *out of Zion* shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD *from Jerusalem*’ (Isa. 2:2,3).

This is supplemented by Zechariah, the prophet:

‘And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of *the earth* unto *Jerusalem* to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be *no rain*’ (Zech. 14:16,17).

Inasmuch as the bulk of Scripture is taken up with the history and prophecy of this earthly people and kingdom, no attempt on our part, particularly considering the limitation of our space, can possibly do more than indicate the fact of its existence. There is, however, unanimity among most believers regarding the first, or lowest, sphere of blessing, and while we shall have to return to the subject when certain of its features will be compared with those of other spheres, we now pass on to the consideration of the next sphere, having left nothing unproved or resting upon mere assumption. Therefore we feel that we can conclusively make this statement:

The earth will be a sphere of blessing in which there shall be set up a kingdom, over which the Lord shall be King, with Jerusalem the chosen centre, and Israel a Kingdom of Priests. This we will call the First Sphere.

The Second Sphere, The Heavenly Jerusalem.- We come now to the second sphere; that which is associated with the *heavenly* Jerusalem. While it must be recorded as a fact of importance, that no hint of such a sphere is to be found in the whole of the Old Testament, yet, when we study the New Testament, we learn that its existence was intimately known by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For this information we turn to the epistle to the Hebrews, where, by the example of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in chapter 11, the apostle illustrates the statement that ‘Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’.

Coming to the example of the patriarchs, the apostle pauses to add:

‘By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles (*tents*) with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: *for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*’ (Heb. 11:9,10),

and after speaking of Sarah’s faith, the apostle reverts to the subject of this city, saying:

‘These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. *But now they desire a better country,*

that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city' (Heb. 11:13-16).

After a further and fuller expansion of the theme of Hebrews 11:1, the apostle returns to the subject of the heavenly city in chapter 12, but approaches it from another angle, upon the significance of which, however, we reserve comment until we have established the fact of the revelation of all three spheres. Meantime we pass on to verse 22:

'But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven' (Heb. 12:22,23).

Other references to this sphere of blessing are found in the Revelation:

'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name' (Rev. 3:12).

The significance of the fact that this is associated with the overcomer, together with the similar significance of the context of Hebrews 12, will be considered when we come to deal with the subject of the individual spheres themselves: at present we confine ourselves to establishing the fact that the Scriptures do speak of such spheres:

'And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (Rev. 21:2).

'He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God' (Rev. 21:10).

The testimony of Hebrews 11:16, alone, is sufficient proof that this heavenly city is a separate sphere of blessing from that of the earth, and while much must yet be studied if we would appreciate its true significance, we can, without hesitation, affirm that there is full, scriptural testimony to the existence of this second sphere of blessing.

Granting that these two spheres of blessing are actual, scriptural facts, the question that now awaits an answer is: Do they exhaust the teaching of Scripture on the subject? In other words, is there a third sphere of blessing, distinct from both the earth and the heavenly city? We believe there is, and proceed at once to state the evidence for this belief.

The Third Sphere, 'Far above all'. - The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by Paul as 'The prisoner of Jesus Christ' (Eph. 3:1). As recorded in Acts 28, Israel, as a nation, had been set aside by the quoting of Isaiah 6:9,10, and, with that setting aside, had, of necessity, gone the hope and the blessings of which they were the appointed channel. While Israel remained as a nation before God, the Gentile believer could be 'blessed with faithful Abraham' (Gal 3:9); could be associated with Israel under the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6); could entertain the hope of Israel (Rom. 15:8,12,13), and partake 'of the root and fatness of the olive tree' (Rom. 11:17); but, with Israel set aside, there arose the necessity of a further revelation from God - unless all was to be plunged into confusion and end in despair. This revelation is claimed by Paul in the epistle to the Ephesians.

'If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward (Gentiles): how that *by revelation* He made known unto me the mystery' (Eph. 3:2,3).

This mystery has particular reference to the new position assigned to the Gentiles:

'That the *Gentiles* should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister' (Eph. 3:6,7).

Here we have a 'dispensation' which was particularly concerned with the Gentiles; a 'revelation' that makes known that which was a 'mystery', and that, hitherto, this mystery had been 'hid in God' (Eph 3:9). And not only was it 'hid in God', but it was hid 'from the ages and from the generations, though now made manifest to His saints' (Col 1:26 author's translation).

In order that no statement shall be accepted as true that is not proved from the Scriptures, we pause to justify the remark that 'the dispensation of the mystery was revealed after the setting aside of Israel'. Usually it is enough to produce the missing link in a chain, but, if the play of words may be pardoned, we have a complete chain of evidence, and that none other than the one which fettered the apostle Paul in his Roman prison.

Until the all-day conference with the leaders of the Jews which concluded with their dismissal at the quoting of Isaiah 6, there was the human possibility of the national repentance of Israel, and the realization of that nation's hope. Consequently, the apostle rightly says in Acts 28:20: '*For the hope of Israel* I am bound with this chain'. When next he speaks of his bonds as his chain, the dispensation of the mystery had been entrusted to him, and in Ephesians 3,4, and 6 and Colossians 4, his chain is most intimately associated with the mystery.

While there is much more to be said concerning the unique character of this new revelation, enough has been adduced to prove beyond dispute that this dispensation of the mystery, revealed after the setting aside of Israel, must be different from both the earthly sphere, and the new Jerusalem, and as we have seen that these latter terms represent two very distinct spheres, we are compelled to subscribe to the doctrine of three spheres of blessing, thus:

- (1) FIRST SPHERE . . . *The Earth*.- Subject of Old Testament and part of New Testament. Israel dominant.
- (2) SECOND SPHERE . . . *New Jerusalem*.- Subject only of part of the New Testament. Both Jew and Gentile as seed of Abraham.
- (3) THIRD SPHERE . . . *The Mystery*.- Subject of the 'prison' epistles only. Gentiles especially.

We do not see how it is possible to deny that there is reference, in the Scriptures, to these three spheres - unless we confuse either the New Jerusalem with the earthly sphere, or the mystery with the New Jerusalem. As this is impossible, if we are to keep both our faith and our reason, we believe that every unprejudiced reader must be convinced that there is recorded in the Scriptures three spheres of blessing.

Now Scripture provides a means of testing whether its callings can be rightly subdivided into three, and this is found in the word 'adoption', and the way it is employed by the apostle in his epistles.

In order to enable the reader to appreciate the line of argument we intend to follow, let us use an illustration. Suppose we were to point out an elderly man and say, 'There goes a man who has three firstborn sons'; at first our companion might exclaim 'Impossible!', yet, on second thoughts, he might reply, 'Yes, I see it is quite possible for the man to have three firstborn sons, for he may have married three times, but he can only have them provided that each is the firstborn of one of the three distinct families'. We hope to prove that God has three distinct companies of the redeemed who have the dignity and privilege of being His firstborn, and that each of these three firstborn sons is given an exalted position in one of the three spheres, the earth, the New Jerusalem, and the superheavens.

As we have said, the word which supports this argument is translated in the Authorized Version 'adoption', and our first duty will be to arrive at the scriptural meaning of the term. Except we do thus perceive the *meaning* of a scriptural term, not only will it be valueless but possibly harmful, that is, if we invest it with our own conception of its meaning. Sometimes the etymology of a word establishes its meaning; often it needs an understanding of its usage in Scripture, and, sometimes, a knowledge of the way in which the word was used in secular writings contemporary with the Scripture concerned. This last is very true of the word 'adoption'. The Greek word is *huiiothesia*, and means, literally, 'to place a son'. No modern writer has greater firsthand knowledge of this term than Sir William Ramsay, and in order to acquaint ourselves with its usage in Galatia, we will first of all quote from Sir William's *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*:

'The idea that they who follow the principle of faith are sons of Abraham, whatever family they belong to by nature, would certainly be understood by the Galatians as referring to the legal process called "adoption", *huiiothesia*.

Adoption was a kind of embryo will: the adopted son became the owner of the property, and the property could pass to a person that was naturally outside the family only through his being adopted. The adoption was a sort of Will-making; and this ancient form of Will was irrevocable and public. The terms "Son" and "Heir" are interchangeable.

An illustration from the ordinary fact of society, as it existed in the Galatian cities, is here stated: "I speak after the manner of men". The Will (*diatheke*) of a human being is irrevocable when once duly executed. But if Paul is speaking about a Will, how can he say, after it is once made, it is irrevocable?

Such irrevocability was a characteristic feature of Greek law, according to which an heir outside the family must be adopted into the family; and the adoption was the Will-making. The testator, after adopting his heir, could not subsequently take away from him his share of the inheritance or impose new conditions on his succession. The Roman-Syrian Law Book will illustrate this passage of the Epistle. It actually lays down the principle that a man can never put away an adopted son, and that he cannot put away a real son without good ground. It is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth; yet it is so. The expression in Galatians 3, verse 15, "When it hath been confirmed" must also be observed. Every Will had to be passed through the Record Office of the city. It was not regarded in the Greek law as a purely private document. It must be deposited in the Record Office'.

Here it will be seen that one may be 'adopted', or made the heir, without being at the same time a true child, but in the case of the Scriptural usage of adoption there is no idea that the believer is only an 'adopted' child, for the testimony of the Word is explicit on the point that adoption is something added.

'The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God' (Rom. 8:16).

The argument of Galatians 4:1-7 proceeds upon the supposition that there is a difference between 'a child' (Gal. 4:1,2) and one who has received the 'adoption' (Gal. 4:5). 'If a son, then an heir of God through Christ' (Gal. 4:7). We can see that 'adoption' is related to 'inheritance' by examining Ephesians 1. There we find the word 'predestinate' used twice, once in verse 5, where it is 'unto adoption', and again in verse 11, where it refers to 'inheritance'.

Let us now observe the way in which this important word is used in connection with three different companies of the redeemed.

In Romans 9 the apostle enumerates the distinctive and exclusive privileges of Israel 'according to the flesh'; 'Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption' (Rom. 9:4). The structure of the passage relates 'adoption' with 'promises', and the whole is important enough to claim our attention before passing on. Accordingly we again set out the structure:

Romans 9:3-5

- A According to the flesh, *Brethren*.
- B Who are Israelites.
 - C To whom pertaineth the ADOPTION.
 - D And the glory.
 - E And the covenants.
 - E And the giving of the law.
 - D And the service of God.
 - C And the PROMISES.
 - B Whose are the fathers.
 - A As concerning the flesh, *Christ came*.

No one who has any understanding at all can interpret 'Israel' and 'according to the flesh' as of the Church, or of that company where there is 'neither Jew nor Greek' (Gal. 3:28).

When Israel were about to be brought out of Egypt, God called the nation His 'firstborn', saying, 'Israel is My son, even my firstborn' (Exod. 4:22).

Associated with this position is a citizenship, its city being Jerusalem, the destined centre of the earth when the Kingdom is set up. This we have already seen on page 119, and need now do no more than quote the references, viz., Isaiah 2:2,3; Zechariah 14:16,17.

One fact, however, which we did not emphasize, must now be given due prominence. It is obvious that if one nation is to be granted pre-eminence, the others must be subservient. Indeed, in each sphere, one of the accompaniments of the privilege of adoption is the grant of pre-eminence over other companies in the same sphere. As regards the earthly sphere we get this pronouncement:

‘The nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted’ (Isa. 60:12).

‘And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God’ (Isa. 61:5,6).

The following features are inseparable from adoption, as used in the Scriptures.

- (1) The appointing of the heir.
- (2) The dignity of the firstborn.
- (3) The close association of a citizenship.
- (4) A special pre-eminence over other companies in the same sphere.

Let us put this to the test by turning to the Scriptures that speak of the second sphere. We have already given proof that Galatians 3:28,29, cannot refer to ‘Israel according to the flesh’, but must have in view the company associated with the New Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26). Nevertheless, although Romans 9 categorically declares that to Israel according to the flesh pertaineth ‘the adoption’, it is also said of this new company - where there is neither Jew nor Greek, and where the ‘flesh’ is excluded - ‘That we might receive the adoption of sons’ (Gal. 4:5).

We turn therefore to Hebrews 12, which speaks of the second sphere of blessing, for light upon this question of adoption. The first part of the chapter treats of that which is common to all children (verses 5-14), and then passes on to that which relates particularly to the firstborn son; in other words, the adoption.

Intent on proving every statement before proceeding, we acknowledge that the actual word ‘adoption’ does not occur in Hebrews 12. But Galatians 3 and 4 have made it clear that those who claim ‘Jerusalem that is above’ have the ‘adoption’, therefore, until Euclid’s maxim can be disproved that ‘Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another’, the logical association of Galatians and Hebrews 12 must be acknowledged.

Having made the admission that *huiiothesia* (adoption) is absent from Hebrews 12, we must, with equal justice and regard for truth, assert that the ideas of birthright and the firstborn are insisted upon, and that the argument based on the allegorical use of Sinai and Sion (Jerusalem) of Galatians 4:22-31 is introduced in much the same way in Hebrews 12. It will help if we observe the structure of the passage.

Hebrews 12:15-25

- | | | |
|----------|----------|--|
| A 15. | a | Looking diligently. |
| | b | Lest any man fall back. |
| B 16,17. | | The birthright bartered (<i>prototokia</i>). |
| C 18-21. | | Ye are not come. Six ‘ands’. SINAI. |
| C 22,23. | | But ye are come. Seven ‘ands’. SION. |
| B 23,24. | | The birthright enjoyed (<i>prototokos</i>). |
| A 25. | a | See. |
| | b | Lest ye refuse. |

Esau despised his birthright (*prototokia*). In the heavenly Jerusalem that birthright is to be enjoyed (firstborn, *prototokos*).

Here, therefore, we have the adoption in the second sphere.

We now come to the prerogative of adoption, namely, some form of ascendancy or pre-eminence. We shall not expect to find *nations* subservient to those who have this exalted position, at least, not until the New Jerusalem descends from heaven to earth. In this second sphere we have an innumerable company of *angels* (Heb. 12:22), and

angels are ‘ministering spirits’ who minister to the ‘heirs’ of salvation. When speaking of the ascended Christ, both Peter and Paul state that ‘principalities and powers’ are subject to Him, but Peter adds ‘angels’, a word entirely out of place in the ministry connected with the third sphere of Ephesians 1:19-21 and Colossians 1 and 2. In Hebrews 3:1 those who have position and privilege in the heavenly city are called ‘partakers of the *heavenly* calling’. This is the second sphere.

But this principle of adoption is introduced once more, for a third time, and for light upon this we must turn to Ephesians 1:5, where we read, ‘Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself’. In case any should think that there is a difference between ‘adoption’, ‘adoption of children’ and ‘adoption of sons’ we would draw attention to the fact that the difference exists only in the English version: in every case, the *Greek* word is the same.

If we found it impossible to confuse the company who have the adoption in Romans 9 with those who have it in Galatians 3 and 4, and Hebrews 3 and 12, much more shall we find it impossible to confuse the high and holy calling that goes back before the foundation of the world, and leads up to where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and which was a mystery hid in God until revealed to the apostle Paul as the prisoner of Jesus Christ for us Gentiles, with either of the other two spheres. This third sphere of blessing belongs to the dispensation of the Mystery. It has no connection with the promises made to the fathers or with any covenant, old or new.

We have been reminded that there is a covenant in the Scriptures that was made before Abraham, namely, the covenant made by God with Noah, but whoever thinks that this covenant was made with an elect people needs to read the Scriptures for himself, where he will find that it belongs to all mankind, and so is excluded from the argument. They who snatch at such irrelevant items must be destitute of sound reasons for their claims, and will mislead only those possessed of but the smallest knowledge of the Scriptures, or who virtually wish to be thus persuaded.

This high calling of the mystery has its citizenship:

‘Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God’ (Eph. 2:19)

Neither the citizenship of Israel, nor the citizenship of the New Jerusalem is in view here, but a sphere where Christ sits at the right hand of God. This church is not specifically called ‘The Firstborn’, but it forms the very body of Christ, and He is revealed in Colossians 1 as both Firstborn of all creation and Firstborn of the dead. If, by virtue of the adoption, Israel has pre-eminence over the *nations*, and if those whose sphere is the New Jerusalem have pre-eminence over *angels* (‘know ye not that we’ - the saints of the second sphere, the church during the Acts period - ‘shall judge angels?’ 1 Cor. 6:3), then, by the analogy of faith, we shall expect that those who have the adoption and citizenship in the highest sphere of all will have a corresponding pre-eminence. This is indeed the case, for, in His capacity as Head of the Church which is His body (Eph. 1:23), the ascended Christ is said to be set

‘... at His Own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named’ (Eph. 1:20,21),

and the Church is said to be ‘seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus’ (Eph. 2:6). In this exalted sphere, neither nation nor angel is mentioned, but only the spiritual rulers of the glory. This is adoption indeed!

There is only one way in which this argument can be overthrown, and that is showing that the Scriptures do not use the word ‘adoption’ with intention and discrimination - or that Romans 9, Hebrews 12, and Ephesians 1 do not refer to three distinct companies of believers.

Could this be done, however, it would not only overthrow *our* argument, it would make all similar argument a waste of time, for, to achieve its end, it would overthrow the doctrine of inspiration itself.

For the sake of clearness let us recapitulate:

There are three spheres of blessing set out in the Scriptures, each being clearly marked off from the other, yet repeating, within its own domain, similar features, such as citizenship, pre-eminence, and adoption. By more lines of teaching than one, these three spheres have been proved to be:

- (1) THE EARTH.- Israel. *Kingdom*.
- (2) THE NEW JERUSALEM.- Abraham's seed. *Heavenly calling*.
- (3) THE MYSTERY.- The Church which is His body. *In heavenly places*.

We have a peculiar and personal interest in the third sphere of blessing, revealed in the prison ministry of the apostle Paul, and must therefore give special attention to its distinctive characteristics.

It is not the unique character of Paul's ministry as the prisoner of Christ Jesus that we are to examine, but the unique *sphere* of blessing to which that ministry points.

The distinctive place, 'where', and the time, 'when', the Church of the Mystery shall enjoy its blessings, and was chosen in Christ by the Father, are given in Ephesians 1:3,4 :

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings *in heavenly places* in Christ' (Eph. 1:3).

As the phrase *en tois epouraniois* is exclusive to Ephesians, and as every other occurrence of *epouranios* has reference to the *character* of the 'heavenly' thing concerned, but not the *place where* it will be enjoyed, a mere list of the occurrences of *epouranios* would have only the appearance of argument, while lacking validity.

'In heavenly places' is the translation of the Greek words *en tois epouraniois*. The word *epouranios* occurs six times in the epistle to the Hebrews, but there it speaks of a heavenly calling, a heavenly gift, heavenly realities, and a heavenly country or city. There can be no comparison between a 'heavenly gift', enjoyed on earth, and 'the heavenly places' of Ephesians 1:3: the one refers to character, the other to sphere. The occurrences of *epouranios* in Ephesians must be segregated, for they form a group by themselves. We reiterate, the phrase *en tois epouraniois* occurs only in Ephesians, and nowhere else in the New Testament.

The second occurrence of the phrase is found in Ephesians 1:20,21, where we learn that this sphere is 'where Christ sitteth' at the right hand of God. Whether we continue the use of the phrase 'far above all heavens', or whether we exchange it for a more limited rendering, nothing is more certain than that there can be no conceivably higher position in the whole universe than the right hand of God. Such is the height of this exaltation of Christ that the passage continues:

'Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come' (Eph. 1:21).

Quite apart from the words 'far above', there can be no denial of the fact that there is here indicated a sphere without compare in the whole range of Scripture.

To conclude the first part of our examination, we turn to Ephesians 2:6, where we have a categorical statement that there, where Christ sits, is the sphere of blessing for every member of the Church which is His body.

In these three passages (Eph. 1:3,20,21 and 2:6) we have indubitable evidence of a sphere of blessing that differs entirely from anything hitherto revealed.

We must now establish the relation of this sphere, 'far above all heavens' and 'far above all principality and power', to the 'heavens' of Genesis 1:1 as distinct from 'the firmament' which, according to Genesis 1:6, was made on the second day.

First we must consider the two words that are both translated 'heavenly'. In the original of the New Testament, these are (*ouranios* and *epouranios*). The added word *epi* signifies *upon* or *over*, and refers to the heavens that are above the firmament and beyond the limitations of the present creation (compare Gen. 1. with Psa. 148:4; 1 Kings 8:27; Heb. 7:26).

On many occasions the Scriptures speak of God ‘stretching out the heavens’: Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 40:22; 42:5; 45:12; 51:13; Jeremiah 10:12; 51:15; Zechariah 12:1. When we grasp the significance of the firmament, and the purpose that is carried out within its expanse, we may then see the perfect fitness of the statements of Ephesians, where, in the words ‘the heavenly places’ (*epouranios*, a word which literally means ‘upon the heavens’), we are taken beyond the firmament. Ephesians always speaks of the blessings of the one body as being in the *epouranios*, the sphere above the heavens. Peter’s ministry, however, does not extend beyond the firmament; its inheritance is reserved ‘in the heavens’, not in the sphere above the heavens.

The new heavens and the new earth.- To this period belong the blessings of the mystery. The only calling or revelation that refers to a realm above the present temporary heaven, and which touches that which can be spoken of as eternal, is that dispensation of the grace of God which has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the super-heavenlies, far above all. This shows the unique character of the church of the one body. Both by time and place it is connected with that which begins before the present heavens were made, and it goes on when the present heavens shall be no more.

The church of the mystery is the only link during this age between the time before sin entered, and the time when sin shall be no more. All other purposes are ‘under the heavens’. This one alone places those who are blessed under its terms ‘above the heavens’. If these things are so, it would be very surprising if the doctrine and practice of this peculiar people were not different from all others. Of no other company of believers is it said that their sphere of blessing is ‘IN the super-heavenlies’.

This special sphere of blessing which belongs alone to the church of the one body is mentioned five times in the epistle to the Ephesians, and a study of these occurrences will yield valuable information. First of all, we translate the word ‘super-heavenlies’ in recognition of the presence of the particle *epi*, with which the word begins. It is not simply *ouranios* which is the usual word, but *ep-ouranios*. Secondly, the information contained in the five references demands some such translation. Passing therefore to the second reference, we find, in 1:20,21, that this sphere of blessing is:

- (a) At the Father’s right hand.
- (b) Far above all principality and power.

That this unimaginable height is the destined sphere of the church of the one body Ephesians 2:6 declares. There the believer is associated with the risen Christ, ‘made to sit together in the super-heavenlies in Christ Jesus’. Christ the Head and the Church, His body, are blessed together THERE.

The next two references, 3:10 and 6:12, show the superheavenlies as the abode of principalities, powers, and rulers. Angels are not mentioned; they are heaven’s messengers. The church of the one body is blessed even above heaven’s nobility. In its super-heavenly sphere, dominions and thrones are beneath it. While *epouranios* is used outside Ephesians, no other company of believers is blessed IN these exalted regions as their sphere. The blessings of the church of the one body are not only ‘heavenly’ in character, but ‘up in heaven’.

For the sake of clarity we summarize our findings.

There are blessings that are to be enjoyed on earth. In this sphere the central position is occupied by Israel, and the calling is expressed in the terms of a Kingdom. While Gentile nations are blessed in this same sphere, they will be subservient, for to Israel, and Israel alone, is the Kingdom, and to Israel on the earth pertains that adoption. Israel is the firstborn among the nations.

Other blessings are to be enjoyed in the heavenly country and the heavenly city. There are the blessings of Abraham, and the associated calling of ‘The Bride’ (a calling distinct from that of the restoration of Israel, ‘The Wife’). Gentiles, as well as Israel, go to form this company, called ‘The Bride’, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, but both alike are reckoned as Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. Associated with this company of the redeemed are, not nations, but angels who occupy a subordinate position. To this company, in this sphere, pertains this particular adoption; they are the ‘church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven’.

Three times it is written that the heavenly city descends from God out of heaven to the earth (Rev. 3:12; 21:2,10). The 1,000 year rule of the earthly Jerusalem ends in rebellion (Rev. 20:7-9); earthly rule under the most favourable conditions collapses. Since the beginning man has been enamoured of 'Self-government'. At the time of the end the Gentiles will have experienced every form of government, from the most absolute autocracy of Nebuchadnezzar, to the extremest form of democracy. Nebuchadnezzar himself was ultimately brought to realize that 'the heavens do rule' (Dan. 4:26), and our Saviour, as King of Israel, visualized a kingdom on the earth where the will of God shall be done 'as it is in heaven'. The heavenly Jerusalem and its descent to the earth is God's solution for the government of the world. With its descent, the rule of the earth by heaven begins, and the purpose of the ages nears its goal. In the beginning there were but two spheres - 'The heavens and the earth'; at the end, when the heavenly city descends to earth, there will once more be two spheres. In the beginning God was 'All'; at the end God will be 'All in all', and in the realization of this 'consummation so devoutly to be wished' the heavenly Jerusalem plays an important part.

There are, however, blessings that are neither those of Israel as a Kingdom, nor the heavenly calling of the Bride, and these are enjoyed in heavenly places, where Christ sits, far above all principality and power, and far above all heavens. They who enjoy them constitute neither a Kingdom nor the Bride, but are the Body of Christ and a perfect Man. While individual believing Israelites are not precluded, this calling is mainly Gentile, for it operates during the period of Israel's blindness. It has also a citizenship, but it is one which has nothing to do with the New Jerusalem: not nations nor angels are subservient to it, but principalities and powers. To this company pertains the adoption associated with this sphere, and Christ, as the Firstborn from the dead, is its Head, each believer of the company forming a member of the church which is His body.

As this highest of all callings is the subject of a secret that goes back before the overthrow of the world (Gen. 1:2), so it goes up beyond the 'firmament that was called heaven', which spans the ages, and finds its sphere in the super-heavens; those heavens of Genesis 1:1, which remain unmoved by the ebb and flow of time, sin, death, or dispensational change.

We must now turn our attention to that great principle of interpretation:

Right Division.- This great principle is expressed by Paul in the second epistle to Timothy thus:

'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth' (2 Tim. 2:15).

This verse necessarily has a context, and the outstanding items of that context are brought to light by the structure, and the structure reveals three attitudes toward 'The Truth'; two that are commendable, and one that is evil.

2 Timothy 2:14-26.

- | | | | |
|---|----------|--|--------------|
| A | a | 14. Strive not about words. | THE WORKMAN, |
| | b | 15. Study to show thyself approved. | AND THE |
| | c | 15. That he may be unashamed. | TRUTH. |
| B | | 16. Exhortation. Shun. Increase ungodliness. | |
| C | d | 17,18. Teachers and doctrine. A canker. | ERROR |
| | e | 19. God's foundation. Sure. | AND |
| | e | 19. God's foundation. Seal. | TRUTH. |
| | d | 20,21. Teachers and doctrine. Great House. | |
| B | | 22,23. Exhortation. Flee. Gender strifes. | |
| A | a | 24. Must not strive. | THE SERVANT, |
| | b | 25. Repentance. | AND THE |
| | c | 26. That he may be delivered. | TRUTH. |

In the first case it will be seen that by *rightly* dividing the Word of truth, the workman is unashamed; in the second, by *wrongly* dividing the Word of truth, and by teaching that a future event is one that has passed ('the resurrection is past already'), faith is overthrown.

What are we to understand by the words ‘rightly divide’? The Greek word used by the apostle is *orthotomeo*, which had an established meaning well-known to all readers of the Greek Old Testament. It occurs in Proverbs 3:

‘In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct (*rightly divide*) thy paths’ (Prov. 3:6. LXX).

Right division distinguishes between the two ministries of Paul. While he was a free man he was an ‘able minister of the New Covenant’, and the Gentile who believed under this ministry was joined to Israel in its Salvation and its Hope, but was not otherwise on a perfect equality, being likened to a wild olive grafted into the true stock. The prison ministry, however, dealt with a *new* man, *created* of the two (Jew and Gentile), in which there now obtains perfect equality among all the members.

Right division distinguishes between the ministry of Paul and the gospel which he preached, and the ministry of the apostles of the circumcision (Peter, James and John) and the gospel they were commissioned to preach (Gal. 2:1-10).

Right division distinguishes between the calling of the earthly people Israel and their restoration after divorcement, and the Bride, the company of overcomers so named, whose sphere is the New Jerusalem.

Right division distinguishes between ‘The Bride’ and ‘The perfect Man’ (Eph. 4:13), between ‘The Bride’ and ‘The Body’ (Eph. 1:22,23).

Right division distinguishes between ‘The hope of Israel’ (which is broadly speaking the ‘Second coming’, ‘The Parousia’ and ‘The Apocalypse’, and which is associated with ‘The voice of the Archangel’, ‘the Mount of Olives’ and prophetic times), and ‘That blessed hope’ toward which the church of the one body presses, which is ‘to be manifested with Him in glory’ (Col. 3:1-4).

This principle is endorsed by Christ Himself, when, in the exercise of His ministry, He read Isaiah 61 to the end of the first clause of verse 2, shut the book, and declared that ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears’ (Luke 4:16-21). Had He continued to read the sentence He could not have said, ‘This day is this Scripture fulfilled’ for ‘the day of vengeance’ is yet future.

This principle is really the application of the dispensational test to all Scripture, as illustrated by the interposition of Dispensation between Doctrine and Practice set out on page 68.

In order to bring to a conclusion this attempt to frame a form of sound words, it is necessary that some exhibition be given of the nature and scope of Paul’s second great ministry.

CHAPTER 9

The Prison Epistles and their distinctive revelation

It is a matter beyond dispute that Acts 20 sees the close of one ministry, and the dawn of another. On this evidence both of Acts 20 and 28, it is also indisputable that the new ministry was a prison ministry; that it was the subject of a special revelation from the Lord, and that it had the Gentiles specially in view: ‘The Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee’. From this imprisoned minister went forth the message:

‘The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles’ (Acts 28:28).

To find ‘the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation’ (Eph. 1:13), we must study those epistles that were written by Paul after Acts 28, which bear the mark of prison upon them. What are these prison epistles? Can we discover them, or must we trust to the teaching of men?

There are five epistles written from prison after the setting aside of Israel, and we have but to read these epistles to discover the fact for ourselves.

EPHESIANS IS A PRISON EPISTLE:

‘For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles’ (3:1).

‘I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you’ (4:1).

‘The mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds’ (6:19,20).

PHILIPPIANS IS A PRISON EPISTLE:

- 'Both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel' (1:7).
- 'My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace' (1:13).
- 'Many of the brethren ... waxing confident by my bonds' (1:14).
- 'Supposing to add affliction to my bonds' (1:16).
- 'All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of C -sar's household' (4:22).

COLOSSIANS IS A PRISON EPISTLE:

- 'The mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds' (4:3).
- 'Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you' (4:10).
- 'Remember my bonds' (4:18).

2 TIMOTHY IS A PRISON EPISTLE:

- 'Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner' (1:8).
- 'Wherein I suffer trouble ... even unto bonds' (2:9).
- 'At my first answer no man stood with me' (4:16).

PHILEMON IS A PRISON EPISTLE:

- 'Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ' (1).
- 'Now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ' (9).
- 'Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds' (10).
- 'He might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel' (13).
- 'There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus' (23).

Here, then, are five epistles, each one unmistakably written from prison. The epistle to Philemon is of a somewhat private nature. Philemon was host to the church at Colosse, and the epistle shews something of the home life at the time in which it was written. It is a lovely letter, full of Christian grace, but for the purpose of this attempt to frame a form of sound words, seeing that we are seeking the special truth committed to Paul as the Lord's prisoner, it cannot be included in our exposition. We shall find all that we require in the other four epistles, and far more than we can deal with in the space at our disposal.

These four epistles have been placed by different editors in every possible order. We feel ourselves that they do not contain sufficient evidence to decide the point, but - and this is far more important to us - they have a most definite interrelation that it is of the utmost importance to observe, for a true realization of the scope of each epistle is essential to the correct interpretation of its parts.

Before setting out this intimate inter-relationship, it will be necessary to discuss the presence of a principle that is found throughout the pages of revealed truth. Truth is balanced, not arbitrarily, but morally and essentially. The truth revealed in Scripture concerning the Lord's people deals with their *standing* and with their *state*. Not standing only, for all privilege without some responsibility is fatal to growth. Not state only, for the burden of responsibility, coupled with the knowledge of so much failure, would depress and render salvation fruitless. These two sides of the Christian life - standing and state - are expressed in a variety of ways. These are some of them:

Standing	State
Salvation.	Service.
Free gift.	Reward or prize.
Not of works.	Unto good works.
If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.	If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.

Two passages from the epistles may here be studied with profit. The first is from Corinthians:

‘According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire’ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Standing and state are here represented in the figure of foundation and building. The foundation is not in question, ‘standing’ is unaltered: ‘He shall be saved’, even though he be saved ‘so as by fire’. ‘He shall be saved’, even though ‘he shall suffer loss’. There is the greatest difference between ‘He shall suffer loss’ and ‘He shall be lost’. The test, the reward, and the loss relate only to the subsequent ‘work’. Notice the repeated reference to his work - ‘Every man’s *work* shall be made manifest’; ‘Every man’s *work*, of what sort it is’; ‘If any man’s *work* abide’; ‘If any man’s *work* shall be burned up’.

Before we turn to the second reference, we ought perhaps to anticipate an objection. Someone will say that the whole atmosphere of the revelation of the mystery is of such grace as to rule out all idea of either reward or loss. Of course this is perfectly true if we confine ourselves to the revelation of doctrine, the revelation of our perfect standing in Christ. But even Ephesians, with its wondrous acceptance in the Beloved, warns its readers against some terrible sins, and in the practical section the apostle writes:

‘Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free’ (Eph. 6:8).

Colossians is even more to the point:

‘And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons’ (Col. 3:23-25).

To those who bow before the authority of Scripture, these two citations are the end of all argument, and as we are not, at the moment, writing to persuade others, we can now pass on to our second illustrative passage in 2 Timothy:

‘If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself’ (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Here are two statements which, if not divided aright, appear to be contradictory - ‘He will deny us’; ‘He cannot deny Himself’. But the first deals with *reigning*, and the second with *living*. Now living is one thing; receiving a throne, a dominion, or a crown is another. Both attainments have the necessary qualifications prefixed.

How may we hope to ‘live with Him’? This is settled once and for ever by the fact that all who believe in Him are reckoned by God to have ‘died with Him’. This cannot be altered. It can be neither won nor lost. It stands entirely in grace. It is God’s free gift, and even though one thus saved should become unfaithful, nevertheless, the Lord will abide faithful to His work and promise; He cannot deny Himself. Such shall be saved, just as surely as the man of 1 Corinthians 3.

How may we hope to ‘reign with Him’? This does not depend upon being reckoned to have died with Christ. It is connected with a voluntary fellowship with His sufferings. If we endure, we shall reign; if we do not endure, then we shall not reign. ‘No cross, no crown’. If, in the realm of suffering and reigning, we draw back, we cannot lose our life, for that is not in question, but we can forfeit the reward; in that sphere, and that only, ‘If we deny Him, He also will deny us’.

The reader may well ask why we have digressed from our main theme and entered into this discussion. The reason is a desire to show that these four great epistles of the mystery give balanced truth. We have not four written about privilege; neither have we four written about responsibility. We have a pair that lays the foundation, and a

unexamined many details necessary to the presentation of a complete 'Form of Sound Words', founded on the blessed testimony of the apostle Paul. We can but hope that what has been selected and presented here, will stimulate the reader to gain a fuller and personal apprehension of those things which have not only been written FOR us, as is 'all Scripture', but TO us and ABOUT us, facts which constitute the peculiar sacredness of the Prison Epistles to the believer of today, who lives during Israel's long *lo-ammi* period of rejection.

When faced with the new ministry that awaited him, the apostle commended the Ephesian believers to the Lord, and when he put into writing the new calling, he opened it with a doxology. With his own words on those memorable occasions, so fraught with meaning, let us bring our present study to a close.

'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified' (Acts 20:32).

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved' (Eph. 1:3-6).