

The Berea Baptist Banner

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:4

The Regathering and Conversion of the Jews

T. P. Simmons
(1898 - 1969)

To the Bible student, the Jews are the most interesting people in all history. No other nation holds such a unique place. No other nation ever enjoyed such privileges and blessings as did ancient Israel. "...unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2) and unto them pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service



of God, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4). Through them God gave the Savior to the world. And through them has flowed every spiritual blessing we now enjoy. To Abraham, God said: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). It is even through their fall that salvation has come to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11-12).
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Parables of the Fig Tree

By Matthew Stepp
of Wayne, West Virginia

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not



pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:28-33).

As the Lord speaks this parable that is obviously couched in the passages of end times, the

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Wonderful Warnings from Almighty God

By Timothy J. Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Let us first consider a few portions of the Word of God: "For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (Obad. 1:15). "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me" (Jonah 1:1-2). Acts 17:30-31 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men



every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). [Please also reference Nah. 1:1-15 and Rev. 1:1-8; 22:10-21.]

We have taken notice of only a few passages of scripture, from both the Old and New Testaments, words which were spoken by the Lord's prophets

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The Red Heifer Ordinance Part 3

By Nathaniel Hille
of Plant City, Florida

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face: And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood



directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times: And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh,

and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. And

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to strengthen His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellowship around His Word.
6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

The Fig Tree

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rapture and the Lord's return, we can surely glean some powerful information about the generation that will witness those great events! The importance of this parable has just recently been highlighted by the reinstatement of the fig tree in the middle east! For us to truly understand the implications of this parable let us start in the Old Testament to see what Hebrew symbolism and dialogue the Lord was using when He related this parable to His Jewish listeners.

What is the Fig Tree Symbolically?

"Consider now from this day and upward, ...even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you" (Hag. 2:18-19).

I use this verse as a text because it lists the four most prominent plants in Hebrew symbology. Sometimes a fig tree is just a fig tree in Scripture, but many times these particular trees are used for something a bit deeper. As we study their appearances in Scripture, we will notice that the fig tree is often a picture of a prospering nation of Israel. I will add "secular" to that, because we know that **"..they are not all Israel, which are of Israel"** (Rom. 9:6). When the true physical seed of Abraham is referenced, it is the olive tree that is used. Again, note that the Apostle Paul as he teaches the Gentiles in the church at Rome the importance of God's original elect nation, it is not the fig tree that is used. **"And if some of the branches be broken off,**

and thou, being a wild olive tree (Gentile churches), wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree (nation of Israel)" (Rom. 11:17).

The vine is typically paired with the fig tree to denote prosperity and blessings, or crosswise, in the damaging of, to denote the curse of God upon His people. We will see it pop up later. The pomegranate tree is the most intriguing of the lot. It is reserved primarily for bridal and temple (House of God) connotations, so it pictures the Baptist Bride of Jesus Christ most of the time, but in the Old Testament time, it would reflect the closeness of the faithful Tribe of Levi, that labors within the very temple of God. A good example of these trees being used to teach Israel (as Christ is doing in our parable!) is in Jotham's parable against Abimelech and the men of Shechem. **"The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us"** (Judg. 9:8-14). Rejected first by the royal olive tree, then next by the national fig

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Brief Truths

By Randy Johnson of
Texarkana, Texas

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13).



Liars are deceivers

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7).

Satan is very powerful, he is very persuasive, he comes in the light of Christianity but is a deceiver. He is so sly he can even fool some Christians. As Christians, we need to keep our faith charged up because no one is beyond being deceived; Satan is just that powerful.

If you fail to charge your spiritual energy every day, if you fail to pray and read your Bible every day, if you fail to attend church every week, you are a target for Satan's deception. We must always remember how God saved us, by His grace and through faith, we had nothing to do with our salvation because it is a gift from God. We must always remember that God said there is only one gospel, Paul describes that gospel in I Corinthians 15:1-4 **"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and**

that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

It is without question the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, nothing more and nothing less. Paul said this is the very gospel that saved him, and it is the very gospel that saves every sinner that is ever saved. It is Satan's goal through his liars and deceivers to change the gospel for another one that includes works. Paul clearly states the message of the Gospel, because it was this message that the Judaizers were changing. **"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"** (Gal. 1:3-5). Therefore, Paul made it a very important point that if you are saved through this gospel, then never listen to the Judaizers, who were changing the gospel to include works.

Today, in our time they are called Arminians, these people get their name from Jacobus Arminius who was Protestant and who taught based on the theological ideas of the Dutch Reformed theologians that works are part of the gospel. His goal was to combat the Sovereignty of God with works for salvation. Basically, he was an arm of Satan's liars and deceivers to combat the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are still teachers of his lies in the

world today, they are everyone who teaches works for salvation.

Anyone who teaches that a person must do anything for salvation is a deceiver and is preaching Satan's lies. **"Not of works..."** (Eph. 2:9), **"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"** (Rom. 3:20), **"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"** (II Tim. 1:9). I could go on and on with scriptures that call them liars, but my space is limited.

God said just how these deceivers would change the truth into Satan's lie, **"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever"** (Rom. 1:24-25). Folks, we must understand that Satan is very sly, cunning, and deceiving, God said he comes as an angel of light but he is a liar and a murderer. **"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works"** (II Cor. 11:14-15). Their messages are always passive, they teach no doctrine, they always tell people how God wants them to prosper in life. But, behind their phony smile is an evil heart spreading lies, and their reward from Satan is piles of money hidden in their houses. Loads and loads of money, because Satan blesses his own

servants, but their destiny is the eternal fires of hell.

There is an old true saying, "if you play with fire you are going to get burned." If you play with the devil, if you play in the world's system and thinking, you are going to fall into Satan's deceptive trap. **"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or, else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"** (Matt. 6:24). Always remember the grace that delivered you and the gospel message that saved you. Because, works takes glory away from Jesus Christ and gives that glory to man's works, God warned us of this, beware!

(Randy Johnson is pastor of the Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Texarkana, Texas.)



The Fig Tree

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tree and vine, leaving the bramble to picture this upstart "king" of Israel.

It is How the O. T. Prophets Pictured the Cursings and Blessings of God upon Israel

Okay, now with this background seen in prophecy and parable in Hebrew history, let us see a few practical examples of how set these pictures were in Jewish eyes, when Jesus began to speak. **"He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white. ...The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men"** (Joel 1:7-12). **"I will surely consume them, saith the LORD:**

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Wonderful Warnings

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and apostles, His holy, called, sent ones whom He personally chose and commissioned to carry His message to the inhabitants of the earth among the various nations and peoples and languages of the world. In each of these passages, we find a dreadful warning of swift and impending judgment from Almighty God upon the wicked. We find a call to repent. We find that a cry is to be made, an alarm is to be sounded because men, women, boys, and girls are on the precipice of eternal destruction and loss, everlasting shame and ruin, their names being blotted out forever from the memory of God, no recognition of them except as His eternal and incorrigible enemies, for whom He will maintain nothing but everlasting wrath and disgust, carried out in unending, unbearable torment forever and forever.

I find it to be an amazing thing that people can become enraged, stirred up, provoked to zeal and great swelling words, over just about every subject under heaven except that which God says is the most pressing, most urgent, most demanding of immediate and intense consideration, most universal, and most important for every single living person. People today have no problem getting worked up and even shouting and yelling about a virus; a vaccine; a president; a political candidate; a conspiracy theory; whether or not bars and taverns and saloons get to be open and selling their intoxicating poisons; the weather; taxes; their neighbors' business; things going on all over the world that they have no real comprehension of and no real interest in other than to be a nosy busy-body in matters that

they have no ability to influence or improve whatsoever, all while they neglect and ignore the things that are their personal business and responsibility, and over which they have both direct and indirect influence, day after day. And let me say that I do not care if you are for a vaccine or against it, if you are for the Second Amendment or against it, your business as a child of God and a member of one of God's churches is not to tell people your opinion about any of those things, but rather to be concerned with being sure they both hear and see the gospel of Jesus Christ from you and from your living. Why can you spend your time and your energy that you claim are so precious on all of these things that are of almost no consequence whatsoever in reality, and in the meantime almost everyone that you know personally, and whom you meet on the street, and whom you have anything to do with from day to day, are lost and on the road to hell?

I think that for the majority of people calling themselves Christians, the truths of God's Word are nearly inconsequential in their daily lives; and that is the worst possible condition for anyone who names the name of Christ. I read in my Bible that the blessed man meditates in the words of God day and night. I read in my Bible that no one can even live except by every word of God. And when I read my Bible, I find that this world is perishing, this life is fleeting, the days of this life are consumed with nothing more than vanity and vexation of spirit, and the only hope there is for any single person or for any group of people is in the Lord Jesus Christ whose blood was shed on the cruel, cursed cross of Calvary in order that wicked,

vile, sin-loving, sin-enjoying, sin-preferring slaves of the devil might be washed completely clean and transformed from devilish sinners into saints of God and set free from the devil's bondage, from which they could never have loosed themselves, no, not for an instant.

Now, does your Bible tell you those same things? I know it does. Why can you not care about it? Why will you not stop caring about everything else and humble yourself before God until you do care about it?

Beloved, this world is never going to change. It is rushing toward a head-on collision with the wrath of Almighty God. This very season of the year, the stench of all the hypocritical, idolatrous abominations that people are calling worship and affixing God's name and the Savior's name to is ascending up to the nostrils of God from every quarter of the globe. Why, here we have been in the midst of a global pandemic for two years, and all that people are concerned about is whether or not they can have their drunken parties, have their festivals, and carry on in the pursuit of carnal pleasures and appetites unhindered and unrestrained more than they were before. And the vileness that has come out of the mouths of so many Baptists is appalling and disgusting. I do not recall a single call to fall on our faces in humility and repentance before God. I recall a lot of people being very angry that the usual vain and spiritually unprofitable habits and behaviors in which they want to engage had to be interrupted. I recall a lot of people being filled with either arrogance or fear. All of a sudden, every person on the planet was an expert on what every other person on the planet

ought to be doing or not doing. It was like someone poured a lot of fuel on the already burning fire of devil-driven division and fleshly willfulness that is apparently raging in the hearts of the vast majority of people, even church members.

What are we, whom God has saved and called out of darkness into light? We are pilgrims and strangers, sojourning in this world and in this earthly life. This is not our home. We are citizens of an heavenly country. We claim that we are looking for a city, which hath foundations, and whose builder and maker is God; a city that John saw in prophetic vision, a glorious and eternal city, coming down from God out of heaven, in appearance like unto a bride that is adorned for her husband, in beauty, honor, grace, and love.

What else are we, according to God's Word? We are ambassadors for Christ, chosen and called and given an official message from the Lord of all the earth to convey in urgent pleadings and gentle warnings, in tones of mercy and love, in seriousness and earnestness, to every person on the earth. Were not all of these of whom and from whose recorded words we have read this morning, given a God-sent, God-honoring, God-approved message to the people of their day and time? Was it not a message of repentance and turning to God, because the day of His wrath against all ungodliness, immorality, corruption, wickedness, violence, dishonesty, filthiness, covetousness, and idolatry, is swiftly approaching upon all people? Does not this blessed Book of God end with that very message, an official announcement of the coming day of the judgment of God upon the unbelieving and unrepentant,

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The Fig Tree

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there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them" (Jer. 8:13). When the prophets wanted to show Israel (as a Nation) being judged or cursed, the fig tree and the grapevine are the parable elements used. Then also on the positive side, too... **"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig tree at her first time..."** (Hos. 9:10). **"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. ...for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion..."** (Joel 2:21-23).

In fact, the following became a saying among the people of Israel: **"And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon"** (I Kings 4:25). Used so much that even the invading Assyrians were aware of this alliteration and Rabshakeh offered prosperity via his fig tree nation parabolic speech: **"Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern"** (II Kings 18:31). Prosperity or cursing-bountiful blessings or condemnation. The Bible ties the nation of Israel to the fig tree allegories time after time, and so with this foundation of Old Testament "fig tree" literary usage, let us now go to the New Testament to see how the Lord uses it to teach us deeper

meanings in His Word.

New Testament Parables and References

"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. ...And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away" (Mark 11:12-14; 20-21). Coming fresh off what the fig tree represents, it is a terrible curse that the Lord inflicts upon this disobedient tree that produced no fruit for the Master of the orchard! Echoes of **"He came unto his own, and his own received him not"** (John 1:11)! National Israel's refusal to give fruit to her Creator could be pronounced by the Lord in no clearer fashion, could it? Rejection! John 19:14-15 **"And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."** Even as prophesied in Isaiah 53:3 **"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."**

The Lord sovereignly knew

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The Regathering

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10:11).

But no nation ever failed so significantly to appreciate and appropriate its blessings and privileges. Today, that people that once enjoyed the peculiar favor of God is a nation without a home and a nation in unbelief. They failed to find that which they sought after, because they sought it not by faith. The site of the once magnificent temple of Solomon is now occupied by the Mosque of Omar, and just outside its walls the Jews gather every Friday afternoon and bewail their sad plight. This presents one of the most pathetic pictures in all history. But the blindness of the Jews is neither total nor permanent. **"...the blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"** (Rom. 11:25). That it is only a blindness in part, that is, of only a part of the nation, is shown by the many Jews, comparatively speaking, who today, like Paul of old, are coming to Christ as those born out of due time. An eminent Jewish believer points out that one out of every one hundred and fifty six Jews is a believer. He also points out that some of these believers are the most illustrious ones among the Jews. This blindness is not permanent because it is only until the fulness of the Gentiles come in. **"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew"** (Rom. 11:2). **"...the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"** (Rom. 11:29). The Jews had national gifts and a national calling. God has not repented of these. The gifts are suspended for a while, and the calling is being held in abeyance temporarily, but neither has been revoked. Of old God said to the

Jews, **"I have loved thee with an everlasting love"** (Jer. 31:3). They are still beloved of God (See Rom. 11:28).

The time is yet coming when God will visit the Jews as a nation with salvation, **"And so all Israel (the nation that is living at the time) shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"** (Rom. 11:26). The splendor of the past history of the Jews will pass into insignificance in comparison with the future glory that shall be revealed in them. It is said of Jerusalem: **"Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations"** (Isa. 60:15).

Preparatory to God's visiting of Israel with salvation thy nation is to be regathered to Palestine in unbelief. Early in the tribulation period, we believe the 144,000 of Revelation 7 will be saved. Seemingly the remainder of the nation then on the earth will remain in unbelief. Believing Jews on the earth at the time of the rapture of the saints will have been removed in the rapture. We have only to investigate a little to find out that the Jews are regathering to Palestine even now. Missionary Jacob Gartenhaus, a Jewish believer and a missionary of the Home Mission Board of Southern Baptists, declares that the number of Jews that have already returned to Palestine is one-third greater than the number that returned with Zerubbabel. He also points out that in the past five years the Jewish population of Palestine has increased one hundred percent, and that this increase would have been larger were it not for immigration restrictions: This is

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The Regathering

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the beginning of the fulfillment of prophecy.

There are quite a number of prophecies in the Old Testament relative to the future return of the Jews to Palestine. Some seek to deny the evident teaching of such prophecies by making them apply to the former partial return under Zerubbabel, or by spiritualizing them and making them apply to the elect, or to so-called spiritual Israel. We give three of these prophecies which forbid both of these applications:

"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall all the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand a second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (Isa. 11:10-12).

Note that this prophecy says that God will set His hand the second time to recover the remnant of His people; that He will assemble both the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah; and that they will be brought from the islands of the sea and the four corners of the earth. All of these facts forbid the application of this prophecy to the return under Zerubbabel. And the fact that both Israel and Judah are mentioned shows that this

prophecy cannot be spiritualized.

"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without a teraphim; Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:4-5).

Note that this prophecy applies to the latter days. This means New Testament times and forbids the application of this prophecy to the former return. Note also that the description of Israel clearly delineates national Israel. This forbids a spiritualization of this prophecy.

"And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (Amos 9:14-15).

Note that this prophecy says that Israel is to be planted again in their land. This forbids a spiritualization of this prophecy. This is forbidden likewise by the description of their activities in the land. And note that when they are thus planted, they are not to be **"pulled up out of their land"** any more. This forbids the application of this prophecy to the former return.

We will therefore rest our case on these three prophecies and will now turn to the conversion of Israel as a nation. This is to come after the Battle of Armageddon. It seems that in connection with the

Battle of Armageddon many of the Jews will be scattered again. These will be brought again as Isaiah 66:19, 20 tells us. Isaiah 11:10-12 doubtless refers to the same thing. However, this latter prophecy serves the purpose we have put it in another place, because whatever **"the second time"** may mean, it certainly cannot refer to the former regathering.

The following prophecies tell of the conversion of the Jews as a nation:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zech. 12:9-11).

"And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness" (Isa. 1:25-27).

"And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the

blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:3, 4).

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

"Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul" (Jer. 32:37-41).

"And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned: and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure

♦ (Continued on page 11)

What Matters Most

By T. Matthew Stepp of
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"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:
and he delighteth in his way." (Psalm 37:23).



"And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do" (Ezra 10:10-12).

Without looking at the Hebrew, it may appear in the English Bible that this chapter deals with the disturbing aspects of divorce, separation and abandonment. However, when we look at the words in the original, the chapter takes on an entirely different perspective. We have mentioned before that the Hebrew word "yatsa" is what is translated "put away" twice in the chapter. However, this is misleading and would better be translated "brought out," as it is four other times in Ezra, alone.

The second Hebrew word used in this chapter that has been linked with "put away" is the word "badal" which is translated as "separate(d)" three times in this chapter (vs. 8,11,16). It means to "divide" or "distinguish between" to "make a difference between." That "badal" means this in verse 11, is clarified by the surrounding usages in verses 8 and 16, where it is referring "not" to the strange wives and children, but the men in the marriage that would be

"separated" (a threat in vs. 8, a reality in vs.16).

So, if the context is not speaking of divorce and the surrounding sticky issues that follow this terrible word around, including alimony, broken homes, and bereft children; what is the event portrayed in Ezra 10?

The actual event described is a trespass offering for uncleanness, as you see the ram being offered in Ezra 10:18-19, **"And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. And they gave their hands that they would put away ('yatsa, or bring out') their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass."**

This sacrifice is referred to several times in the chapter as an act of obedience and atonement for the sin of the people in these strange marriages. That the malefactors are submissive and want to be obedient to the commandment of God and the counsel of Ezra is referenced to in verse three, **"Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away ('yatsa, or again, "bring out") all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law" (Ezra 10:3).**

Was Ezra going beyond the

law in his counsel? Not at all! He went straight to a **"Thus saith the LORD"** in Leviticus 5, 6 & 7 in Moses' detailing of the trespass offerings! Let us read the pertinent references in Leviticus 5:1-6, **"And if a soul sin... Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, whatsoever uncleanness it be that a man shall be defiled withal, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty. ...And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing: And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin."** The sacrifice for the people would have been a lamb or kid (or turtledoves or pigeons if too poor), but the ram was necessary for the final lists of priests as per Leviticus 5:15.

This ceremonial cleansing of the "unclean families" took three months (vs.16-17) to complete! From the first day of the 10th month to the 1st day of the first month... A lot more involved than a bill of divorcement would have been. Burnt sacrifices and a full cleansing of these defiled families were absolutely necessary...and that is what they did! An atonement for their sins of disobedience.

But "not" a chapter of God forcing the dissolution of fathers, mothers and children... Remember Mal. 2:16, **"For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away."** Selah! Think about it!

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The Red Heifer

(Continued from page 1) ♦

he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever" (Num. 19:1-10).

We continue to look at this wonderful subject of the ordinance of the Red Heifer. It is without question that this is a picture of Jesus Christ. He is our Red Heifer. It is Jesus who is given to us, His people, as a **"...water of separation: it is a purification for sin"** (Num. 19:9).

Appointed by the LORD

One of the key things I would like us to note is that the ordinance of the red heifer was appointed by God. **"This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded..." (Num. 19:2).** The ordinance of the red heifer was carefully crafted, purposed, planned, and orchestrated by the Lord. He had saved His people and now He would cleanse them. This was no after-thought with the Lord. The Lord has always desired that His people would be pure of dead works. **"For thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6); "Who gave himself** ♦ (Continued on page 8)

The Red Heifer

(Continued from page 7) ♦

for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). The Lord appointed this offering for the cleansing of His people. The Lord did it! The Lord will not accept just anything. Not for salvation, not for the cleansing of His people. Any alterations from this would be considered strange fire before the Lord and would be rejected!

Red HEIFER

In our last sermon we noted that it was to be a "red" heifer. How that the word "red" is what the name "Adam" means. In this sermon we observe that it was to be a "heifer". Now a heifer is a female cow. Typically, a heifer is a young female cow that has not had a calf. Now some folks struggle and choke on the fact that the Lord Jesus is represented or typified by a female cow. But the Holy Spirit was pleased to set Him and His work forth this way. In fact Jesus Himself used a hen to picture what He would have done to Jerusalem saying, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"** (Luke 13:34). So we ought not to struggle with this. Remember, the totality of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ could not be shown with just one or two sacrifices. But all of these put together, were but a foreshadow of what the work of the Lord Jesus would do.

Now our Lord was pictured here in a female cow. Why? The Lord sets forth the character of our Lord Jesus Christ;

because it is from the female that life comes forth! **Genesis 3:20— "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living."** The name "Eve" means "living" or "life-giver". And beloved it is Christ Jesus who is the giver of life. He gives temporal life and He gives eternal, spiritual life. **"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"** (I Pet. 1:23).

Without Spot, Wherein Is No Blemish

Truly, we see none but Jesus. You and I are wholly spotted and filled with blemishes. That is why we need to be saved. And then even as a child of God we need cleansed. **"Without spot"** (Num. 19:2) referred to the color. It was to be perfect in redness. This red heifer was to be closely examined to make sure that it was pure red. If it had one black or white hair it was rejected as being able to be the red heifer. You see, it all depended upon the sight. No one was examined more closely than the Lord Jesus Christ. When His examination was completed we have the words of God **"...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"** (Matt. 3:17); and the words of man **"...I find in him no fault at all"** (John 18:38).

"Wherein is no blemish" (Num. 19:2). This was common to all sacrifices. **"No blemish"** is described in Leviticus 22:21-25, **"And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace-offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill-offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by**

fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD. Either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill-offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted. Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land. Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption is in them: they shall not be accepted for you." The red heifer was to be perfect, thus it could represent the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ had no stain of sin upon Him. Not that which was passed down to Him from Adam, for He was not conceived by man, but by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin; nor did He have His own sin. There was no internal sin in the Lord Jesus. We have been talking about our own internal sin with respect to the ordinance of the red heifer. Christ had no internal sin. Observe, **"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin"** (I John 3:5). Scripture declares that He **"...knew no sin"** (II Cor. 5:21). He never had a sinful thought. The thoughts and intents of His heart were not only evil continually as ours are.

We see Jesus pictured both **"...without spot, wherein is no blemish..."** (Num. 19:2). **"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"** (I Pet. 1:18,19).

Upon Which Never Came Yoke

This particular requirement was not listed upon any other sacrifice. Recall the scapegoat from the Great Day of Atonement. That scapegoat had to be yoked, for it was led away into the wilderness by the fit man never to be seen or heard from again (Lev. 16:21,22). But with the red heifer it was to never to have a yoke upon it. A yoke is an instrument of bondage. It is a mark of slavery. In the Scriptures, bondage, slavery is what sin is referred to. We see in type that Israel was in bondage in Egypt (Exod. 1:14; 2:23; 13:3). Egypt is a type of sin. God delivered them from that bondage. The Lord is still delivering from sin! Here we see Jesus of whom was never in any bondage of sin.

Now this red heifer not having a yoke also pictures the voluntary, free will of Jesus Christ in coming to deliver His people from their sins. He would be free from the traditions of men, but most willingly engaged. Not forced by compulsion, but willingly in the business of our deliverance. The Lord Jesus voluntarily submitted Himself to the work of our redemption **"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"** (Phil. 2:5-8). What were the words of our Lord when they came to arrest Him, and Simon Peter sought to fight with the sword? **"...Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given**

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The Fig Tree

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when He approached the fig tree that He would find no fruit. The text even affirms this, **“for the time of figs was not yet”**, and that is a vitally important revelation in this parable of the fig tree. The time of Israel was not yet. As Israel rejected Christ, so Christ rejected Israel, also! Hear the plaintive cry of the Creator and Saviour in Hosea 4:6, **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”**

The diaspora (scattering of the Nation of Israel across this globe by Roman General Titus' destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70) is thus predicted and predestined, as God works out His will and Israel's rejection is punished to the full. **“Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children”** (Matt. 27:25).

This peril of Israel, the fig tree nation, is brought out deeper in the next New Testament parable in Luke 13:6-9 **“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”**

Certainly as the Master of the vineyard and the fig tree has come

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Heavenly Hymns

“...Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-20). [This hymn was printed with permission from the Olmstead Baptist Church. You may access their free-domain hymnal by going to www.olmsteadbaptistchurch.org/hymnal.pdf]

ABIDE WITH ME

1

1 A - bide with me: fast falls the e - ven - tide,
 2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day;
 3 I need thy pres - ence ev - ery pass - ing hour;
 4 I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;
 5 Hold thou thy cross be - fore my clos - ing eyes;

The dark - ness deep - ens; Lord, with me a - bide!
 earth's joys grow dim; its glo - ries pass a - way;
 what but thy grace can foil the tempt - er's power?
 ills have no weight, and tears no bit - ter - ness.
 shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.

When oth - er help - ers fail and com - forts flee,
 change and de - cay in all a - round I see.
 Who, like thy - self, my guide and stay can be?
 Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy vic - to - ry?
 Heaven's morn - ing breaks, and earth's vain shad - ows flee;

help of the help - less, O a - bide with me.
 O thou who chang - est not, a - bide with me.
 Through cloud and sun - shine, Lord, a - bide with me.
 I tri - umph still, if thou a - bide with me.
 in life, in death, O Lord, a - bide with me.

The Fig Tree

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seeking fruit as in the previous parable, it is again disappointing to not find fruit. But while the three years numerically is the universal number of testing and trying, it is also poignantly the number of years the gentle master has labored within the borders of this beloved nation. To still not be received and worshipped by the nation as a whole, is worthy of the curse witnessed by Peter and the Apostles in Mark 11, but this parable shows the electing grace of this particular fig tree. Although unmerited, the servant pleads for a period of grace, wherein he shall stir up the soil and fertilize it, hoping the fruits might follow the hard work of the dresser. Perhaps this might even describe the work of the Lord's New Testament churches in working the soil, to bring forth 30, 60 or 100-fold...? But if not, it certainly will be cut down. I wonder in America today if the Gentiles might not have reached that point of one more year being almost up and judgment just around the corner.

With the thought of the Lord's churches in mind, I do have another interesting passage concerning the Fig Tree. **"Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee"** (John 1:48). Certainly, as I mentioned at the outset, sometimes a fig tree is just a fig tree, but the Scriptures rarely would fall into that category, with the richness of its fertile soil for the avid student of the holy Writ. For Christ to have Philip call Nathanael from out of the shade of the fig tree into the service of the Rabbi, cannot be a coincidence.

While the fig tree may be in a period of rejection toward the Messiah, Nathanael must leave behind his caustic unbelief, if he is to join with those that are part of the noble olive tree, or even in this case of an Apostle, perhaps even the shade of the pomegranate tree is what Nathanael ultimately is to find in His baptism and bridal status as a member of the Lord's church.

The Endtime Parable of the Fig Tree

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:32-36). Powerful, powerful text! Having delivered the clearest outline of the end times in the first 31 verses of this enlightening chapter and followed by the clearest parabolic analogies for the rapture and the end of the world, this parable sits right in the middle of the Lord's revelation of signs of the end times. And there is our fig tree! The nation of Israel is key and paramount in the Lord's plans for this world. He is not finished with those He has eternally chosen, as the Apostle Paul reiterates throughout his writings: **"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people (Israel) which he foreknew. ...Even so then at this present time also there**

is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:1-2, 5).

The coming of the Lord (as it was in the days of Noah, etc) will come unannounced to the world, but not to God's people! Noah may not have known which day the rain was coming, but he knew it was coming! So, too, is this generation! We may not know the day of the rapture, but we know it is coming! **"..when ye shall see all these things..."** the parable of the fig tree says. Summer is nigh, the fig leaves say, as they sprout and grow green! Christ is coming, the new nation of sprouting Jews is saying! The Lord is revealing that He will not return until the fig tree is reestablished in the promised land! Not the olive tree yet, no, what we have is a 2021AD prosperous secular nation ruled by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, where **"... Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree."** Particularly, after American President Donald Trump has been used of the Lord to strengthen that sense of "safety," this fig tree nation, while still rejecting the Messiah Jesus Christ as a whole, is in place to be used of the Lord to complete His plans of judgment and grace in Daniel's soon-coming seventieth week and then the time of Jacob's trouble.

The Lord's parable says that **"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"**! That causes the fingers to fly on the calculators! Which generation? The one that sees Israel established as a fig tree nation in 1948? How long is a generation? Typically, a new generation is about every 40 years, but one generation of mankind can cover 75-80 years. 40 years from 1948 would be 1988, so that did not reveal the Lord's coming.

80 years would be 2028, though! How exciting that would be! To know that the Lord is coming before 2028! Why, He could come today! Wow! Hallelujah!

Now, I am not trying to name a date and dogmatically tie God's return to a particular date, or even a block of time. We cannot do that! **"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only"** (Matt. 24:36). But the signs do serve a purpose to let us know the time is near and to make us excited, and if that is all that this article does, is increase your zeal for the Lord and His work for us, then it is indeed worth the ink and time of study and writing. But what if this is an old paper you are reading and it is 2030 and the Lord has not come yet? Well, I was crunching some more data and numbers and I discovered that it was not until the six-day war in 1967 that Eastern Jerusalem was liberated from the Arabs and TransJordan and their Egyptian and Syrian allies. What if that is when the Lord starts counting His generation from? After all, Jerusalem is the city of Zion! That would put our 40/80 numbers up to 2007 and 2047 as "this generation." And further, the city was not freed from military rule until the Peace Accords of 1982 with Egypt and the Arab representatives, with projected generational numbers of 2021 (Wow!) and 2061, if stretched to 80. But wait, I am not finished yet...what if it is when the fig tree nation was officially recognized with her capital of Jerusalem? That did not occur until that same Trump presidency started moving their embassies to Jerusalem in 2017! Even Vladimir Putin as Russian President has now acknowledged

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The Regathering

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unto it" (Jer. 33:7, 9).

"For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36 :24-27).

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Wonderful Warnings

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and a final calling and summons to come to Him by way of the fountain opened for sin, and to forsake the broken cisterns of this world that can hold no water, and freely come and drink of the ever-flowing spring of living waters that never shall run dry?

What a gracious and merciful, longsuffering God, abundant in mercy and truth, who so summons sinners to the fountain that He opened, the well that He dug, the spring that He setup and created and maintains, that those who, deserving of His wrath and inconsiderate of His claims and rights as the sovereign God and Creator and Possessor of all things, may be pardoned of all their guilt, reconciled fully to God, and fitted for an everlasting abode as His own dear sons and daughters! How can we ever get over His

manifested love! How can we not delight in sharing this wonderful and grand news! How can we ignore the needs of those who are perishing around us, knowing not only that we once were likewise perishing, but that there is so nearby a saving remedy! There is balm in Gilead! There is a Great Physician who now is near, the sympathizing Jesus, Jehovah who healeth thee!

"Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off" (Nah. 1:15). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). The door is now open, today is the day of salvation, the time is at hand, and the kingdom of God is even now pressing its claims upon all people everywhere. The longsuffering of God is waiting, even as it did in the days of Noah prior to the flood. Be saved today! Enter in through the door, which is none other than Jesus Christ, and be saved, and go in and out, and find pasture.

This church has a glorious message to proclaim, a saving, life-giving, God-honoring, Christ-exalting message. People may call the truth a condemning message. The gospel is not a condemning message. Every person outside of Jesus Christ is condemned already. The gospel is a saving, delivering, healing, rescuing, justifying message, the only God-authorized and God-given message, whereby already condemned and perishing sinners can be cleared of their sin-guiltiness and receive everlasting life. **"By faith Noah, being**

warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7). "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (II Pet. 2:5). The gospel and gospel-becoming living will condemn, will denounce, unrighteousness. If you live as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ, and you share the gospel with others as it is in truth, then you are not going to be walking the same path as them. Is it not amazing that people claim that everyone should be able to make up their own mind; but if you have a mind for the things of God and Christ, and they do not, then they say you are walking the wrong path. You once thought that way, before you had the mind of Christ, the mind that is no longer concerned with pleasing the world and the flesh, but with pleasing God and doing His will because of the great love wherewith He loved you, and gave His only begotten Son to save you. Yes, a gospel-approving life, a gospel-witnessing life, a gospel-complimenting life, will condemn the world, because the world as it is stands in opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. **"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I John 5:19).** You do not have to condemn people, they are already condemned in unbelief; and a soberminded, godly, righteous way of life and testimony will condemn the world because you have renounced the world and any desire to have a part with it in order to follow Christ.

We have become so concerned

in this day and age with pleasing people. Everything has to be attractive and appealing to the carnal mind. The carnal mind is dead. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, and indeed cannot be – it never will be, it never will want to be, it never can be. No matter how much religion, how nice, how "Christian-like," how "churchy" someone becomes, it will be only a hypocritical show, if they are not renewed in the spirit of their mind by the Spirit of God, and they are not born of the Spirit and therefore walking after the Spirit. Let me show you what the Bible says about carnal things and what our concern ought to be regarding them.

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again,

♦ (Continued on page 22)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

What is the distinction between the Holy spirit's work in the following areas: (1) The regeneration of a spiritually dead person? (2) The born-again" process? (3) The baptism of the Holy Spirit? (4) Do all regenerated and born again people actually possess the Spirit of God or does He live and work through the church and its members alone?

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The work of the Holy Spirit in irresistible regeneration (the I in TULIP) is to transform a totally depraved sinner into a persevering saint of God! **"And you hath he (God, in the Person of the Holy Ghost) quickened (made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins"** (Eph. 2:1). The Lord explains the work of the Holy Spirit to Nicodemus thusly in John 3:6-8, **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the (Holy) Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the (Holy) Spirit."** Selah! Think about it!

This saving act by the Holy Spirit is illustrated in the Bible as the new birth, which is being born again in a creative regenerating act that restores every one of God's unconditionally elected sheep into everlasting life. The family of God is a spiritually born again creation! **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is**

a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Hallelujah! Praise God! **"It is the (Holy) spirit that quickeneth (makes alive/borns again!)..."** (John 6:63). **"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. ...ye have received the Spirit of adoption..."** (Rom. 8:11, 15). Therefore we go forth preaching the Gospel that the Holy Spirit might give birth, save, and indwell those that He enables with spiritual life to hear the blessed Gospel...! **"...he that soweth to the (Holy) Spirit shall of the (Holy) Spirit reap life everlasting"** (Gal. 6:8).

Upon this new birth, God takes up His residence within us, with continual communion that is promised "every" child of God! **"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you..."** (Rom. 8:8-9). Christ promises in John 14:16-17, **"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be**

in you." This influx of the Holy Ghost into the new believer is also frequently called a "sealing" by the Apostle Paul. **"Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts"** (II Cor. 1:22). **"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption"** (Eph. 4:30).

God the Holy Spirit will make His Holy Presence known in the life of all believers! There will be fruit in His human gardens and glory to His Holy Name! **"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us"** (I John 3:24). **"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"** (I Cor. 3:16). **"That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us"** (II Tim. 1:14).

Holy Spirit fire baptism is entirely a different work from regeneration and His work of consecrated indwelling. The fire baptism of the Holy Spirit was a prophesied recognition and empowering of the Church of Jesus Christ. Both John the Baptist and Jesus prophesied of this sacred event of immersing an assembly of believers with fire, and it was fulfilled initially upon the Day of Pentecost. **"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire"** (Matt. 3:11). **"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence"** (Acts 1:5). Only on three more occasions after the Acts two account of the Day of Pentecost do we find

Holy Spirit fire baptism in the New Testament, and its purpose is always and again to validate the Lord's Baptist Churches' polity and membership! In Acts 8:15-17 it validated Samaritan membership; in Acts 10:44-48/11:16-18 it validated Gentile membership. And lastly in Acts 19:1-7 it validated "only" Baptist Baptism for church membership. There is no validation (by Holy Spirit fire baptism) for the water baptism administered by the man Apollos, even if he has valid water baptism (from John). Water baptism is a now a church ordinance that "only" Baptist churches can administer. It is an extraordinary fact to consider that the Holy Spirit took this recorded event to validate (with the "last" recorded instance of Holy Spirit fire baptism) the Anabaptism that the Apostle Paul administered with the authority of his sending church, the First Baptist Church of Antioch! (Acts 14:26-27) Selah! Think about it!

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"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

"For as the Father raiseth up

◊ (Continued on page 14)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

We believe that Jesus started His church and that Baptists have a lineage back to the first church. But, how did Baptists come down through the Dark Ages to us? Any books that Baptists wrote were naturally destroyed by the Catholics, so we have no history of Baptists in the Dark Ages.

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We believe, first of all, that Jesus started His kind of church and that Landmark Baptist churches are those kind of churches, and they trace their authority and lineage back to that one original church, just as surely as we trace our parentage back to the one original Adam of Genesis 1... Whether we can or cannot trace it by paper trails or genealogy books, does not deny either the spiritual parentage, or the physical. Jesus personally guaranteed the chain-link authority of church succession in the classic passages of Matthew 16:18, **"...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"**, and Matthew 28:18-20, **"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."** The Apostle Paul echoes this chain-link assurance in Ephesians 3:21, **"Unto him be glory in the church**

by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Selah! Think about it!

Evidences of Baptist Churches have been recorded for us from virtually every century and generation by their persecuting enemies, hence J. M. Carroll's treatise entitled, *"The Trail of Blood"*. Truly the history, polity and doctrine of Baptist churches, although infrequently preserved literarily by friendly hands in Confessions of Faith, has primarily been validated by the ferocious enmity of Satan's relentless pursuit of their Baptist doctrine into every nook and cranny of Europe, Africa and Asia throughout the Dark Ages! **"Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man"** (John 7:45-46). The very acts of hatred, murder and martyrdom are proof positive of the courage and purity of the churches that God has promised to preserve. A conservative estimate of 50 million Baptist saints gave their last full measure to their Lord, King and Bridegroom in the currency of their own lifeblood!

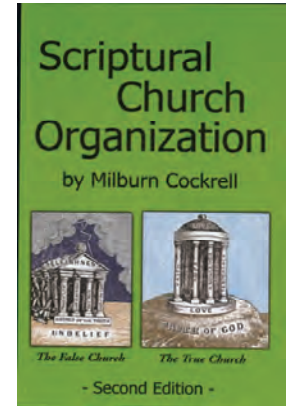
While true that most Baptist writings (except for the Holy Bible!) did not survive the burn pyres of those dark times, many a biography can still be gleaned from the pages of honest history! **"And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and**

imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:36-40). Modern resources would fill a library with the documented history of the Baptists! Excellent historians to start with include: Benedict, Hisel, Christian, Armitage, Jarrel, Orchard, Cramp, Robinson, etc...

Let us recap some "scholar-validated" history of the Baptists, made all the more powerful as this peer-reviewed research comes from her erstwhile opponents! First, Catholic Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius in 1558: "For if so be, that as every man is most ready to suffer death for the faith of his sect, so his faith should be judged most perfect and most sure, there shall be no faith more certain and true, than is the Anabaptists', seeing there be none now, or have been before time for the space of these thousand and two hundred years, who have been more cruelly punished, or that have more stoutly, steadfastly, cheerfully taken their punishment, yea or have offered themselves of their own accord to death, were it never so terrible and grievous. . . . If you will have regard to the number, it is like that in multitude they would swarm above all other, if they were not grievously plagued, and cut off with the knife of persecution."

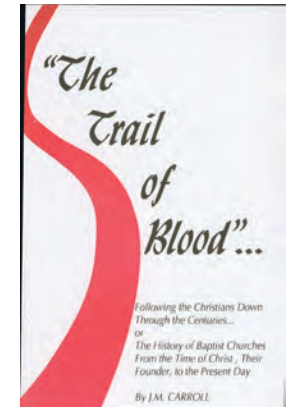
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Now Available!



As referenced by Brother Roger in the forums, we do indeed have *Scriptural Church Organization* by Milburn Cockrell available. This book will be sent free to any prisoner that requests it. Regular retail price is \$6.95, on sale this month for \$5.56 if you order online ONLY at www.bereabookstore.com

Also Available



Also referenced by Brother Roger this month was J. M. Carroll's essential read on Baptist history entitled *The Trail of the Blood*. This crucial read is on our website, www.bereabookstore.com right now for \$2.50.

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Forum Question #1

(Continued from page 12) ♦

the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:21). "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the

words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

When speaking with Nicodemus Jesus gives this answer to help him understand the new birth, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-8).

The above scriptures should answer the first two parts of this question. I would have to say that all three persons of the Godhead work together in the redemptive, and regeneration work of God's elect. But we can see again, by the scriptures above that it is a spiritual, supernatural work, not anything that is done by the freewill of man. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." Also consider Acts 10:43-48 "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that

on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."

I am not sure I really understand the third part of this question since the Holy Spirit absolutely possesses those that are born-again, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30); "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

Also, there is no separating a regenerated, born-again believer and church member, they are one in the same. A person is a Baptist church member only because they were baptized into the church, the prerequisite to being baptized is salvation, you must be born-again in order to be baptized. Or I should say, you must confess that Jesus Christ died for you personally, and profess that you are saved before you can enter into the baptismal water (Acts 8:30-39).

Church members are the church (I Cor. 12). So, the Spirit works in each person who makes up the church as members, I do not believe you can separate the two. The church is not the building, the Holy Spirit does not hang out there when the members

are not there.

When the members come into the building then the Spirit of God is there as well, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). The Spirit works then in the believers (members) to do the business of the church, in the case of Matthew 18:15-20 it was for church discipline/exclusion of one that is brought before the church. The Spirit does not execute judgment on an erring brother, but the members being led of the Spirit do. God Bless!

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Questions 1 and 2 may be combined because regeneration and the new birth as performed by the Holy Spirit are synonymous terms and may be used interchangeably. There is no distinction between the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration and the new birth or the "born again process".

Sinners are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). They are blinded by Satan who is called "the god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4). They are taken captive by Satan, ensnared by him and subject to his will (II Tim. 2:26 cf. Eph. 2:2-3). Sinners are without spiritual discernment because their minds are perverted by iniquity (I Cor. 2:14) and they are spiritually ignorant (Eph. 4:18-19). In their natural, fleshly condition sinners hate God and will not come to the Light of Jesus Christ by their own initiative or will. John 3:19-20 declares: "And

this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." Sinners in their natural, fleshly, sinful state are not just spiritually dead, blind, ignorant, captives of Satan, dominated by his will, hateful, and wicked; they are also wholly incapable of doing anything spiritually good or pleasing in the sight of God. Their mind is carnal, their heart is desperately wicked, and their will is perverted due to their carnal, fleshly nature. Romans 8:7-8 states: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. SO THEN THEY THAT ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD" (Emphasis mine, TWR). This means that the sinner cannot rise above his dead, depraved nature and choose something that is spiritual or pleasing to God. It is the doctrine of man's total depravity and inability. Man's supposed "free will" is a myth. The will is in bondage to a nature that hates God and can not produce anything spiritual.

You cannot and will not understand the truth of the Spirit's work in regeneration or the new birth without grasping what was written in the previous paragraph. The reason why the new birth is needed is because of the hopeless and helpless condition of the natural, fleshly man. Man is completely passive in the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The Spirit of God must create spiritual life in the sinner before any spiritual activity can take place. As soon as the Holy

♦ (Continued on page 16)

Forum Question #2

(Continued from page 13) ♦

Next, Methodist scholar John Clark Ridpath as follows on Baptist succession: "I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A.D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists."

Dutch Reformed historians Annaeus Ypeij and Isaak Johannes Dermout: "We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists...were the original Waldenses; and...have long in the history of the church received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages. ... They were therefore in existence long before the Reformed church of the Netherlands. ... The perfectly correct external and internal economy of the Baptist denomination[n] tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish church, that the Reformation brought about in the sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary; and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics, that their communion is the most ancient."

Lutheran historian J. L. von Mosheim: "The origin of the... Anabaptists...[can be traced to the] Waldenses ...and others... styled the witnesses for the truth before Luther...[C]enturies before Luther's time...[they] lay concealed in almost every country of Europe[.] ...[M]any Anabaptists were put to death... for [practicing] adult baptism. ... [T]here most certainly was an

intimate connection between the ancient and the modern Anabaptists...[for the] modern are the descendant[s] of the ancient Anabaptists."

Quaker historian Robert Barclay: "[T]he rise of the Anabaptists took place long prior to the formation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the Continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the time of the Apostles ... a lineage or succession more ancient than that of the Roman Church."

Church of Christ founder, Alexander Campbell: "[C]louds of witnesses attest the fact, that before the Reformation from popery, and from the apostolic age to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists, and the practice of baptism have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced."

Finally, a familiar friend summing our wondrous Baptist history, Charles H. Spurgeon: "[We] hold the pure primitive ancient Apostolic faith. We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants

of almost every sect..." **"And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"** (Luke 18:7-8). Absolutely! Praise God! He has kept and will always keep His promises! Selah! Hallelujah!

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"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). This is a promise from the Lord! Yes, I will agree that many of the church records were burned or destroyed, but just because we have no records during the Dark Ages does not mean God does not have records of these things, or that there were none of Christ's churches during this time.

I would encourage you, dear reader to read the "Trail of Blood" by J.M. Carroll. If you have read it, then please read it again. In the chart in the back of the book Carroll illustrates the Dark Ages and shows that during that time were the Paulicians, Waldenses, and others.

I disagree with the statement from the questioner, "We have no History of Baptists in the Dark Ages"! I have a whole shelf devoted to Baptist History. In fact, I have a book in front of me "The History of the Ancient Vallenses and Albigenes". We have True Baptist Historians that have put

together enough information that we know True Baptist Churches existed during the Dark Ages.

Let us say nothing was ever written, no personal accounts or testimonies were ever given, how would we identify or know that a New Testament Church existed? Consider these in your search; First, The New Testament Baptist Church is visible, second, it always exists, thirdly, the truth of the Gospel is there always professed by the whole of Society, and forth, it is not permitted to depart from its doctrine; or, in other terms, that it is infallible, and I am not saying it is sinless, but its doctrine is like no others, teaching the same things that Christ taught (Matt. 28:18-20). Not every denomination keeps this commandment.

How do I recognize a True New Testament Baptist Church today that goes all the way back through time, clear back to Jesus Christ? By her faith and practice. True Baptists believe in church perpetuity/chain link succession! One Baptist Church starting another Baptist Church. Read "Scriptural Church Organization" by the late Milburn Cockrell, I am sure it is still available through the BB Church Bookstore. [Editor's note, this book (\$5.56) as well as the "Trail of the Blood" (\$2.50) are both in stock here at the Berea Bookstore. You may find us online at www.bereabookstore.com]

I had authority from Big Creek Baptist Church to start a mission work in West Jefferson, Ohio and then by the Authority of our Mother Church, Big Creek, we organized into a True New Testament Baptist Church, perpetuity/chain link succession! If all our records were burned, does that mean we did not exist?

"And I say also unto thee, That

♦ (Continued on page 16)

Forum Question #1

(Continued from page 14) ♦

Spirit creates spiritual life in the new birth, He immediately gives the sinner the gifts of repentance and saving faith in the Gospel of Christ. The logical order is spiritual life in regeneration, followed by the spiritual exercise of repentance and saving faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. There is no real time lapse between regeneration (the Spirit's work) and conversion (man's response in repentance and faith in the Gospel). As soon as a person is born of God, he immediately believes on Christ. This is the order presented by Christ in His discourse on the new birth in John chapter 3. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:3, 5-8). New birth first, followed immediately by saving faith in the promise expressed in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Regeneration or the new birth ("born again process") is a creative act of the Holy Spirit wherein He imparts spiritual life and implants a new, holy nature that

corresponds with God's Divine nature. The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and the creation of the new nature is what enables the sinner to commune and fellowship with God. This new holy nature is also what the Spirit uses to produce good works and fruit that is pleasing to God, none of which was possible prior to the new birth. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them... That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 2:10; 4:22-24). The Spirit's work of regeneration is also the starting point wherein He begins to produce fruit in us that is pleasing to God: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-25 cf. Rom. 6:17-22).

Part 3 of the question regarding the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as it relates to the church, church membership, and His indwelling has been the source of much heated debate especially among New Lighters or those who adhere to the Priesthood of the Church heresy. If Jesus Christ was correct in His definitive statement on the new birth (John 3) everyone who is born again or regenerated enters into the kingdom regardless of denominational affiliation or church membership. Based on what Jesus said I believe it is clear

that everyone who has ever been saved by grace through faith must be born of the Spirit, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament. You can not see or enter into the kingdom apart from the Spirit's work in the new birth. Furthermore, everyone who is born of God is immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit from that moment on. Romans 8:9 clearly states this truth as fact: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Simply stated, if you do not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit you do not belong to Christ. Everyone who is truly saved has the Holy Spirit of God. The thief on the cross was born of the Spirit and believed on Christ but was never baptized into a church.

The idea that the Holy Spirit only indwells Baptist church members is really an offshoot of old Catholic and Protestant ecclesiology that is heretical. Catholics and Protestants alike equate salvation with church membership. In other words they wrongly believe regeneration makes you part of the church. True Baptists have never believed that. You are born into the family of God and the kingdom of God, but you are baptized into the church of God by water baptism rightly administered. It is true that the Holy Spirit leads and directs some saved people to receive scriptural baptism in a Baptist church, but not all (I Cor. 12).

Also the phrase "baptism of the Spirit" is a misnomer. Jesus Christ fulfilled the promise of the Father on the Day of Pentecost when He (Christ) baptized the first church "with" the Spirit: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be

baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). The baptism with the Spirit Christ was referring to was His official validation and empowerment of His church to carry out the Great Commission. All true churches from the original one Jesus started and empowered are still benefiting from the baptism with the Spirit. However, the baptism with the Spirit had nothing whatsoever to do with regeneration or the new birth. Rather it had to do with empowerment as well as the corporate presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit in all true churches.



Forum Question #2

(Continued from page 15) ♦

thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). God Bless!

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As a Bible believer I firmly believe that my lineage as a human being goes back to the three sons of Noah on this side of the flood, and ultimately all the way back to Adam and Eve. I have never really studied my family tree or found out how far back it goes, but I know I am a descendant of Adam and Eve by faith. I do not need historical records to prove that I am a human being.

How do we know Baptists go all the way back to the first church Jesus started during His earthly ministry, gave the Great Commission to, and promised

♦ (Continued on page 17)

Forum Question #2

(Continued from page 16) ♦

perpetuity to? The promises of Christ and the clear statements of Scripture. Matthew 16:18 declares: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ did not give this promise to the Roman Catholic Church or any of her Protestant harlot daughters. They were not even in existence when this promise was made. It was made to a group of saved men chosen by Christ and baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist during the earthly ministry of Christ. He told that first church that the church He founded as an institution would have a perpetual existence without fail. This clearly means that Christ never intimated that His kind of church would ever have to be reformed or restarted. Jesus reinforced this truth of Baptist perpetuity and succession when He gave the Great Commission: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD. Amen" (Matt. 28:18-20, Emphasis mine, TWR). Christ promised to be with His kind of church unto the end of the world as it faithfully carried out the terms of the Commission. Catholics and Protestants have never baptized anyone after the manner and order commanded by Christ. Only Baptists have carried out the

terms of the Commission as they were laid out. Baptists have done this on a continual basis in every century without fail. John 15:16 states: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Christ is here talking to the first church and He promised that as they went and brought forth fruit, their fruit would remain. The first church, ordained, chosen, and empowered by Christ brought forth spiritual fruit as they preached the Gospel, baptized the believers, and taught them the truth. The church of Jerusalem brought forth fruit and was blessed to organize the church at Antioch (Acts 11:22-26). The church at Antioch brought forth fruit and was blessed to send out missionaries (Acts 13:1-3) who were ordained and authorized to start and organize churches (Acts 14:21-23). That fruit bearing pattern has existed since apostolic times up unto this very day. Every time a New Testament Baptist Church is organized it is an affirmation to the truth that the fruit Christ was referring to still remains. Paul the apostle intimated that the Lord's church as an institution would exist without fail through the eternal ages: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

As I read all the promises of Christ regarding Baptist perpetuity and succession I do not find a promise to preserve all the historical records of the Lord's churches through the centuries. I am sure some have been lost, stolen, misplaced, or destroyed through the years. However, Christ promised perpetuity to His

kind of church, not the preserved records of individual churches. I know the Lord's churches existed during the Dark Ages because of the promises of Christ and that is enough for me.

Fortunately for Baptists, even Catholic and Protestant historians admit that Baptists go all the way back to Christ. In my book, Teachings on the Local Church I quote Catholic and Protestant historians who acknowledge that Baptists have existed since Christ started the first Baptist church during His earthly ministry. Here is an excerpt of the chapter Which Church pages 6-9 with their testimonials:

John Clark Ridpath, a Methodist, said:

"I should not readily admit that there were Baptist churches as far back as A.D. 100, although without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists." (3)

Cardinal Hosius, Roman Catholic president of the council of Trent wrote the following in 1554:

"If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptists since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more generally punished or that have more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people." (4)

Drs. Dermont and Ypeij of the Dutch Reformed church wrote in 1819:

"We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly

♦ (Continued on page 19)

The Fig Tree

(Continued from page 10) ♦

at least western Jerusalem as the Capital of Palestine Israel! Now it is surely our generation, no matter what numbers you are using!

So what is the importance of the parable of the fig tree? Acutely, it is a sign that God is just about finished with the Gentiles and the church age is drawing to a close. God is about to start the clock ticking on Daniel's seventieth week and turn the focus of the world upon this fig tree nation of Israel and once again making it the apple of His eye. There is much to be studied, but I thought it was interesting that the Fig Tree makes one and last appearance in the book of Apocalypse. **"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. ...For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"** (Rev. 6:12-13, 17).

As Israel enters the great tribulation there is not much good news, humanly speaking. First there will be a faithless alliance with the wicked one, whom the deceived Jews will hail as their Messiah. **"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive"** (John 5:43). Then after the antichrist betrays these poor, unbelieving Jews and desecrates the very temple he helped them build, Satan will unleash a terrible war of persecution that will culminate in two-thirds

♦ (Continued on page 19)

The Kentucky Baptist and the Burning Coals of Truth



C. D. Cole
(1885 - 1968)

Eternal Punishment



(This article began in the July issue of the Banner and is concluded here)

PART II: DEATH

We wish to say a few more things about the nature of man, for this is vital in the discussion of eternal punishment. In our first message, we observed that man is a compound being, composed of matter and spirit. The human body is of material substance of the same earth from which the beasts have their bodies (Gen. 2:7, 19). This gives man kinship to the beast. Another thing that man and beast have in common is a soul. Before making personal investigation, we thought this was only a vagary of Pastor Russell. The average Christian will be shocked at the statement that the beast has a soul, but this is both scriptural and scientific. The Hebrew word for creature in Genesis 1:21, 24 and many other places is "nephesh" or "soul," the same word used to describe man as a living soul in Genesis 2:7.

It is soul that distinguishes animal life from plant life. Life is a general term to demote anything capable of growth and propagation. There is animate life and inanimate life. Inanimate life is every form of life without soul. Animal life, or soul life, includes everything that is capable of conscious sensation. This includes the brute as well as man. It is the soul that gives to the body the

physical senses, such as touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste; and, these belong to beast as well as man.

F. W. Grant: "In the fact of being a living soul, he (man) does not differ from the beast, but he does in the way he becomes one."

This is also true of man's body.

Dr. C. I. Scofield: "In itself, nephesh, or soul, implies self-conscious life, as distinguished from plants, which have unconscious life. In the sense of self-conscious life, animals also have "soul."

God has a soul. Isaiah 42:1: **"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."** See also Matt. 12:18; Heb. 10:38.

What shall we reason from the foregoing facts? Some reason that there is no difference between man and beast because both have a soul. By the same law of reasoning, we could argue there is no difference between man and God, or between beast and God, because all have souls.

MAN AND BEAST DISTINGUISHED

1. The "origin" of the human soul is different from that of beast. Of the brute creation, God said, **"...Let the earth bring forth the living creature (soul) after his kind,..."** But of man it is said, that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a

living soul. Compare Genesis 2:7 with Genesis 1:11, 20, 24, and 27.

2. Man is made in the image of God. There is a link between man and God that does not exist between the beast and God. God is a spirit and to be in His image involves man as a spirit as well as a soul. Man has a spirit which the beast does not have. This makes man the offspring of God (Acts 17:28), and explains why God is called the Father of spirits in Hebrews 12:9.

3. The spirit in man distinguishes him from the beast in three particulars:

a. It makes him a moral being, capable of sinning, which is not true of the beast. The beast is only under the law of his nature, and natural retribution overtakes the cow when she eats too much, and the dog when he eats poison. But man as a moral being is under a moral law, which makes him accountable to God, and liable to positive and penal punishment. The laws of nature and human society inflict punishment in this life for their transgression, but penal punishment from God does not begin until after this life.

b. The spirit in man makes him a rational being, capable of reasoning. To man, God says, **"Come now, and let us reason together...."**

c. The spirit of man makes him an endless being. He will have conscious and personal existence in all ages to come. He may lose his well-being, but never his being. There is this age and an age to come for human existence (Matt. 12:32). The spirit in man is what causes his soul to survive the death of the body.

PROOF THAT NATURAL MAN HAS A SPIRIT

I Corinthians 2:11 says that the spirit enables a man to understand the things of man,

so to be without the spirit would preclude intercourse in human affairs.

II Corinthians 7:1 speaks about the filthiness of the spirit. This can only refer to the human spirit, which the natural and fallen man still has. It cannot mean that which is born of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of the natural man is depraved like the rest of his being.

Proverbs 20:27 says: **"The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD."** Now, a candle is to give light, and the spirit of man is the seat of his understanding--the light by which he reasons and understands---the light that constitutes every man a responsible being.

Zechariah 12:1 says: God **"formeth the spirit of man within him."** It is obvious from the context that this speaks of man in creation and not in regeneration.

The Sadducees were a party of Jews in our Lord's time who denied the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Josephus tells us that the Sadducees believed that the soul died with the body. Paul once split the council by taking the side of the Pharisees (Acts 23:8-9).

Why is it said in Genesis 2:7 that man became a living soul rather than a living spirit? F. W. Grant thinks it was to "hide pride from man." The angels are spirits, and they had already fallen; also the condemnation of the devil was for pride. "Thus he is called 'Adam' from adamah, the ground, as if to remind him of his origin--**"Dust thou art."** Yet he was assuredly something more than **"dust."** Here in the same way, his being a living soul reminds him of his kinship with the beasts; yet it does not show that he is not more. Among spiritual beings, this is, indeed, his real distinction---that

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Burning Coals

(Continued from page 18) ♦

he is a **'living soul.'**" (F. W. Grant)

It is not until after death that man's real distinction begins to manifest itself. It is then that he is called a "spirit." When Christ appeared in His resurrected body to His disciples, they thought they had seen a spirit, but He tells them to touch Him, and reminded them that a spirit does not have flesh and bones. Our Lord did not believe that "a disembodied spirit is a self-contradiction."

In I Peter 3:19 we read of spirits in prison. These were doubtless the disembodied spirits of lost men to whom Noah preached while they were in the body and were disobedient to the Word of God. When Peter wrote they were absent from the body and in prison.

In Hebrews 12:23 we read of the spirits of just men made perfect.

WHAT BECOMES OF AMAN WHEN HE DIES?

Death does not end human existence as it does with the beast. Man is a moral and responsible being, accountable to God the Creator and Lawgiver. At death, the constituent parts of man are separated until the resurrection, when they are again united, and come before God in judgment.

If physical death is punishment for sin, then redeemed saints are punished for their sins. And dogs, which cannot sin, are punished as severely as men who do sin.

If the soul dies when the body dies, then Matthew 10:28 is unintelligible. The man who kills the body would also kill the soul.

Some years ago, H. A. Ironside was holding meetings in the same city where a Seventh-Day Adventist was lecturing in a large tent. One day in passing the tent,

he noticed a very imposing sign in large letters: TEN THOUSAND DOLLAR REWARD, "I will give \$10,000.00 United States Gold Coin to anyone who will produce a text from the Bible that speaks of an immortal soul." Ironside went inside and contacted the preacher, saying, I have come to see you, Sir, about the sign outside. The man inquired if he had come to collect the reward, and Ironside told him that he was afraid he could not claim it on his terms. The man thought that Ironside was admitting that the Bible did not teach the immortality of the soul. Then Ironside asked, "Because the Bible nowhere speaks of an immortal soul, do you therefore believe that the soul of man is immortal?" "Certainly," the man answered; "undoubtedly if the Bible never speaks of an immortal soul, the soul must be mortal." His attention was then called to the fact that just as the Bible does not mention an immortal soul, neither does it ever speak of a mortal soul. It was pointed out to him that, arguing from his standpoint, it was just as reasonable to say that the soul of man is not mortal, since the Bible never mentions a mortal soul. Ironside went on: "If I can produce a scripture that declares the soul is not killed when the body is killed, will you give me the \$10,000.00? For, I suppose, by an immortal soul, you mean a soul that lives when the body dies." The man began to hedge and said it was a question of interpretation, but Ironside produced the passage: **"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul"** (Matt. 10:28).

END

The Fig Tree

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of their deaths. "Awake, O

sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zech. 13:7-9).

But, I think our final Revelation reference has a light of hope in that the fig tree will cast off her untimely figs. As we study further, the Lord will have two witnesses and 144,000 preserved preachers from all twelve tribes of Israel (even 12,000 from that stubborn tribe of Judah!). As they preach and grace is poured out, that rebellious fig tree will cast off untimely figs, leaving (I rejoice!) a few good figs (Jer. 24:2). In the end, I believe we will witness a final act of grace, as the Lord turns the great tribulation into the millennial reign, "fig tree Israel" will finally be grafted into the "olive tree Israel" that Scripture elevates into splendor with her husbandman. And finally in the eternal ages to come, the fig tree can just be a fig tree, once again, to the beauty of her God and the rejoicing of His beloved saints! Amen! Selah! Think about it!

END

Forum Question #2

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called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and have long in the history of the Church

received honor of that origin. On this account, the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages." (5)

Robert Barclay, a Quaker historian, wrote:

"We shall afterwards show the rise of the Anabaptists took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the Continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the times of the apostles. In the sense of the direct transmission of Divine Truth, and the true nature of spiritual religion, it seems probable that these churches have a lineage of succession more ancient than that of the Roman Church." (6)

Alexander Campbell, founder of the Church of Christ said:

"I would engage to show that baptism as viewed and practiced by the Baptists has its advocates in every century of the Christian era...and independent of whose existence, clouds of witnesses attest the fact, that before the Reformation from popery, and from the apostolic age, to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists, and the practice of baptism have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced." (7)

Mosheim, the Lutheran historian wrote:

"The true origin of that sect which acquired the denomination of Anabaptists by their administering anew the rite of baptism to those who came over

♦ (Continued on page 23)



From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



Overruling Providence

"But as for you, ye thought it evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20).

Nothing demonstrates the wisdom and goodness of God more than His overruling the evil actions of men so as to cause them to serve His own holy and gracious purpose. When evil in the human heart comes out, God orders it to flow in one direction rather than in another, so that its course can best be directed and the least harm may result.

THE CASE OF JOSEPH

The story of Joseph is found in the book of Genesis. You may recall how that his jealous brothers agreed to murder him, but at length they were satisfied to sell him to foreigners. This act was cruel and unnatural. These strangers sold him a second time. He ended up in Egypt in the house of Potiphar. This was followed by the false accusation of his mistress, his imprisonment, and the inexcusable conduct of a fellow prisoner. These were evil and criminal acts intended to ruin Joseph.

But Divine providence overruled these evil acts to bring him great advancement and to make him a benefactor to mankind and his own people. Addressing his brothers he said: **"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did**

send me before you to preserve life. . . And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 45:5,7-8).

Are we to understand that God was a party to the heartless sale of Joseph by his brethren? The vile lie of his mistress? Did God put His approval on these acts which were connected with Joseph's advancement? No! These things were transgressions of His holy law, and God held the guilty parties answerable for their sins. But God did overrule the evil of his brothers and the vile accusation of his mistress for good, although God approved of neither.

Much good came out of these evil acts. First, Joseph was personally advanced to great authority---made next to the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt. Second, he saved thousands of people from perishing during the seven years of famine. Third, Joseph was the means of saving his family that they might give birth to the nation of Israel. Fourth, he was the means of bringing Israel to Egypt so they could develop into a nation. This whole account about Joseph shows how God often brings good out of evil and promotes the designs of His

providence even by the sinful acts of men and women.

THE LITTLE MAID

In II Kings 5:1-17 there is found the story of a little Hebrew girl who was taken captive by a band of thieves. She became a slave in the family of Naaman, the Syrian general. Her master suffered from one of the most dreadful of all maladies, the Eastern leprosy. Though a slave in his house, she desired to see her master cured of his miserable condition. The maid told Naaman that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure his leprosy. Believing what she said, Naaman went to Elisha and was healed by dipping seven times in the Jordan River.

Here again is the overruling providence of God. This young girl was torn from her parents and the land of her birth and compelled to live among idolaters. Her kidnappers did her a great injury and a wrong. God held them responsible for these great sins. Nevertheless, God overruled this tragic event so that it led to Naaman's miraculous cure and his conversion to the worship of the God of Heaven. Without a doubt his conversion to the worship of Jehovah only must have spread the knowledge of the true God among his heathen people.

SENNACHERIB'S INVASION

In Isaiah 10:5-7 it is written: **"O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doeth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few."**

The spiritual condition of Israel was very low at this time. They had become a hypocritical nation. They pretended to love, fear, and serve the Lord. This vain worship of theirs had aroused God's wrath and indignation. To punish His disobedient people, God would use the king of Assyria as the rod of His anger to chastise and correct Israel for their sins (Hab. 1:12).

The language of God is strong: **"I will send him against a hypocritical nation" and I will "give him a charge, to take spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets."** Such words reveal that the secret power of God's providence was guiding and directing Sennacherib in his invasion of Israel. Here we have scriptural proof that God is in control over kings and conquerors (Prov. 21:1). The plans of wicked men are overruled to execute the purposes of the Supreme Being. There is a superintending providence in the universe, and even the kings of the earth cannot defeat the purposes of Almighty God. All men and creatures are subject to the direction of God. To deny this teaching, is to deny the Bible.

Note verse 7 again: **"Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few."** Sennacherib did not intend to be an instrument in the hands of God. When God uses men as instruments in His hand to do His work, they mean one thing and He means another. The king of Assyria did not know he was the rod of God's anger and the executioner of His vengeance. He acted by his own power and according to his own will. He did not in any way know that he was

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Country Preacher

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serving the purpose of God. He did not intend to chastise the Jews but to spoil and destroy them and other nations.

The plan of Sennacherib to invade Israel and to rape and murder was wicked and abominable. He sought only to gratify his own covetousness and ambition. He wanted to set up a universal empire to feed his pride and to satisfy his taste for blood (Hab. 2:5). His wicked acts are to be judged according to what they really were, and not according to the use which God made of them by counteracting or overruling them. His intentions were evil and deserved no credit. Nevertheless, God overruled his invasion of Israel for good, for it reformed and revived His people.

THE DISOBEDIENCE OF JONAH

God commanded the Prophet Jonah to go and preach to the people of Nineveh, but he fled **“from the presence of the LORD”** (Jonah 1:1-3). He bought a ticket on a ship bound for Tarshish. God sent a storm upon the ship at sea. It was so great and terrible that his fellow-voyagers assigned him to a watery grave for his sin and their own preservation. Jonah was then swallowed by a great whale, but he was miraculously preserved and vomited up on dry land. This miracle gave fire to his message and credit to his preaching to the Ninevites, for his preservation was a sign to the people of this great city (Luke 11:30).

The disobedience of the prophet was criminal in a high degree and God-dishonoring. Jonah suffered for his sin of rebellion. But the overruling providence of God brought good out of evil. The sailors intended

to drown Jonah for his sin, but God interposed and preserved the guilty prophet. He used the whale's belly to bring Jonah to repentance so he would be better qualified to preach repentance to the Ninevites. This miraculous experience in the whale's belly put fire in the bones of Jonah and saved the city of Ninevites from the judgment of God. This ordeal also made Jonah a type of the resurrection of Christ, which is the crowning evidence of His Messiahship (Jonah 1:3,17; 2:10; Matt. 12:39-40).

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

One of the darkest events in Jewish history was the Babylonian captivity, which happened about six hundred years before the birth of our Lord. The temple was burned, the city of Jerusalem demolished, and the treasures of the temple and palace were seized by Nebuchadnezzar and his army. The people were subjected to slavery. The Babylonians were guilty of injustice, theft, and unmerited violence against the Jews. Yet these atrocious sins, committed by a heathen people, were overruled by God for the good of His truth and people.

This experience humbled the people of Judah and destroyed their national pride. They were brought as never before to see the need to look to Jehovah for protection. Never before had they realized their accountableness to God as by this event. By living seventy years in Babylon they saw the evils of idolatry and never bowed their knee to a heathen deity again. Their presence in Babylon was also a means of a wide diffusion of sound religious knowledge among the Gentile world. God greatly used Daniel and his three noble companions to spread the knowledge of the

one true God.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

There was never such a miscarriage of justice on earth as the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. There was His inhumane treatment before crucifixion. His enemies spit in His face, buffeted Him, and smote Him with the palms of their hands (Matt. 26:67-68). Pontius Pilate had Him scourged before the people. The Roman soldiers put a crown of thorns on His head and mocked Him (Matt. 27:27-31). **“And many other things blasphemously spake they against him”** (Luke 22:65). **“And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate”** (Luke 23:11). The Jewish nation cried for His blood, and finally Pilate condemned an innocent man to be crucified.

These enormities can never be contemplated but with horror. Speaking of this event, Peter said: **“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”** (Acts 2:22-23). Here Peter charges the leaders of the Jewish nation with aiding and abetting in the murder of Christ. Later he told them of **“... Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree”** (Acts 5:30). The death of Jesus Christ was deliberate, premeditated murder.

Back behind the crucifixion of Christ, which was a very wicked act of murder (Matt. 27:25; Acts 5:28), was an overruling providence. Although Christ

was crucified by wicked hands, He was also **“delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”** (Acts 2:23). Acts 4:26-28 tells us: **“The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou has anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”** God overruled one of the most wicked acts in history to be the means of salvation for guilty sinners. Christ willingly died as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the covenant people (Phil. 3:8) and the Father spared Him not from this awful suffering (Rom. 8:32). Here is overruling providence at its best!

THE PERSECUTION OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The enemies of the Jerusalem church sought to extinguish its growth by means of persecution, but it had a contrary effect. **“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committing them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word”** (Acts 8:1,3-4).

This relentless persecution led to a scattering of early Christians to all parts of Palestine and to other countries. Wherever

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER	
Financial Report	
6-1-2022 to 6-30-2022	
Beginning Balance.....	\$7,038.98
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	750.00
Carol Willett, Cottonwood Shores, TX	100.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Grace B. C., Gladwin, MI	50.00
Grace B. C., Germanton, NC	50.00
The Lord's B. C., Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	40.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Cheapeake, OH	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wellington, KS	100.00
Beauty Mtn. B. C., Edmond WV	50.00
Indore BC, Indore, WV	300.00
West Jefferson BC , West Jefferson, OH.....	75.00
Berea BC, Stonington, IL.....	60.00
Big Creek BC, Wayne, WV	200.00
Eld Ted Tweet, Headland, AL.....	100.00
Faith BC, Lynn, AR.....	12.50
Victory B. C., Courtland VA	25.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg KY	150.00
Grace B. C., Corbin KY	100.00
Parkway L. B. C., Springfield OR.....	100.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena TX.....	50.00
Eve Knowles, Scarborough ME	100.00
Subscriptions.....	70.00
Divided Checks.....	150.00
Anonymous	250.00
Sub Total	\$3207.50
TOTAL.....	\$10,246.48
EXPENDITURES:	
Postage	727.81
Printing.....	459.10
Wages	1750.00
FICA	133.88
Div Cks	150.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,220.79
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,025.69



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST	
Financial Report	
6-1-2022 to 6-30-2022	
Beginning Balance.....	\$4,613.57
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
.....	425.00
TOTAL.....	5,038.57
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio time.....	403.98
Adobe	32.09
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	436.07
.....
Interest	+0.04
ENDING BALANCE	\$4,602.54

Country Preacher

(Continued from page 21) ♦

these Christians went they carried the light of the gospel. In consequence of their dispersion many thousands heard of Christ. Had God not overruled this persecution of the Jerusalem church for good, these many thousands would have lived and died in ignorance of Christ and the gospel. Overruling providence advanced the cause of Christ by the very means which bad men had employed to effect its subversion!

Persecution and suffering in the case of God's people is always overruled for spiritual good. These things tend to illustrate our virtues and correct our sins. James 1:2-4 reads: **"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."** These things increase our devotions, teach us patience, and drive us to the protection of God. They show the world how much we love God and how much we are willing to suffer for His honor. So the things which evil men use to try to drive us away from our religion are overruled by God to confirm us in it.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WHORE

In prophetic symbolism in Revelation 17 apostate religion is seen as a scarlet whore. This false church is said to be intoxicated **"with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus"** (Rev. 17:6). This one-world church controls the Antichrist and the ten kings of the revived Roman Empire during the first part of the tribulation period (Rev. 17:3). But this blood-thirsty

institution is destined to be judged for the murders of God's saints.

The whore will be destroyed by its former friends, the Antichrist and the ten kings: **"And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled"** (Rev. 17:16-17).

The words that **"God hath put in their hearts"** are very strong. Overruling providence is clearly seen here. This evil alliance of Antichrist and the ten kings with the false church was formed to destroy the saints, but the Antichrist and the ten kings will destroy the whore for the good of the saints. Here is also seen the fact that the foreordination of God extends to the evil acts of men. What is attributed to the kings in verse 16 is traced to its source in verse 17. The ecclesiastical and secular rulers of the world are under the control of God. Instead of thwarting God's purpose as they intended, God overrules their actions to fulfil His sovereign will!

CONCLUSION

1. What a comfort this doctrine is to believers. It makes Romans 8:28 have a deeper meaning: **"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."** Some would water down **"all things"** here, but I take them in a most comprehensive sense, admitting no exception (I Cor. 3:21; II Cor. 4:15). The verse teaches that all things are advantageous to the children of God. Even the sins of believers

work for their good, not from the nature of sin, but by the overruling providence of God which brings light out of darkness. When they fall they are brought to humility and repentance; they are driven to prayer and watchfulness.

2. One practical lesson can be deduced from the doctrine of God's overruling providence: **"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb"** (Ps. 37:1-2).

3. Jeremy Taylor has well said: "God esteems it one of His glories that He brings good out of evil; and therefore it is but reason we should trust God to govern the world as He pleases; and that we should patiently wait till the change comes, or the reason be discovered."

4. The original transgression is another example of God's overruling providence. Satan, in the form of a serpent, drew our first parents from their allegiance to God and caused them to transgress God's law. This brought ruin to the race of Adam. The fall of man appeared to be the triumph of the Devil, but this was not the case. The scheme of redemption was prepared beforehand, and it was immediately brought into operation. But for the fall, there would have been no incarnation of the Son of God; no display of redeeming love; no gift of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and cleansing; no song of blood redemption in Heaven!



Wonderful Warnings

(Continued from page 11) ♦

that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's" (II Cor. 10:1-7). Oh, the outward appearance is so deceiving! We are to cast

Wonderful Warnings

(Continued from page 22) ♦

down carnal things, and stamp them to powder, and have done with them. They are like the demonic idols that the Canaanites worshipped whom God drove out from before the children of Israel; and the children of Israel were commanded to destroy their idols, cast down their images (meaning to break them in pieces and ruin them), and chop down and burn the groves they had planted and built where they worshipped their false gods. Have done with all that is not Christ's! Have only one true love of your soul, the Shepherd, and Bishop of your soul, who loved you, and died for you, and rose again, and is coming again to receive you unto Himself, that where He is, there you may be also!

May we hold fast the truth which God has delivered to us, and which faithful brothers and sisters of days past have lived and suffered and died to pass on to us. May we give out the true report, as faithful witnesses and ambassadors of Him Who has called us and Who is calling out a people for His name from among all nations. May we shun all parts of this world's wickedness, and let our lights so shine before others, that, seeing our good works, our God-pleasing living, and conduct, they may glorify God in acknowledgment of the truth of the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.



The Red Heifer

(Continued from page 8) ♦

me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). We see the volunteering of our Lord Jesus Christ. No yoke was needed for Him.

Christ was not under the yoke of the law. A yoke is an instrument used to bring an animal into submission. Christ Jesus did not need a yoke to bring Him into submission for the Scripture states: **"...for I [Jesus] do always those things that please him"** (John 8:29). How often did Jesus Christ please the Father? **"Always"**! Christ did not fulfill the law to be perfect. He did fulfill the law. But He was perfect and so He fulfilled the law. **"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust"** (I Tim. 1:8-11). The Lord was not subject to the law because He is righteousness itself. The law simply testified of what a man would do if he was righteous. Jesus fulfilled every part of **"Thou shalt not"** and **"Thou shalt"**. Christ Jesus fulfilled the law because He was perfect. He was righteous. He did not become righteous because He fulfilled the law, but the Lord Jesus fulfilled the law because He was righteousness itself. So He was not under the bondage or yoke of the law.

Thus as see that just as the red heifer was to be one upon which never came a yoke, so, too, with our Lord Jesus.

Closing

We see that the red heifer

is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ: that He is set forth for the cleansing of His people: that He is my red heifer. Is He yours?



Forum Question #2

(Continued from page 19) ♦

to their communion, and derived that of Mennonites from the famous man to whom they owe the greatest part of their present felicity, is hidden in the depths of antiquity, and is of consequence, extremely difficult to ascertain... It may be observed, in the first place, that the Mennonites are not entirely in an error when they boast of their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrusians and other ancient sects, who are usually considered as witnesses of the truth, in times of general darkness and superstition. Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed, in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland and Germany, many persons who adhered tenaciously to the following doctrine, which the Waldenses, Wickliffites and Hussites had maintained, some in a more disguised, and others in a more open and public manner, viz.: That the kingdom of Christ, or the visible church which he established upon earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought, therefore, to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests, to oppose the progress of iniquity or to correct and reform transgressors." (8)

Even C.H. Spurgeon, whom the Reformed Baptists of our day revere and hold in high esteem said:

"We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We

did not commence our existence at the Reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents...Long before your Protestants were known of, these horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the one Lord, one faith, and one baptism...I am not ashamed of the denomination to which I belong, sprung as we are, direct from the loins of Christ, having never passed through the turbid stream of Romanism, and having an origin apart from all dissent or Protestantism, because we have existed before all other sects." (9)

I believe that I have proven historically that the kind of church Jesus started and promised perpetuity to was a Baptist church. All other denominations trace their origin back to a man rather than Christ. All other denominations bear many of the birth marks of their mother, the Roman Catholic Church.

<p>Jon Bailes 91 Stringtown Rd Hico, West Virginia 25854</p> <p>Pastor Beauty Mountain Baptist Church 30 Apple Ridge Rd. Edmond West Virginia 25837</p>	
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First, a simple answer to the question at hand: I believe that the Baptists came down through the Dark Ages "exactly" the same as we do today. Meaning a mother (sending) church authorized

♦ (Continued on page 24)

Forum Question #2

(Continued from page 23) ♦

a mission work through that church which was supported until such a time as it was able to be organized into a New Testament Baptist Church. Matthew 16:18 unequivocally declares: **“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** In this verse Christ both states He is building His Church upon Himself, and that His Church will be in existence in some form (meeting in homes, caves, church buildings, etc.) until such a time as he returns.

Secondly, since there is relatively no historical evidence left, as stated by our question, it is my belief that we must accept that the aforementioned method of church succession as set forth by Christ is the method that was used during the Dark Ages. I have held the belief that it is likely an impossible and potentially offensive effort to attempt to trace the lineage of a local church back to the first church to determine if that church is properly organized. An example of what I am attempting to say could best be shown by the following: We know and have Scriptural proof that Adam was the first human to be created, we know that all of us have a lineage back to him. However, we would not draw the conclusion that we did not descend from Adam if the historical evidence was missing that would prove this. Therefore, I conclude that we must address the Dark Ages much in the same manner. We must not strip a church of its authority based on the absence of these records. Paul had this to say and while I believe it to be about the genealogy of man

I also believe it to be applicable here: **“Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do”** (I Tim. 1:4). Notice we should avoid fables and endless genealogies and rather focus on edifying one another.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that I believe that proper church authority is essential and not to be taken lightly. However, if we are unable to directly link a church to the first church today, we must not strip that church of its authority due to that. I do not presume to know how far back we should investigate this issue in order to establish proper authority but I typically am of the opinion that if we know the sending church had proper authority then we must assume that the daughter church is Biblically founded.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grace Baptist Church of Gladwin Michigan is seeking to start a mission work in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. We are also seeking a sound preacher to go there. If you are interested and feel led of the Lord please contact Pastor Sam Wilson at 989-701-5564. You may also contact Brother Tom Coffee, who is currently working in the area at 843-254-3018.

This ministry currently has a blog written by Bro Coffee that can be read online at <https://thefaithfulofgod.com/blog/>

The Maranatha Missionary Baptist Church located at 14460 Ravenna Avenue, Alliance, OH, 44601, is seeking a pastor. The church was organized in 1981 and currently has seven members that are grounded in sound Baptist doctrine. Any interested elder can contact Brother Denny Morgan at dennymatco@gmail.com or call (330) 324-3038.

The Grace Landmark Baptist Church of Buckhannon, WV, is seeking a pastor. The church is Sovereign Grace and Landmark in doctrine and practice. Any interested called pastor of like faith may contact Brother Brad Butcher at (304) 669-4738 or (304) 745-6226.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact the church in writing at SGBC, 400 N. Main St., Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

The Victory Baptist Church of Chehalis, Washington is in need of a pastor. Any interested brother may call Gerry Greisen at (360) 985-7975, or Mark Fenison at (360) 751-

2929.

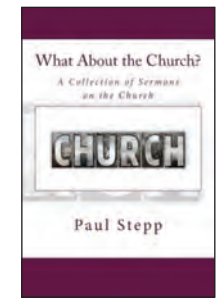
The Lord’s Baptist Church in Tacoma Washington is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact Gaylen Russell at 360-879-5565 (home) or 253-495-4567 (cell) or by Email: gaylenr@rainierconnect.com.

Grace Baptist Church of Germanton NC is having their annual Labor Day Bible Conference beginning Friday evening at 7PM 9/2-9/4. The conference will be held at the church building this year. Hotel accommodations are made for the speakers. Other visitors who come to our conference will get charged the same group rate we were charged for the speakers. The theme of our meeting is “Prevailing Over Persecution” and if you would like to come, please call Pastor Andy at 743-207-1743.



NEW BOOK

What About the Church?
by Paul Stepp - Retail \$13.00



The Church is important. It has always been important, since the time of Christ. But, as the days grow more evil, and as the wickedness of man grows more rampant, the Church is the last Bastion of the Truth. Sadly, Christianity has largely forsaken a proper worship of God in the Church of Jesus Christ. In this book are compiled (17) sermons on the importance of the Church in today’s society, and in today’s Christianity. (See postage chart on page 13)

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