

Present Truth

A magazine dedicated
to the restoration
of New Testament Christianity
in this generation

Sola Gratia Solely by Grace
Solo Christo Solely by Christ
Sola Fide Solely by Faith


Vol. 5 #2

Special Issue

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Present Truth

Present Truth is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead
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Publishers: A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded — namely:

1. *Sola gratia.* God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.
2. *Solo Christo.* Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.
3. *Sola fide.* The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.
4. *Sola Scriptura.* The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

Present Truth is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question — even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

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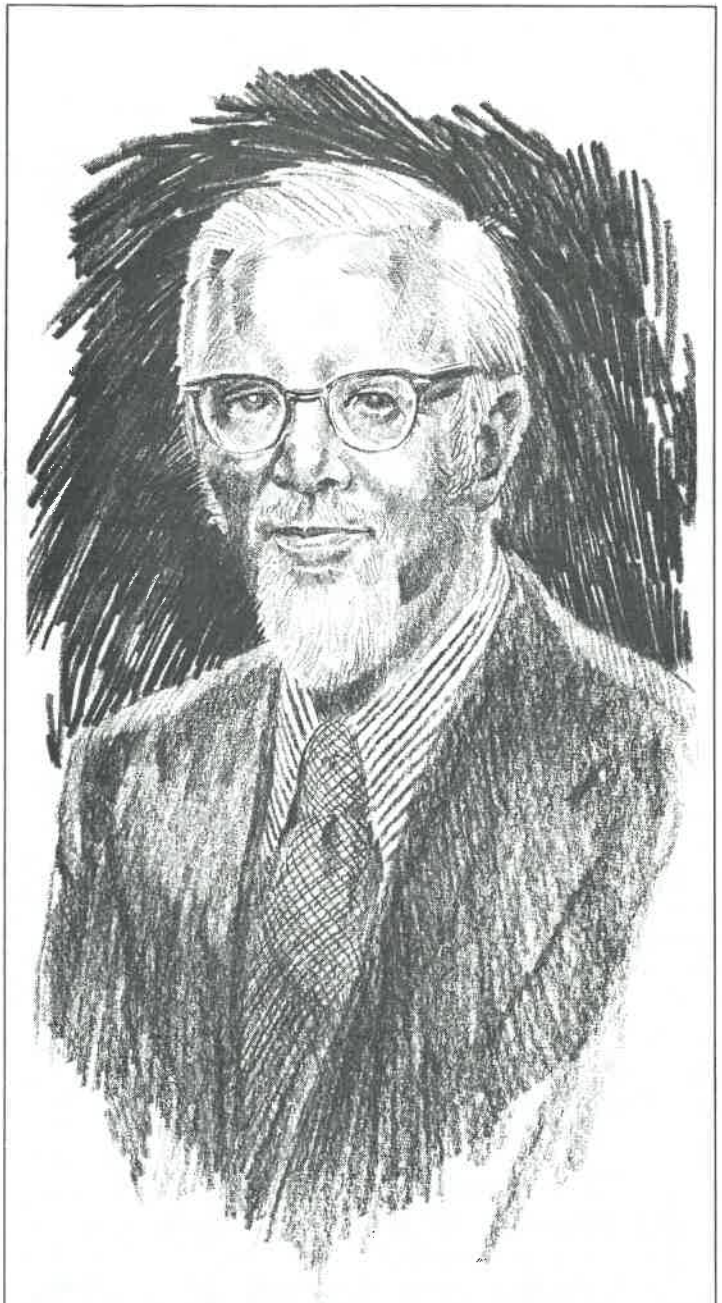
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Dedicated to George Eldon Ladd, Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. Dr. Ladd is an evangelical scholar committed to the established verities of the Christian faith, yet a man who has the grace to combine Christian conservatism with openness to new currents of biblical thought. The editor is deeply indebted to his brilliant essay, The Pattern of New Testament Truth (Eerdmans), for the following articles on New Testament eschatology.

An Introductory Word

Eschatology—the systematic study of the last things—has become a subject of raging importance all over the church. The battle lines are flung wide—from the fields of fundamentalism and the rocky wastelands of cultism to the broad plains of liberal theology.

Eschatology is a relatively new word in the vocabulary of Christian scholars, for it is only a little over 100 years old. Before the Millerites took the field in America and the Darbyites in Great Britain, and before Albert Schweitzer stirred up the subject among a more liberal class in Europe, the church did not seem to know much about eschatology. It would seem that the average Christian could have written all he knew about it on the back of a postage stamp. But each age of the church has had a special area of theology to hammer out, and that not without conflict.

The early church was preoccupied with the first things of theology—matters like the canon of Scripture and the Trinity. Then the battle moved on to Christology, until the issues of the two natures of Christ became pretty well settled at Chalcedon. In the sixteenth century the battle was on the front of soteriology. None of the old issues are dead by any means. We need to know of battles fought and victories won in the church's history.

Today the action is on eschatology. That is, we believe, inevitable for the simple reason that the great day of God and the events of the last day are so close that they cast their shadow before them. As the navigator needs to look more closely at the map of the end portion of his journey as he nears the desired harbor, so it is providential that the church should look more closely at her chart and compass as she begins to scan the contours of the approaching terrain. The worldwide interest in eschatology, even though often misdirected, is a great sign that we are nearing the eschaton.

Recent years have seen some exciting developments in biblical study and research. In his introduction to *The Pattern of New Testament Truth*, Ladd claims that the old way of presenting biblical truth by using a few "proof texts" will never do. New light on the form of biblical documents, the study of the patterns of Hebrew thought, discoveries concerning covenants in the ancient world, the relation between the enthronement Psalms and the temple ritual, and above all, renewed study of the Old Testament as the necessary background to understand New Testament expressions—all these things have resulted in a new theological ball game in



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Some fundamentalists who jump up like a startled rabbit at any new thought are quick to cry, “Liberal,” “Neo-orthodox,” “Modernists,” when they are confronted with anything that is different from their petrified creed.

many respects.

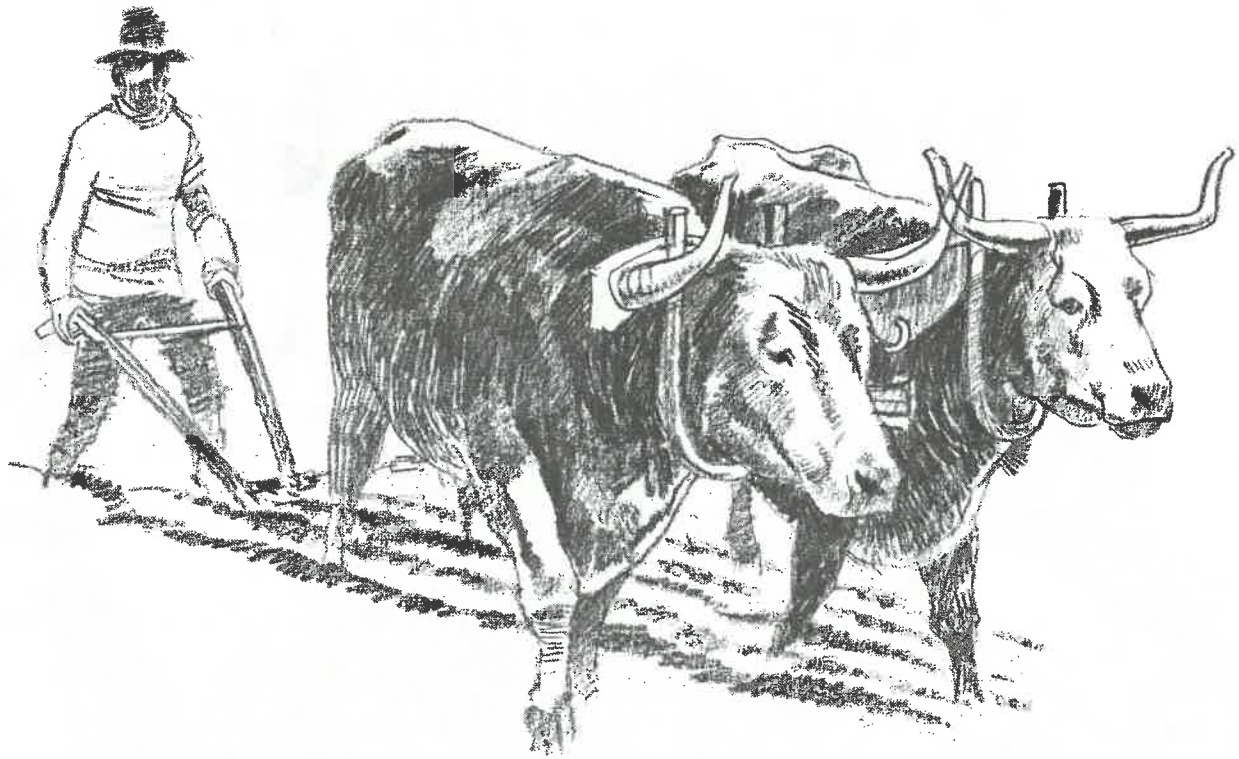
The problem that often arises, however, is that many of us who hue to conservative Christian thought are often the most terrified of any new ideas. We like to polish and garnish the sepulchers of our great spiritual fathers, but forget that they were great because they were not unwilling to plow some new ground in their own day. We need to look back, but how sad when we cannot also look forward—when we laud the old trail-blazers, but are against any new ones! We are often quick to damn anyone who does not shout our own shibboleths, but forget how our revered forefathers refused to repeat popular shibboleths of their day. We tend not to realize how much of our talk is made up of tired clichés or how easily those clichés set like concrete, as do those who are addicted to them.

Sometimes *Present Truth* receives letters complaining that, while the material presented is appreciated, we should not quote scholars whose pedigree is suspect. While it is often admitted that the quotations may be good in themselves, the idea of using anything from someone who smells suspiciously like a liberal is considered something that should not be done. Some fundamentalists who jump up like a startled rabbit at any new

thought are quick to cry, “Liberal,” “Neo-orthodox,” “Modernists,” when they are confronted with anything that is different from their petrified creed. The fact is, we must acknowledge that there are some scholars outside our own holy city who have been doing some homework. We remember Luther’s remark that God once spoke through the mouth of an ass. Truth is truth, regardless!

As our readers well know, we are thoroughly committed to the time-honored verities of the Christian faith—such as the Trinity, deity of Christ, virgin birth, blood atonement, bodily resurrection and ascension, second coming, final judgment, justification by faith alone, sanctification through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, and glorification at Christ’s soon return. Yet we also think there are areas where we need to plow new ground, that we need to be challenged to rethink vital portions of the faith. It is hoped that the reader will be stimulated by a number of suggestions throughout the following articles to investigate some areas seldom considered in many sectors of the church.

If the reader is expecting that this essay on eschatology may contain wild-eyed speculations about future events in Palestine (or anywhere else), we hope he is pleasantly disappointed. The presentation is preoccupied with the meaning of Christ and Him crucified.



If there is a basic premise in the essay, it is simply this: *Christ crucified and risen from the dead is the truth of eschatology. We must determine to know nothing of end-time events save those which are mirrored to us in the Christ event.*

We cannot arrive at the truth about eschatology by taking the Old Testament utterances and then jumping clear over the New Testament proclamation of the entire fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ. We must stop gazing at Palestine or Russia to understand eschatology and fix our eyes on our great High Priest. Wherein the presentation in this essay does not glorify Christ or detracts from the meaning of the triumph of the cross, it is not worthy of acceptance. If the reader finds some things too tough to chew, we hope he will enjoy the entree.

The editor, who has written the following articles, has tried not to be too heavy. But we should also be reminded that there are times when we need to put the Bible up on the bench and work at studying it. To be sure, salvation is by grace. Yet in the area of human responsibility there are no gains without pains.

Come, let us reason together.

R.D.B.

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The Background of the New Testament

The New Testament throbs with one awe-inspiring, joyous theme—the Christ event. This event is called the *gospel*—a word which means *good news*. It is news so overwhelmingly good that those who tell it are obviously irradiated and radically transformed by it. They are so caught up in the wonder and joy of what this event means that they can scarcely say anything about their own subjective experiences and religious feelings.

There are two aspects of the gospel as presented by the apostles:

1. The description of the Christ event—that is to say, the account of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is given by the four gospels. A third of

their narrative is devoted to describing Christ's passion.

2. The interpretation of the Christ event. Paul, for instance, spends almost no time writing about the details of Christ's life or death. He is concerned with interpreting the event.

When, with the apostles, we seek to understand the significance of the Christ event, we are driven back to the Old Testament. For it is the united witness of the New Testament writers that the entire Old Testament—the law and the prophets—find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In a word, the Old Testament was a *promise*. For long centuries the Hebrew people had waited for its fulfillment. Both law and prophets helped

the Hebrews keep the promise alive. The New Testament bears united witness that Jesus is the One of whom "Moses . . . and the prophets, did write." John 1:45.

In order to appreciate the breathtaking vastness of this fulfillment in Jesus Christ, we must know what had been promised in the Old Testament. That is why, in the very nature of the case, the New Testament drives us back to the Old Testament.

The New Testament message, therefore, cannot be understood in isolation from its Old Testament background. Not only is the subject matter directly related as *promise* and *fulfillment*, but the distinctive terms which the apostles use to interpret the Christ event are taken right out of the Old Testament. We cannot understand or appreciate the real force of these expressions unless we go back to the Old Testament.

For years some scholars gave the church the "run-around" by interpreting the New Testament more in the light of the Greek philosophies and religions which prevailed in the first and second centuries A.D. Paul's message, it was said, was orientated not to the Hebraic-Judaistic background, but to Greek-Hellenistic thinking. These scholars tried to derive various leading motifs in Paul's preaching from the literature and world of Greek philosophical thinking. Other scholars tried to understand Paul in the light of "the popular religious views and phenomena of the Hellenistic period, in particular to the religious syncretism of that time as this had arisen under the influence of eastern and western religiosity and manifested itself in the mystery religions and cults."—Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Eerdmans), p. 36.

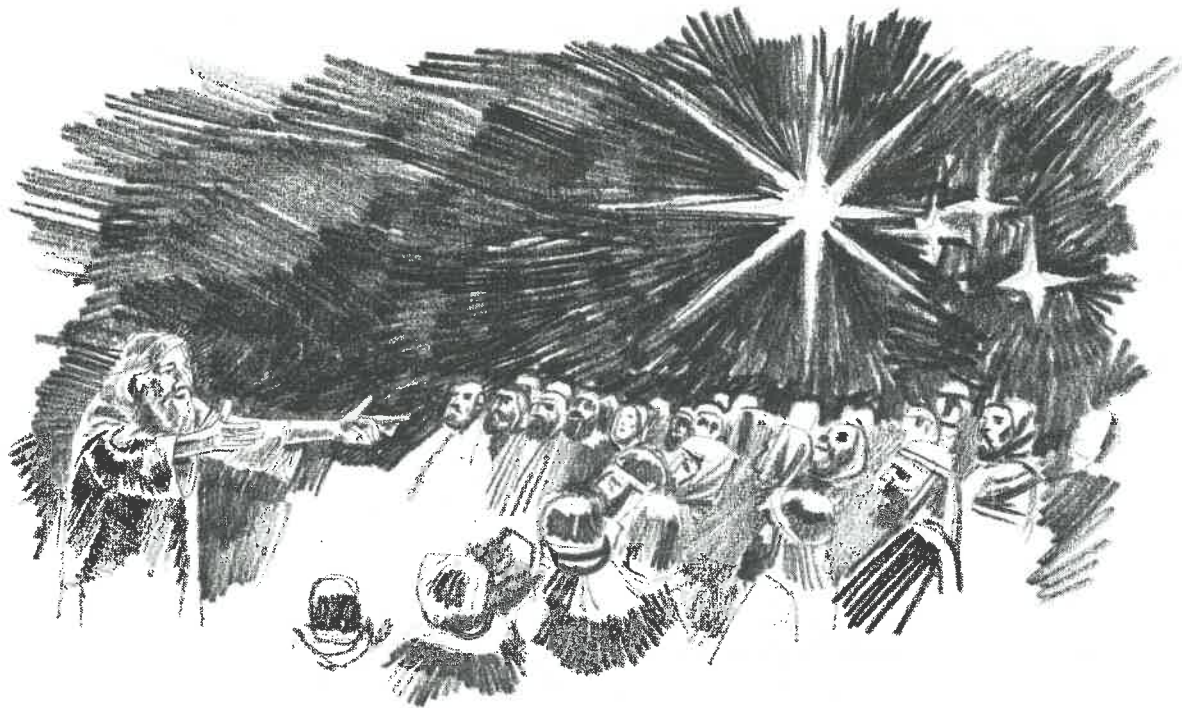
This sort of scholarship has now passed over the hill, for recent scholarship has been able to demonstrate quite conclusively that the apostle's religious concepts, and even the main expressions with which those concepts are clothed, have their background in the Old Testament. This not only applies to Jesus and the unlearned fishermen, but to that learned Hebrew lawyer, Paul. Says Ridderbos:

In order to understand Paul, therefore, one must not call in the assistance of the gnostic systems, the mystery religions or the Hermetic writings, but rather seek in the knowledge of God in the Old Testament the source from which Paul has drawn even for the formulation of his proclamation.—*ibid.*

This is not to deny, of course, that Paul was familiar with Hellenistic religions and philosophy, nor that he used some expressions that show that. But what we need to be clear about is that the fundamental structures of Paul's preaching and doctrine, as well as his distinctive ideas and modes of expression, are drawn from the Old Testament. And the same thing may be said for the other New Testament writers.

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The Eschatological Nature of the Old Testament Hope

For all the [Old Testament] promises of God find their fulfillment in Him.—2 Cor. 1:20.

... we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled . . . by raising Jesus. . . —Acts 13:32, RSV.

This news is so unspeakably good that it passes all man's capacity to comprehend it. If a man could grasp the excellency of the matter and with a constancy believe the same, he would utterly despise all the power, glory and pleasure that this world pretends to offer. He would be glad and willing to perform any duty and be gratefully ready to face anything. If a man hears this gospel and believes it, he cannot be the same man. For him, old things pass away, and all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

Since the glorious fulfillment which took place in Jesus can only be appreciated when we see what the Old Testament had promised, we should take some pains to

grasp what is repeatedly called "the hope of Israel."

The Old Testament begins in Paradise—with man in face-to-face communion with God and having access to the tree of life. He is crowned king in Eden and given dominion over the whole created order (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8:4-8). Then comes the great captivity. Adam loses kingdom, Eden, homeland and this "first dominion"—for himself and the whole human race. Another has become the prince of this world. Man is no longer a king, but a slave; no longer an heir of life, but of death.

The long night of captivity, however, is not one of unrelieved darkness. God gives to Adam, then to the patriarchs, and finally to Israel, the promise of deliverance and restoration. The revelation of God's redemptive purpose does not all dawn at once. It is progressive. At first the promise, though certain, is somewhat vague and obscure. But as God reveals Himself constantly at work for His people (as in the great deliverance from Egypt) and sends prophet after prophet to more specifically reiterate the promise, the hope of Israel begins

to take definite shape.

In a word, a day would come when God would finally act and effect His redemptive purpose. The righteous God would intervene, deal with the enemy of His people, and restore them to their destined order. By the time we come to Isaiah, it becomes very clear that restoration envisages more than restoration to temporal peace and prosperity in Palestine. The prophet uses expressions that clearly mean a restoration of Edenic proportions and to Edenic conditions.

The Old Testament therefore looks forward to this day—the day of Yahweh—when God would finally act for the deliverance and restoration of His people. Enemies, oppressions, sin and death would at last be dealt with. “The first dominion” would be restored to “the daughter of Zion.” The Old Testament is a journey toward the fulfillment of God’s promise. It is forward looking. It is characterized by such expressions as “Behold, the days come. . . ,” “In that day . . . ,” “It shall come to pass in the last days. . . .”

This means that the Old Testament hope is *eschatological*—that is to say, it looks to the last days and focuses on God’s end-time event. The Old Testament looks for history to arrive at its appointed end—a glorious end when the life of this “age” would give place to life in what later Judaism called “the age to come.”

The Book of Daniel

The eschatological hope of the Old Testament finds its most specific expression in the book of Daniel. In fact, Daniel is like the Old Testament in miniature. Written during the seventy years of captivity to Babylon,¹ it epitomizes the great captivity which began at the gate of Eden. The Jews had lost homeland and kingdom to the king of Babylon. Their sanctuary, which expressed their mode of worship and was the vehicle of the covenant, lay in ruins. Their children were captives in an enemy land. How much like the Fall all over again!

No tragedy, however bitter, could prevent those Hebrews from dreaming of a better day. God had put a sense of destiny in their hearts that nothing could quench. So they dreamed of restoration to their homeland—a restored kingdom and a king on David’s throne, a restored sanctuary, and a restored people. The prophecy of Daniel tells of this restoration. But like the prophecies in Isaiah, Daniel’s picture of restoration transcends the little temporal restoration that took place at the end of the Babylonish captivity. That obviously did not fulfill the prophecies of restoration in Isaiah.² Even more obviously do the prophecies of

¹We are aware of the arguments for the late dating of Daniel, but for reasons which we cannot deal with here, we feel fully justified in holding to the conservative position. It is unthinkable that the New Testament, as we shall see, would make so much use of a forgery of late dating.

²The return from the exile prefigured the eschatological restoration.

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Daniel

Daniel carry us forward to that great final, eschatological restoration.

There are four prophetic outlines in Daniel, which all focus on the great deliverance through God's end-time action.

1. In Daniel 2 the hope of the establishment of the kingdom of God is clearly enunciated. This hope of the coming kingdom is a concept which develops and gradually takes shape in Old Testament history, but it reaches its most mature expression in the book of Daniel.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.—Dan 2:44, 45.


2. In Daniel 7 the prophet sees how the kingdom is restored through the action of God's judgment:

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit. . . . the judgment was set. . . . judgment was given to [rendered in favor of] the saints of the most High. . . . And the kingdom and dominion . . . shall be given to . . . the saints of the most High. . . .—Dan. 7:9, 10, 22, 27.

Of course, Daniel was not the first prophet to speak of that coming day when the Judge of all the earth would arise to set matters right. This was a conviction deeply engrained in the Hebrew consciousness. God was, above all, the Lawgiver and the righteous Judge. Even in their annual sanctuary ritual (Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement) the Jews saw an enactment of judgment day:

God seated on His throne to judge the world, at the same time Judge, Pleader, Expert, and Witness, openeth the Book of Records. . . . The great trumpet is sounded, a still small voice is heard; the angels shudder, saying this is the day of judgment. . . . On New-Year's Day the decree is written, on the Day of Atonement it is sealed who shall live and who are to die, etc.—Art. "Day of Atonement," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 286.

The Psalmist, too, repeatedly speaks of God's arising in judgment to plead the cause of His downtrodden people and to punish evil. As in prophetic spirit he announces the arrival of that day, his spirit breaks forth in songs of unrestrained joy (see Ps. 96:11-13; 67:4).



There are four prophetic outlines in Daniel, which all focus on the great deliverance through God's end-time action.

But as we said, it is in Daniel that the eschatological hope of the judgment is given its most definite expression. In a sense, the whole book of Daniel is about God's great intervening act of judgment. *Daniel* means *God is my Judge*, and even the stories of Daniel illustrate God's great interposition on behalf of His people.

3. In Daniel 8 the prophet is told about the restoration and vindication of God's downtrodden sanctuary. It will be remembered that at the time Daniel saw these visions, the sanctuary at Jerusalem lay in ruins. That he was burdened for its speedy restoration is evident from his intercessory prayer in Daniel 9. "Now therefore, O our God," he prayed, "hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake." v. 17. But the vision of Daniel 8 carries us beyond the limits of the restoration at the end of the seventy years. Along with Daniel 2 and 7, it takes us forward to the great eschatological restoration, when all that the Jewish temple stood for and prefigured (worship, fellowship, covenant, etc.) will be *sadaq* (Dan. 8:14)—put right, victorious, vindicated, and restored to its rightful state.³

Isaiah had spoken of a new exodus at the end of the Babylonian rule. Likewise, Jeremiah had spoken of a "new covenant" (Jer. 31), and Ezekiel of a new temple (Ezek. 40). But this new exodus, this hope of a renewed covenant, and this expectation of a glorious temple did not take place at the end of the seventy years in Babylon. This could only take place in an eschatological event. It is in Daniel that this eschatological hope is most clearly expressed.

4. **Daniel 12.** So far Daniel has spoken of the restoration in terms of the kingdom, the judgment and the sanctuary. Thus far the hope is expressed in very theocentric categories, for it is God's restoration from beginning to end—His kingdom, His judgment and His sanctuary. But in the last vision the hope becomes more personal, more people-centered. In fact, all symbolism is thrown away as Daniel speaks very literally of the personal hope of every Hebrew: ". . . many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to *everlasting life*. . . ." Dan. 12:2.

Here is what the apostles of the New Testament call the hope of the resurrection (Acts 23:6). This hope was first given to the patriarchs, but it has to be admitted that the doctrine of the resurrection is only implicitly intimated in Moses. In the Psalms the concept begins to emerge more strongly that death cannot be the end

³We cannot here pause to set forth all the arguments as to why Daniel 8 points to an eschatological deliverance and triumph for God and His people. But when this chapter is viewed in the context of the fourfold prophetic outline, the evidence is overwhelming. The parallelism is too strong to deny it. All attempts to handle Daniel 8 less than eschatologically stick out like a sore thumb and disjoint the unity of Daniel's message.

It is in Daniel that the eschatological hope of the judgment is given its most definite expression.

of blessed fellowship with the living God. With the possible exception of Isaiah (chs. 25:8; 26:19), the doctrine of resurrection to “eternal life” is given its most definite expression in the book of Daniel. Says Dr. Alan Richardson in his *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (Harper & Row):

This conception of a general resurrection makes its first appearance in Jewish literature in Daniel 12:2. . . . This is the only occurrence of the expression *zoe aionios* [life eternal, or life of the Age to Come] in Greek translations of the Old Testament. . . . The phrase is entirely Jewish . . . [it] is not found in pagan religions and philosophical writings until long after the New Testament period.— pp. 72, 73.

The Hebrew concept of the afterlife was vastly different from the Greek view. If the Greek thought of salvation, it was in terms of “the flight of the soul from the world and history,”⁴ from the prison house of the body, and from all things material. On the other hand, the Hebrews viewed this earth as God’s creation and the scene of God’s activity. All things are God’s gifts to be enjoyed in wholeness of life. Redemption is not a flight from the world or escape from earthly, bodily existence, but restoration of man to his true creaturehood, where he may enjoy all of God’s gifts in fellowship with God. This is the theology behind the concept of the resurrection of the body.⁵

So the book of Daniel gives the most mature and definite expression to Israel’s eschatological hope. The coming of the kingdom of God (Dan. 2), the action of the judgment of God (Dan. 7), and the vindication of the sanctuary of God (Dan. 8) are presented as that which would usher in the life of “the age to come” (Dan. 12). All this would come to pass through “the Seed of the woman,” “the Son of David,” the One who is called “Messiah” in only one Old Testament book—the book of Daniel. In the fullness of time God would send Him to do the work foretold in Daniel 9:24—

“to finish transgression,
and to make an end of sins,
and to make reconciliation for iniquity,
and to bring in everlasting righteousness.”

Therefore the Hebrew people fully expected that this grand eschatological hope would be fulfilled in the coming of God’s Messiah in the last days.

⁴George Eldon Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth*, p. 40.

⁵See Ladd, *ibid.*, for an excellent discussion on Greek and Hebrew thought in relation to redemption.

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The Eschatological Nature of the Christ Event

The Christ event is thoroughly eschatological. Unless we grasp the eschatological nature of the Christ event, we cannot appreciate why the New Testament message was such an electrifying announcement.

The Old Testament looks forward, saying, "Behold, the days come. . . ." But the New Testament opens with a dramatic change of tense. The hour "now is." "The time is fulfilled." "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." In the fullness of time Christ comes to announce this decisive, redeeming act of God and to perform it.

We have seen that the Old Testament hope was fundamentally eschatological. The New Testament everywhere proclaims that Jesus is the fulfillment of that hope. The Christ event, therefore, is thoroughly eschatological. The kingdom of God and the life of the age to come are proclaimed as present fact in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Eternity has already broken into history. Christ is the new Adam in whom the new creation has already become a reality (2 Cor. 5:17).

Unless we grasp the eschatological nature of the Christ event, we cannot appreciate why the New Testament message was such an electrifying announcement. Jesus opened His ministry with the arresting words, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. . . ." (Mark 1:14, 15). Jesus did not have to stop to define His words. The Jews to whom He spoke knew what He meant. "The Kingdom of God lay within the vocabulary of every Jew. It was something they understood and longed for desperately."—John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Abingdon), pp. 17, 18. Jesus was therefore saying, In My Person and work the decisive events of the last days have arrived. No wonder the hopes of the disciples were lifted to the highest pitch of excitement!

What can we say of Paul's preaching? Writes Ridderbos: "The coming of the kingdom as the fulfilling



eschatological coming of God to the world is the great dynamic principle of Paul's preaching, even though the word 'kingdom of heaven' does not occupy a central place in it."—Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Introduction to His Theology*, p. 48. Paul declares, ". . . when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. . . ." Gal. 4:4. Here is an echo of the words of Jesus recorded in Mark 1:14, 15. "Nothing less is intended than that the decisive, long-expected coming of God has dawned, the hour of hours, the day of salvation in the fulfilling, eschatological sense of the word."—*Ibid.*, p. 45. The apostle proclaims that the mystery which had been kept secret for long ages is *now* revealed (Rom. 16:25, 26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10). At the end of the waiting ages God's ultimate intervention according to His eternal counsel and purpose has taken place.

Then we turn to the writer of Hebrews and hear him declare: "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. . . ." ". . . now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Heb. 1:1, 2; 9:26.

Peter, in order to show the significance of the events on the Day of Pentecost, seizes the eschatological prophecy from Joel which says, ". . . it shall come to pass in the last days. . . ." (see Acts 2:16, 17).

There are numerous New Testament expressions used to describe the Christ event—such as glory, light, justification, outpouring of the Spirit, resurrection, eternal life, etc.—which are thoroughly eschatological in character.¹ The unified witness of the New Testament writers is that *all* the eschatological promises of the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Acts 13:32, 33; 2 Cor. 1:20). In Him the eschatological hope of Israel is realized.

This does not mean that the apostles express God's mighty act of salvation in Jesus Christ in the same manner. There is variety as well as unity in the witness of the New Testament. We have seen that the Old Testament hope was expressed in various ways. So is the New Testament fulfillment expressed in a variety of ways.

We suggest, however, that the New Testament uses four major Old Testament motifs to interpret the Christ event. (1) The Synoptics² employ the *kingdom of God* motif. (2) Paul interprets the Christ event as the *righteousness of God*. (3) The writer to the Hebrews uses the *Yom Kippur* motif to give his distinctive witness to Christ's Person and work. (4) John sees the gospel as the coming of *eternal life*. It is also suggested that these four major characterizations of the Christ event find their background not only in the Old Testament in general, but in the book of Daniel in particular.

At the end of the waiting ages God's ultimate intervention according to His eternal counsel and purpose has taken place.

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The New Testament uses four major Old Testament motifs to interpret the Christ event. (1) The Synoptics employ the kingdom of God motif. (2) Paul interprets the Christ event as the righteousness of God. (3) The writer to the Hebrews uses the Yom Kippur motif to give his distinctive witness to Christ's Person and work. (4) John sees the gospel as the coming of eternal life.

¹See Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 62-83; George Eldon Ladd, Art. "Unity and Variety in New Testament Faith," *Christianity Today*, Nov. 19, 1965.

²Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The Synoptic Interpretation of the Christ Event: The Kingdom of God



... Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.—Mark 1:14, 15.

In the three Synoptic Gospels the expression "kingdom of God" (or "kingdom of heaven")¹ is used scores of times. It is Jesus' favorite expression to designate His work and the significance of His mission.

We need to make several observations regarding the significance of this expression:

1. The concept is thoroughly Jewish and Old Testamental.

... for all His repeated mention of the Kingdom of

¹Both expressions obviously mean the same thing (see Matt. 19:23, 24).

God, Jesus never once paused to define it. Nor did any hearer ever interrupt Him to ask, "Master, what do these words 'Kingdom of God,' which you use so often, mean?" On the contrary, Jesus used the term as if assured it would be understood, and indeed it was. The Kingdom of God lay within the vocabulary of every Jew. It was something they understood and longed for desperately.—John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 17, 18.

The Jewish hope of the coming kingdom of God was a growing concept throughout the Old Testament. If ever there was any thought that the kingdom of Judah, especially under the reign of David and Solomon, was the fulfillment of Israel's hope, that thought was soon shattered by the kingdom's sinful decadence. When it was wiped off the map by the Babylonians, the Jews still clung to the prophetic promise that there would be a new king to sit on David's throne. But ex-



The thing that was startlingly new about the message of Jesus was His announcement that the kingdom of the future age had now appeared in history.

expectations for a restored kingdom did not materialize in the return from the Babylonian exile.

As we saw earlier, the Jewish expectation of the kingdom received its most definite expression in Daniel. There it is symbolized by a stone which smites the metallic image, grinds it to chaff, and becomes the kingdom of God, which stands forever (Dan. 2:44). The announcement of Jesus about the arrival of the kingdom, therefore, would certainly awaken among His hearers memories of the stone of Daniel 2. In words clearly reminiscent of Daniel, Jesus spoke of Himself, saying, “. . . whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” Matt. 21:44.

Furthermore, the Synoptics repeatedly recall how Jesus referred to Himself as “the Son of man.” This reminds us of the passage in Daniel 7: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom. . . .” vv. 13, 14. At His trial we hear the high priest demanding of Jesus, “Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus replies, “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Mark 14:61, 62. There is no mistaking what Jesus meant. His accusers instantly

recognized His allusion to Daniel’s prophecy of the Messianic kingdom.

All this proves that the Old Testament expectations of the coming kingdom find their fulfillment in Jesus. Therefore we must understand the expression “kingdom of God” in the light of this Old Testament background.

2. The expression “kingdom of God,” being Old Testamental, is thoroughly eschatological. The Old Testament depicts this age as ending in a divine visitation, “the day of Yahweh,” or as Daniel 7 describes it, a day of judgment wherein God ushers in His kingdom. This would mean a visitation of punishment on the adversaries of God’s people and a visitation of redemption and salvation for God’s people.

Here we should be careful to continue thinking in Old Testamental rather than Grecian categories. Old Testament expectations of salvation have a robust, earthly realism about them. Salvation is not a flight from the realm of the material, the body, and from the sphere of the created order. It is rather the redemption of the created order, where man lives as a servant under God and as a ruler over all of God’s gifts. The kingdom of God is an anticipated order where the whole man would be restored to life. The kingdom would therefore end the life of this age and usher in the life of the age to come.

3. The thing that was startlingly new about the message of Jesus was His announcement that this kingdom of the future age had now appeared in history. His words did not merely mean that the kingdom was imminent, but that it actually was present in His Person and work. As He stood among men, He declared, “. . . the kingdom of God is among you.” Luke 17:21.² The miracles and mighty works of Jesus were not a mere means of demonstrating His Messiahship (for the false Christs show off their works to prove their claims), but they appeared because the presence of the age to come had broken into history. Here was God’s new Adam, who was master of the whole created order because He Himself was subject to God in all things. No wonder the preaching of Jesus was an electrifying announcement. His claims that the hour for the fulfillment of all eschatological expectations had arrived in Him were matched only by the infinite nature of His Person and work.

4. The announcement of the kingdom was a joyous announcement. Jesus called it “the gospel [good news] of the kingdom.” It was a matter of such joy that He refused any the right to make His disciples fast while He was with them. His visitation was a time of celebration. Jesus was no doleful character. Crowds, children, publicans and sinners sought out His company. His name was at the head of many party invitation lists.

Jesus frequently used the common illustration of a feast or banquet to describe the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom of God. The divine joy over the salvation of one lost is described in terms of feasting, merry-making, and dancing (Luke 15:23, 25). . . . In His own view, His frequent eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners was itself a foretaste of the fellowship of the consummated Kingdom of God.—George Eldon Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth*, p. 41.

Those being invited to the kingdom of God must be invited as to a joyous feast. Jesus made it clear by his own actions that the gospel must not be presented in pompous ecclesiastical moroseness, but with transparent enthusiasm. He was always full of boundless optimism, telling His disciples that He must move on and spread the glad news of the kingdom to other cities. Preaching that is without infectious, joyous enthusiasm is not preaching the gospel.

5. Yet the preaching of the kingdom is no light-hearted, frothy enthusiasm. It is an invitation of solemn urgency too. Jesus presented the message of the kingdom as a matter of desperate importance. It is so crucial that it would be better to mutilate one’s self and enter maimed than not to enter this kingdom at all. The response of man must be commensurate with the great-

Crowds, children, publicans and sinners sought out Jesus’ company. His name was at the head of many party invitation lists.



²“Among you” is the preferred reading of Luke 17:21.

ness of the invitation. One must be willing to forsake all—houses, lands, kindred and life itself—in order to press into this kingdom. Pride must be abandoned, and the subjects become as humble as little children.

Behind the invitation to salvation in this kingdom is the somber warning of what it means to be left out. It means weeping and gnashing of teeth. Men must repent or perish (Luke 13:3). The Jews were not to imagine that salvation on God's eschatological day would come to the children of Abraham as a matter of course. The note of warning in the prophets, especially Amos, was revived, telling the chosen people that the day of Yahweh would come as a day of wrath upon all sinners, Jews included.

6. Most kingdoms are established by the birth pangs of conquest, hardship, pain and suffering. The kingdom of God is no exception. It was established *solely* by the bitter suffering and death of God's suffering Servant according to the prophecy of Isaiah. This was the real mystery of the kingdom that took all by surprise. This is what the disciples found so hard to comprehend and the Jews in general found so objectionable. The idea of a suffering Messiah was unthinkable.

Yet the Synoptic portrayal of the cross—the passion of the King in the birth pangs of the kingdom—is the high point of the arrival of the kingdom narrative. About one-third of the total presentation of the Christ event is devoted to the scenes of Christ's passion. Little is said in interpretation of this awe-inspiring sacrifice. That is left to the Epistles of the New Testament. Christ simply said that He must first suffer and then enter into His glory in order that forgiveness of sins might be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

7. The phrase "kingdom of God" primarily means the *reign* or *rule* of God. The reason for the evil of this present age is that man has revolted from the rule of God and therefore the whole created order is in revolt against man. To enter the kingdom of God means that man must cast away his sinful pride and submit to the rule of God. Life and true freedom are found only in subjection to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Many people have the perverted notion (certainly not obtained from the Bible) that the gospel somehow frees man to some sort of autonomous freedom where he may now dispense with such "legalistic" things as rules, codes or external authorities. The gospel is wrongly used to perpetuate man's sinful independence as if it were within him to direct his steps. But as Jesus' story of the prodigal son illustrates, true freedom is found in subjection to rightful authority. The kingdom message is a call to discipleship, to radical obedience in view of the dawning of the end-time age in the Christ event. "Ye are my friends," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14.

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How men can get the idea that the gospel releases them from obligation to all external authority is a mystery—the mystery of lawlessness indeed!

How men can get the idea that the gospel releases them from obligation to all external authority is a mystery—the mystery of lawlessness indeed! Fellowship in God's kingdom, which is embraced in the *now* by faith, means submission to the absolute authority of God's commandments and submission to the relative authority of the church, the state, parents, and all institutions which are a reflection of the eternal principle of divine authority. To refuse to submit to the abuse of authority is one thing, but to refuse to recognize the principle of authority is rebellion against the kingdom of God. This is an age when the church needs to stop compromising with the spirit of antinomian permissiveness and unflinchingly call men to repent and submit to the authority of God's rule. To preach anything less is not to preach the kingdom of God.



The Pauline Interpretation of the Christ Event: The Righteousness of God

Paul had only one message—"Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2. He gloried in nothing save the awesome, infinite Christ event (Gal. 6:14). Like all the other New Testament writers, he was so pre-occupied with explicating the cross of Christ that he had little time to dwell on subjective religious feelings. He was so thoroughly caught up in the vastness and awesome wonder of God's redemptive act that the man and any egocentric concern about his own subjective experiences were swallowed up. The impressions of a man as he stands in Glacier National Park are but a feeble illustration of what Paul felt like as he looked up to the mountain of God's righteousness.

Paul does not spend any time describing the Christ event. There is scarcely anything said about the details of Christ's life, His teachings, or the incidents of His passion. Paul is concerned with the theological significance of the cross. His gospel is *interpretation*

rather than *description*.

What is Paul's distinctive interpretation of the Christ event? Unquestionably, it is "the righteousness of God."

. . . I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. . . .
For therein is *the righteousness of God revealed*.—
Rom. 1:16, 17 (see also Rom. 3:21, 22, 25, 26).

Of course, "the righteousness of God" is not the only way in which Paul interprets the doing and dying of Christ. He also calls it a "redemption" (four times), a "propitiation" (one time) and a "reconciliation" (four times). But he uses the word "righteousness" (of God) and related nouns, verbs and adjectives (justification, justify, justified) numerous times.

Let us turn our full attention to this expression, "the righteousness of God." What does it mean? The interpretation of this key Pauline phrase has a rich his-

tory. It was in 1515 that Professor Martin Luther began a series of lectures on Romans in the University of Wittenberg. Recalling the occasion some years later, he wrote:

I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "the righteousness of God," because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. . . . Night and day I pondered until . . . I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before "the righteousness of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.—*Luthers Works*, Weimar ed. (1928), Vol. 54, pp. 179f.

That insight into "the righteousness of God" launched a world-shaking movement which changed the course of history. F. F. Bruce aptly comments, "There is no telling what may happen when people begin to study the Epistle to the Romans."—*Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Eerdmans), F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 60.

Luther's insight into "the righteousness of God" being God's saving mercy is an interpretation which Luther needed at that moment of his crucial experience. His interpretation is certainly true, but it does not exhaust all that the expression means. According to Romans 3:25 (which we will discuss later), the righteousness of God can just as appropriately be taken to mean the righteousness whereby God punishes sin. Indeed, if we take the whole sweep of Romans 1:17 and 3:21, 25, 26 with its context into consideration, we will see that:

1. The righteousness of God is a righteousness which reveals wrath against all ungodliness.
2. It is a righteousness which arraigns Gentile and Jew before God's holy law and condemns them all alike.
3. Then, proceeding to Romans 3:21, it is a righteousness which intervenes in man's terrible predicament and graciously provides him a justification.
4. It is a righteousness which does not dispense with God's law, but punishes man's sin in the Person of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:25).
5. Finally, it is a righteousness which justifies God and upholds the honor of His law (Rom. 3:26, 31).

"There is no telling what may happen when people begin to study the Epistle to the Romans."—F. F. Bruce.

So a whole spectrum of meanings is involved in the term, "the righteousness of God." This may be seen not only by looking at the context, but by considering the Old Testament background of the expression. Paul did not invent the expression. He did not borrow it from contemporary Hellenistic religions, nor even from the Roman law court. He drew it from the Old Testament. That is clear from Romans 3:21. He said that "this righteousness of God" is "witnessed by the law and the prophets." That is to say, it is the righteousness which the law and prophets tell us all about. Just as the Synoptic expression "kingdom of God" drives us back into the Old Testament, so the Pauline term "righteousness of God" drives us back into the Old Testament.¹

The Judicial and Eschatological Meaning of the Righteousness of God

"Righteousness is for the Hebrews the fundamental character of God."—Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, p. 79. In the true character of Hebrew thinking, the concept is essentially dynamic. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways. . . ." Ps. 145:17. ". . . our God is righteous in all His works. . . ." Dan. 9:14. ". . . the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Ps. 19:9. ". . . all Thy commandments are righteousness." Ps. 119:172. Scholars are quite well agreed that the Hebrew word for *righteousness* (*sedeq*) has a judicial meaning in an overwhelming number of its occurrences in the Old Testament. (This is even more true of the verb form, *to justify*.) It is a word that finds its setting in the law court. God's righteousness is related to His law, His divine tribunal, His office of Judge and Arbiter of human destinies.

Applied to God, the word *righteousness* causes us to think of Him as the God of law. The vast number of times *law* and its related words are connected with Jehovah proves that the Hebrews thought of Him as "One who has a deep interest in law. . . it is the way He administers His universe. He can be relied to act according to law. . . Yahweh and law went well to-

¹"The background for the Pauline doctrine is the Old Testament."—George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Eerdmans), p. 43. "Terminologically the whole expression 'the revelation of the righteousness of God' is derived from Judaism."—Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Introduction to His Theology*, p. 164.

gether. . . . The Old Testament consistently thinks of a God who works by the method of law. . . . Thus, as we approach the question of the use of justification in the Old Testament, we are dealing not with an isolated conception which appears briefly now and then, but with an idea of law which runs through and through the ancient Scriptures."—Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Eerdmans), pp. 255-258.

A whole spectrum of meanings is involved in the term, "the righteousness of God." The Pauline term drives us back into the Old Testament.

Applied to man, *righteousness* means conformity to the will of God as expressed in His law. God expects and demands that His people conform to His righteous rule. "The law of Yahweh is an order of life which cannot be challenged or changed."—*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, Vol. 2, p. 176.

In His character of Lawgiver and Judge, God will surely call all men to account before His tribunal. He will condemn and punish wrongdoers, and vindicate and deliver those who are judged to be righteous in His eyes. He is the Judge of all the earth, who will do right (Gen. 18:25). "He shall judge thy people with righteousness. . . ." Ps. 72:2. He is addressed as the "Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously." Jer. 11:20. Says the Psalmist, ". . . He shall judge the world in righteousness. . . ." Ps. 9:8 (see also Ps. 50:6; 96:13; Isa. 5:16; Judg. 5:11).

Not only is the concept of the righteousness of God *judicial*,² it is also *eschatological*. The hope of the Hebrews was that one day God would arise as Judge, deal with sin and wrongdoing, and set matters right. Especially did they think of this judgment as punishing Israel's enemies and bringing deliverance and salvation to the covenant people. God's covenant faithfulness (*chesed*)³ demanded this. Thus the Psalmist prays, ". . . O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew Thyself. Lift up Thyself, Thou Judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud." Ps. 94:1, 2. As the Psalmist views God rising up to judgment, he breaks forth in

²"Terminologically the whole expression 'revelation of the righteousness of God' is derived from Judaism, inasmuch as here, too, the concept 'just' or 'justice' was understood in close connection with the judicial pronouncement in the divine judgment."—Ridderbos, *op cit.*, p. 164.

³*Chesed* is the Hebrew word which has the idea of faithfulness, loyalty, steadfast love. It is related to the covenant whereby the Lord became "married" to His people.



unrestrained joy (see Ps. 96:11-13; 67:4).

In Psalms and especially in Isaiah "the righteousness of God" means God's *saving action* on behalf of His people. God's gracious interposition to save the Psalmist from his enemies and Israel from Babylon is seen as a gracious act of deliverance by God's righteous judgment (see Ps. 98:2; 71:15; 24:5; Isa. 56:1, 5; 46:13). In these passages the saving righteousness of God takes on an eschatological character.⁴

By the end of the Old Testament era, the Jews had lost sight of God's saving righteousness as presented so clearly in Isaiah. They even thought to bring the eschatological day of deliverance by perfect lawkeeping. "It was felt that if Israel could only keep it perfectly for a single Sabbath, Messiah would come."⁵

In radical opposition to Judaism, Paul revived the Old Testament doctrine of salvation through the operation of the righteousness of God. In Isaiah this is a righteousness which saves Israel in spite of her sinfulness and utter unworthiness. The Old Testament prophets speak of a redemption that depends not on Israel's works, but on the faithfulness of God alone. St. Paul revives and develops Isaiah's concept of the divine righteousness which works salvation.

To summarize: The revelation of the righteousness of God is the hope of the Old Testament. Its "Behold, the days come . . ." anticipates a day when God will arise and judge the world in righteousness. He will deal with sin, punish Israel's enemies, and bring the long-looked-for deliverance and salvation to God's people. This hope of God's righteousness (judgment) is given its most specific expression in the book of Daniel (ch. 7).

Paul Announces the Arrival of the Hoped-for Event

Paul does not bring a new message, but in keeping with the whole New Testament, he changes the tense. It is no longer "Behold, the days come. . .," but he announces the revelation of the righteousness of God in the *now*. In Romans 3:21 he declares that the fulfillment and realization of what had been promised and foretold by "the law and the prophets" is *now* manifested in the Christ event. Paul's announcement of the revelation of the righteousness of God is thoroughly eschatological. In his gospel he proclaims that the great eschatological event of the ages, the day of judgment, has dawned. Paul catches the significance of what Jesus meant when he said, "*Now* is the judgment of this world. . . ." John 12:31.

That "the righteousness of God" means *the right-*

⁴For a fuller discussion of the eschatological nature of God's righteousness in the Old Testament, see George Eldon Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth*, pp. 93, 94; Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 441f.; Ridderbos, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-166; Kittel, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 174f.; Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-83.

⁵John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 175.

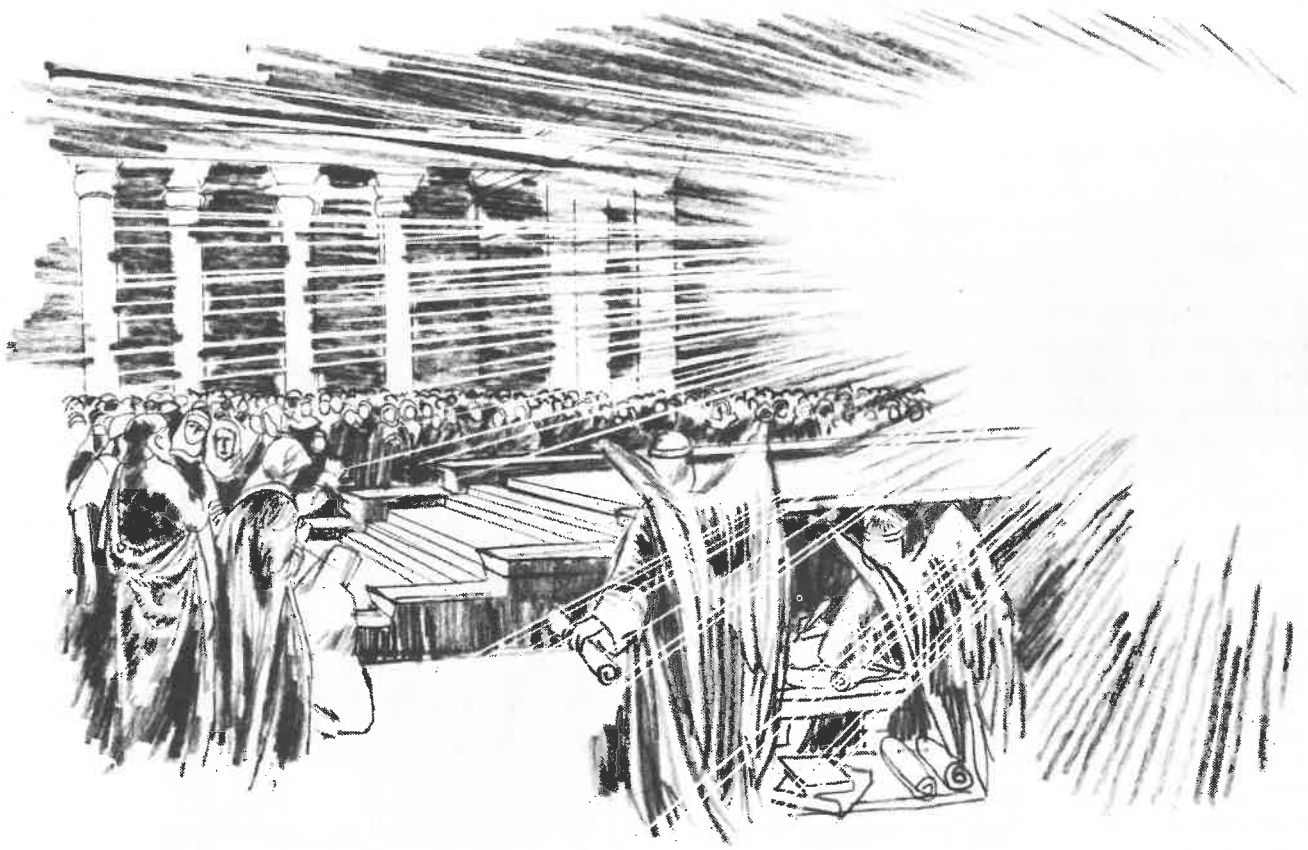
In Psalms and especially in Isaiah "the righteousness of God" means God's saving action on behalf of His people.

Paul's announcement of the revelation of the righteousness of God is thoroughly eschatological. In his gospel he proclaims that the great eschatological event of the ages, the day of judgment, has dawned.

eous judgment of God is not only seen from the Old Testament background, but from the first three chapters of Romans. This section in Romans is clearly an arraignment of Gentiles and Jews before the judgment bar of God.

. . . *the wrath of God* is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.—Rom. 1:18.

But we are sure that *the judgment of God* is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape *the judgment of God*? . . . But after thy hardness and im-



penitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. . . . For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. . . .) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.—Rom. 2:2, 3, 5, 12, 13, 16.

It is therefore transparently clear that Paul's gospel is presented in the context of the righteous judgment of God. It brings us face to face with the Creator (Rom. 1:19, 20), with His tribunal, and with His law—that expression of His holy character which can never be modified or relaxed. It is only in this context that we can understand Paul's gospel.

The reason why the Pauline doctrine of justification is not generally understood or appreciated in the contemporary church is because the church generally ignores the setting in which this gospel is proclaimed. If the gospel is cut off from its roots in the law of the Creator and the awful reality of the end-time judgment, it verily becomes "another gospel." If there is to be a restoration of New Testament gospel preaching in these last days, this judgment-Creator-law context must be recovered. John the Revelator does see such a message—being sounded in these final days of the Christian era.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters [the Creator]. . . . here are they that keep the commandments of God [law], and the faith of Jesus.—Rev. 14:6, 7, 12.

This apocalyptic passage is a remarkable parallel to what Paul presents in Romans 1 through 3.

The Revelation of God's Righteous Judgment

We have seen how the Synoptics record Jesus' announcement of the coming of "the kingdom of God." This kingdom is somehow established by His death and resurrection, although this is not fully explained in the Synoptics. This is where Paul's "righteousness [righteous judgment] of God" complements the Synoptical "kingdom of God." Daniel 7 clearly portrays that it is only by the action of the day of judgment that the kingdom of God can be established.

In Paul's gospel God's righteous judgment of this world is shown to have taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ. The announcement of this

stupendous event is made at Rome! Let us look now at this event of all events—the revelation of God's great judgment day in the Christ event.

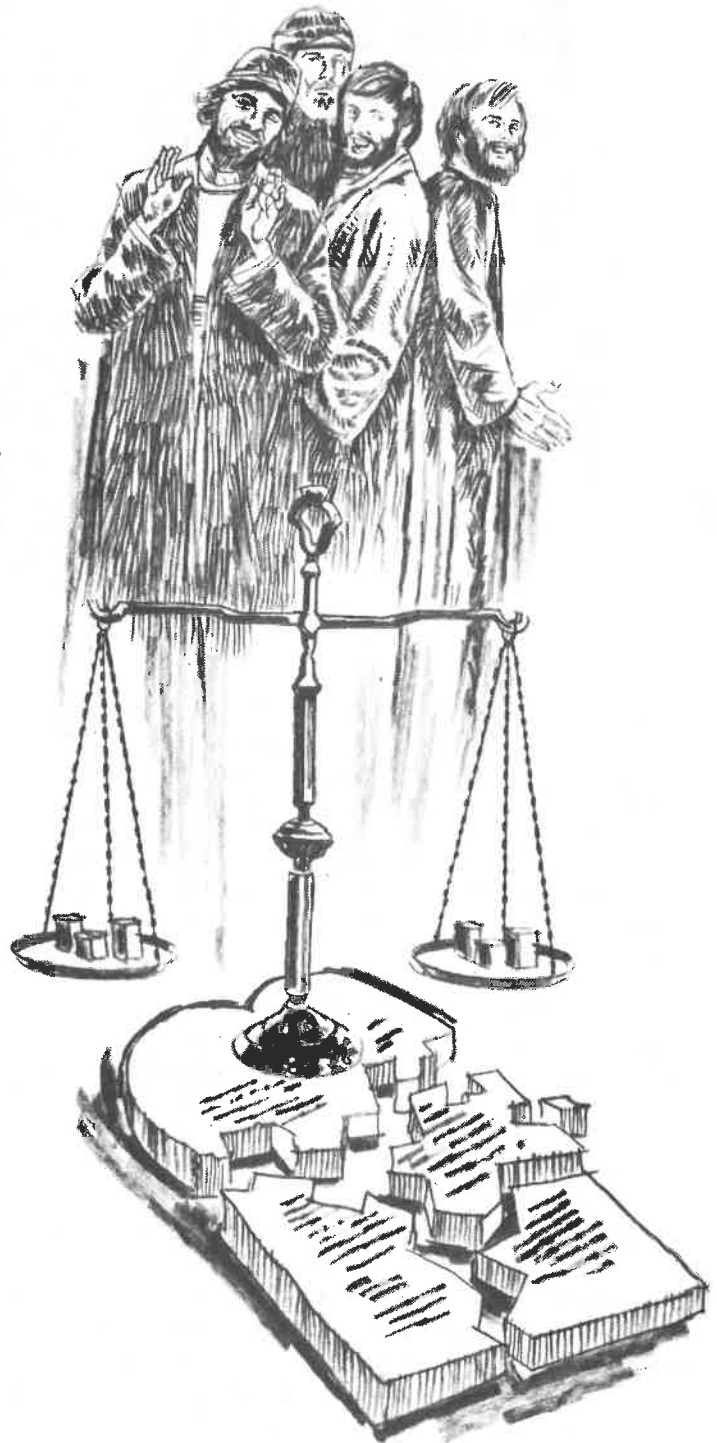
God's Great Arraignment

With inconceivable patience God has put up with evil and the wretched impudence of men. The deception of sin has reached its height. Transgression has come to the full. The time has come for Jehovah to arise, to punish rebellion, and to vindicate the authority of His down-trodden law (Rom. 1:18-32). Even the chosen people have utterly misrepresented God by their perverted religion and by their insufferable pride and self-righteousness (Rom. 2). God rises up in flaming anger to deal with sin, to see to it that men reap what they have sown. In the great arraignment of both Gentile and Jew before the bar of eternal justice, the Gentiles are first to hear the verdict. In their insolent intellectual pride they have refused to acknowledge the Creator. The things which God has made have given clear testimony to "His eternal power and Godhead." These unthankful fools are "without excuse" (Rom. 1:18-22). Their refusal to acknowledge God has led them into social sins, to sexual sins, to uncleanness, to rottenness, and to all manner of unrighteousness (Rom. 1:23-31). They are weighed in court. They deserve to die. There is one penalty: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Ps. 9:17. Their case is hopeless indeed!

Now let us imagine the Jews watching these proceedings. This comes as no surprise to them. They have confidently affirmed that this would happen to the Gentiles on the day of judgment. In fact, they have longed, even prayed, for this to happen. So when the court declares that the Gentiles are worthy of death, they give a hearty "Amen" and applaud the verdict. They feel that if they heartily condemn these sinners, they will demonstrate their abhorrence of evil and thereby show that they are surely on God's side. Thus they hope to "escape the judgment of God" (Rom. 2:1-3). After all, do not they have circumcision and the law as tokens of the fact that they are God's favorites?

But in this judgment there are no favorites. "... there is no respect of persons with God." Rom. 2:11. Had not Amos the prophet warned that the day of judgment would condemn Israel too? (Amos 5:18). So it now becomes clear that not even the chosen people can escape the righteous anger of God. They are found boasting in the law, but when weighed in its just balance, they also are shown to be guilty of breaking it and blaspheming God's name (Rom. 2:17-24).

The Judge sees to it that His holy law and the moral order of the universe are upheld. There is to be no compromise with evil. The law is the standard by which all are judged. ("... the doers of the law shall be justified." Rom. 2:13.) Everyone who has failed to do it must be





Since there is none to stand up for these hapless sinners, God Himself will stand up for them. His mercy is so unpredictably great that He surprises all by stepping down from the bench and standing at the side of the accused.

condemned.

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 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. 3:19, 20.

There is now a fearful silence in the court. It is the silence of guilt. It is transparently clear that there is "none righteous, no, not one." Rom. 3:10. There is one verdict: "... tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. . . ." Rom. 2:9. This condemnation of all men at God's tribunal is part of the revelation of the righteousness of God.

God's Great Intervention

At this juncture in the proceedings, a new dimension of "the righteousness of God" is introduced. "But now the righteousness of God . . . is manifested. . . ." Rom. 3:21. These sinners are silenced, they deserve to die, *but*—. They are in a hopeless predicament, *but*—. There is none to help, *but*—. Since there is none to stand up for these hapless sinners, God Himself will stand up for them. His mercy is so unpredictably great that He surprises all by stepping down from the bench and standing at the side of the accused. Such a thing is undreamed of, but who can protest when all the ways of God are righteous? It is now to be seen, as taught in Isaiah, that God's righteousness is manifested in saving sinful and undeserving people.

The One who stands at the side of the accused is called an Advocate, Mediator, Pleader, Propitiator, Intercessor, a Speaker-for-us. This is what the Judge becomes for us in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is not only "God . . . for us" (Rom. 8:31), but "God with us." Matt. 1:23. Redemption must be accomplished by a blood brother, a next of kin. The Father gives His best and dearest to become such a One and to stand as the Representative of sinners at the bar of justice. Thus does God graciously set about to freely justify sinners by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24).

Now this Pleader-for-us does not stand up in the court and make excuses for these sinners. He is a truthful Witness. He alone fully knows how terrible and inexcusable is their guilt. He knows that God will not, cannot change His law by a hair's breadth, even to save a universe of sinners. He knows that, to plead for sinners, He must put His own life on the line. Did not Moses put his own life on the line when he pled for sinful Israel? (Ex. 32:31, 32). Did not the high priest put his own life on the line when He went into the holy of holies to make an atonement for sinners? But what Moses and the high priest could only do in type, Jesus steps forward to do in

reality. He pleads by putting His own life on the line.

In assuming the headship of the race, Christ Himself assumes the responsibility of the sins of all men. In His Person the whole sinful, rebellious world stands before the outraged law, and in His Person that guilty world must make reparations for the damage done.

Or to change the idea from *representation* to *substitution*, Christ becomes our Substitute — the Just to stand in the place of the unjust — “that He might bring us to God.” 1 Pet. 3:18. Christ pleads not with mere words, but with the agony of tears and sweat and great drops of blood. “Forgive,” He cries, knowing that this is only possible if He stands in the place of guilty sinners and takes the full consequences of their sins.

God’s Great Wrath

For centuries God has passed over human sin without meeting it with the full punishment justice demands. But the time has fully come for God to show on what basis He has passed over former sins (Rom. 3:25). It is as if God’s holy wrath against sin has been treasured up for ages, but now bursts forth upon the One who stands before justice as all the world’s sin. Christ is set forth to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). In the cross “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” Rom. 1:18. The cross of Christ is the visible, historical manifestation of the wrath of God. In Him the punishment of the age to come (*kolasin aionion*—Matt. 25:46)⁶ is fully revealed. “This is the horror of the judgment. God

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is silent. A hell, deeper and hotter than anything one might imagine from myths and fairy stories about places of torment, has opened its maw, devoured God’s Son, and become all victorious.”—Marcus Barth, *Justification* (Eerdmans), p. 48. Justice bends from its exalted throne and before this expiring Victim declares, “It is enough. Justice is satisfied.”

⁶*Aionios* means *age to come* (see Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 74). Christ’s death was the revelation of God’s “everlasting punishment,” or punishment of the age to come. In Matthew 25:46 *kolasin aionion* is translated as “everlasting punishment” in the AV. *Aionios* really means *age to come* (see *ibid.*). Christ’s death was the revelation of the punishment of the age to come. Compare also “wrath to come” in Matthew 3:7.

In Christ’s Person the whole sinful, rebellious world stands before the outraged law, and in His Person that guilty world must make reparations for the damage done.

The righteousness of God sees to it that this is a universe wherein all debts are paid and where the rule of law is upheld.

In this awesome display of God’s hatred of evil, the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness which upholds the law and punishes all sin with an exactness and impartiality which is absolutely terrifying. The righteousness of God sees to it that this is a universe wherein all debts are paid and where the rule of law is upheld.

God’s Great Verdict of Acquittal

When the lips of this Pleader-for-us are sealed in death, His blood yet pleads. When the blood of righteous Abel cried for vengeance from the ground, God heard it and took swift action. When the blood of His holy Son cries from the ground, God takes action. Christ’s blood speaks louder than the blood of Abel — and better (Heb. 12:24). Whereas Abel’s blood cried for vengeance, Christ’s pleads for mercy and acquittal.

The court adjourns on Friday afternoon for a brief Sabbath’s silence to honor the finished work, the perfect atonement, of the One who poured out His soul unto death. Then it reconvenes first thing Sunday morning. Christ’s death was a prayer—“Father, forgive. . . .” The resurrection is God’s answer to that prayer. He “was . . . raised to life because we are now justified.” Rom. 4:25, NEB (margin).



Just as Christ's death was a demonstration of God's righteous judgment on the sin of the world, visited on Him as a means of propitiation, so His resurrection was the demonstration and proof of the acquitting righteousness of God. — Ridderbos, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

In Christ's death God has sat in judgment, judged sin, and in this way He has caused His eschatological judgment to be revealed in the present time. Christ's death was the demonstration of the judging and justifying judgment of God in the eschatological sense of the word because the old aeon and the old man were judged in Him, a justification unto life and the new creation came to light in Him as the second Adam. — *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 169.

“In Christ's death God has sat in judgment, judged sin, and in this way He has caused His eschatological judgment to be revealed in the present time.” — Herman Ridderbos.

The Meaning of Justification

The righteousness of God in the Christ event justifies the believing sinner (Rom. 3:26, 28). Paul uses the words

justify, justified and *justification* numerous times. It is his primary way of describing what God's righteous judgment does for believers.

There are two things we need to emphasize about the meaning of the word *justify*.

1. “Justify” Is a Legal, Judicial, or Forensic, Word. Three things need to be said about this:

a. *To justify* means *to declare righteous, not to make righteous* (see Luke 7:29; Rom. 3:4). It is the opposite of condemnation (Rom. 8:33, 34).

b. It is a word used in reference to trial and judgment—a word that belongs to the law court (see Deut. 25:1; Ps. 51:4; Matt. 12:37; Rom. 2:13; Isa. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). It is in every sense a verdict of the Judge. It means to be declared “righteous by divine sentence” (Shrenk), “acquitted in the judgment of God” (Ridderbos), “judged Righteous at God's tribunal” (Morris).

c. Being a legal word, it is related to the law. *To justify* means to be “set right before the law” (Strong):

We need to be reminded that the God of biblical revelation is the God of law. Paul has often been outrageously misrepresented as an enemy of the law. Some have thought that the more they kick and despise the law, the more they imitate Paul. Thus have these “blind guides” caused antinomianism to follow Paul around “like a dark shadow” (Koberle). But when we rightly consider Paul, especially in the light of the Old Testament background, we are brought face to face with the God of law. When Morris reflects on this, he says: “Law is thus not simply a demand God makes on His people, it is the very way in which He administers His universe. He can be relied upon

to act according to law.”—Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

Paul’s doctrine of justification brings us face to face with the end-time judgment. The law is presented as the standard of that judgment (Rom. 2:13-16). Whether we look at the end-time judgment that will yet take place or the one which has taken place in the Christ event, *it is a process which honors the law*. Is not the Judge’s first concern to administer and to uphold the law? Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would “magnify the law, and make it honourable.” Isa. 42:21. “Never was the law more highly honored than when He stood before the bar of justice to make reparations for the damage done” (Flavell). Apart from the righteous demands of God’s law, the death of Christ becomes a senseless tragedy. If the law of God has no legal claims to make and if Christ was not meeting these legal (righteous) claims on Calvary, then the cross ceases to be the means whereby sin is dealt with. It becomes merely the means whereby man may be inspired to deal with sin!

Morris well says: “Today we are inclined to be suspicious of legalism. Indeed, if we can convict an opponent of too great an interest in law we are half-way to confuting him.” Then he adds: “Justification . . . witnesses to the importance of law in the divine economy. That law was honored in the process whereby forgiveness was wrought.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 256, 257, 293, 296. So also Denney declares, “It cannot be too often repeated that if the universal element of law be eliminated from personal relations, there is nothing left; no reason, no morality, no religion, no sin or righteousness or forgiveness, nothing to appeal to mind or conscience.”—James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (London: Tyndale Press, 1973), p. 277.

So we say that the righteous judgment of God seen in the Christ event honors the law from start to finish. “Do we then make void the law through faith?” asks Paul. “God forbid; yea, we establish the law.” Rom. 3:31. We have seen that the righteousness of God condemns all sin, intervenes in man’s predicament by appointing an Advocate, punishes sin with a great display of terrible justice, and justifies the believer. One more dimension is added, and it is the most glorious of all. This whole procedure shows that God is righteous (Rom. 3:26). It honors and upholds His law (Rom. 3:31). The judgment of God establishes “the kingdom [rule] of God.”

Those who would presume to partake of the holy delicacies of the gospel, yet continue to despise the authority of God’s law, must surely arouse God’s vengeance. Justification is God’s gracious verdict that sets the believing sinner right in the eyes of the law on the grounds that Christ honored it in precept and penalty on the sinner’s behalf. If Christ put His life on the line to honor it so that sinners could be saved, then saved sinners will gladly put their life on the line to honor it by a life of new obedience (see Ps. 119). Salvation is not by the keeping of the law, but it is salvation to the keeping of the law.

It is the strangest anomaly that antinomians think they

Paul has often been outrageously misrepresented as an enemy of the law. Some have thought that the more they kick and despise the law, the more they imitate Paul.

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are pals of Paul, when the truth of the matter is that nothing establishes the law so much as the apostle’s revelation of the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:31). It is certain that we today cannot revive this powerful doctrine of justification unless it be in the setting of God’s judgment and God’s law (see Rev. 14:6-12).

2. “Justify” Is an Eschatological Word. This is not only evident from its use in the Old Testament, but from its use in the New Testament! Because it is a word which belongs to judgment, it belongs to the verdict of the end-time judgment. This is very clear in two New Testament scriptures:

. . . for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.—Rom. 2:13, 16.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.—Matt. 12:36, 37.

The Jews believed in an end-time judgment in which those approved of God would be justified. Their whole life was regarded essentially as a preparation for judgment. On God’s last day, according to them, those whose good deeds outweighed their bad deeds would be justified. If the balance was equal, God, being merciful, would put His weight on the side of good deeds. The means of attaining



this favorable verdict on the day of judgment was obedience to the law.

Paul's message makes a radical break from Judaism on two major points. (1) The ground of justification at God's judgment seat is not our obedience (nor our faith, repentance, humility, or anything which is ours, for that matter), but the obedience of God's suffering Servant (Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:1, 19; Phil. 3:5-9; etc.). (2) Paul proclaims the astounding fact that the judicial verdict has already been settled for the man of faith. The resurrection is the seal and proof of this (Rom. 4:25). Thus the future eschatological verdict has become a present possession to the man of faith. He is therefore sure of deliverance from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9) and rejoices in the certain prospect of glorification at the consummation of the age (Rom. 8:11, 30).

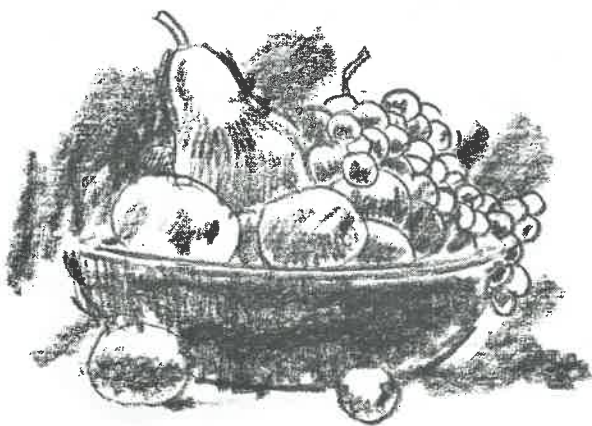
The sole ground of justification is God's righteous judgment which took place in the Christ event. This justifying action took place in Jesus Christ, outside of us and independent of us. It was an event completely objective to us. Like the other great Pauline expressions describing the Christ event—redemption, propitiation, reconciliation—justification does not mean something done *in us*, but that which is done *for us* and in our interest. "Man is justified because Christ died. . . . something took place exterior to man in the process whereby his salvation was effected."—Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

Yet this is not presented by Paul as a one-sided objectivity which is divorced from experience. The most objective expressions of Paul (righteousness of God,

Paul proclaims the astounding fact that the judicial verdict has already been settled for the man of faith. The resurrection is the seal and proof of this (Rom. 4:25). Thus the future eschatological verdict has become a present possession to the man of faith.

The achievement and declaration of salvation are never separated from the appropriation of salvation by faith. It is impossible to separate God's justifying action which took place at the cross from personal justification through faith.

Justification is no legal fiction, but a legal reality, for we are dealing in the category of legal rights from beginning to end. The gospel proclaims these rights which have been won by Christ and which may be accepted by faith alone.



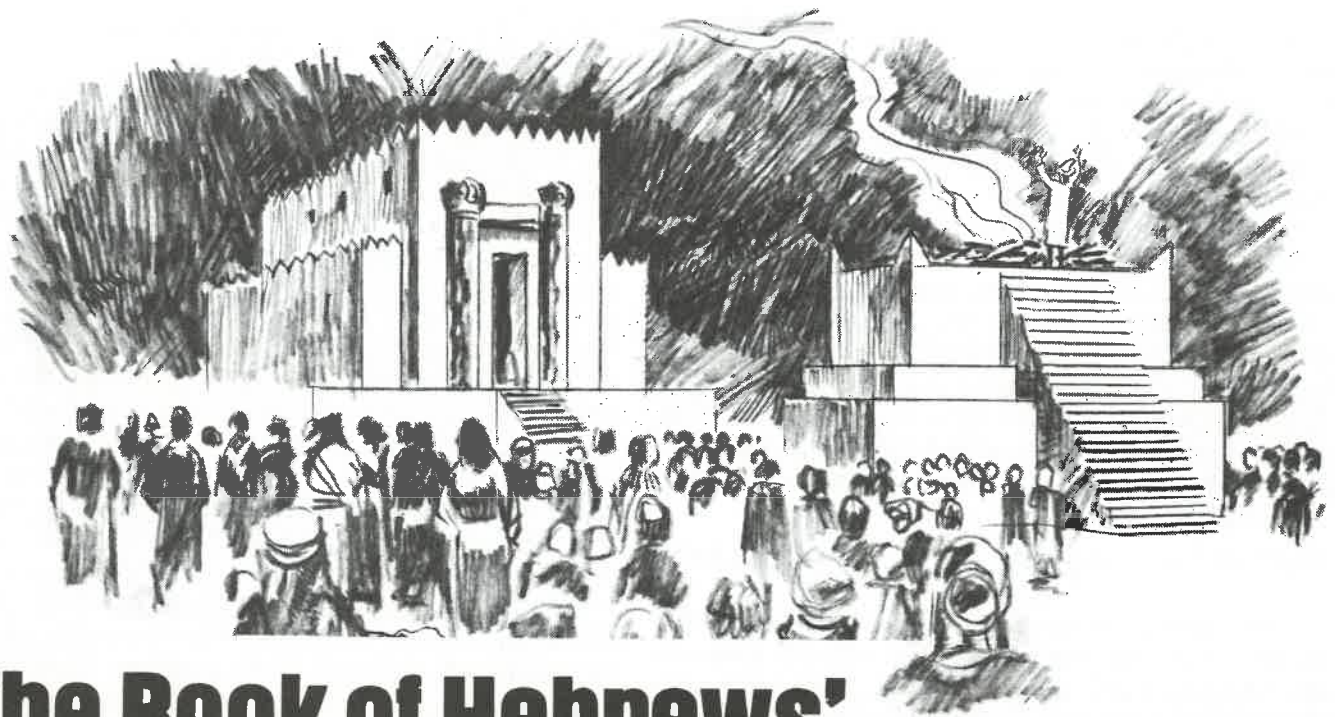
redemption, propitiation, justification) are always connected with the subjective experience of faith (see Rom. 1:16, 17; Rom. 3:21-26). The achievement and declaration of salvation are never separated from the appropriation of salvation by faith. It is impossible to separate God's justifying action which took place at the cross from personal justification through faith. Therefore it is true to say, "Christ did all this for us that we might believe," and, "Christ did all this for those who believe." Without faith we have no interest in the benefits of the Saviour's work.

In no sense is God's gift of justification something done in man. We may correctly say that the righteousness of God in the Christ event is communicated to the believer by *imputation* (Rom. 4), but it is scandalous to say that it can be communicated to us by *impartation* (infusion).⁷ The righteousness of God is a once-for-all event which took place 2,000 years ago. Even God Himself cannot reenact it outside of us, to say nothing of doing it in us. But what Christ did He did as our Substitute. Therefore His life was really my life, and His death my death. God counts them as mine. That is what justifies. Or to put it another way, what He did He did as my Representative, so that I lived and died and rose again in Him.

Substitution means that when Christ lived, He lived for me, and when He died, He died for me. *Representation* means that I lived in Him and died in Him. Since all this was done for me (substitution) and since I did it in Him (representation), I can rightly claim it as mine. God reckons it mine. This is no legal fiction, but a legal reality, for we are dealing in the category of legal rights from beginning to end. The gospel proclaims these rights which have been won by Christ and which may be accepted by faith alone.

Whereas in Romans 3 through 5 Paul sets forth the substitutionary and representative work of Christ which is imputed to all who believe, in Romans 6, 7 and 8 he explains what it means to have faith in God's righteousness. *First*, faith means being baptized (incorporated) into Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6). *Second*, it means being married (united in spiritual union) to Jesus Christ (Rom. 7). *Third*, it means having the Spirit of Christ within us (Rom. 8). The first delivers us from the dominion of sin. The second delivers us from the bondage of legalism. The third sustains us in suffering through the warfare against the old sinful nature. This is *sanctification* (faith working by love), and it is the fruit of *justification*. The Christian life and experience are not the gospel, but the fruit of the gospel. They cannot be put in the room of the gospel, and they must not be confused with what Paul calls "the righteousness of faith."

⁷James Buchanan (*The Doctrine of Justification*) is certainly right when he argues that God's righteousness provided for us in the doing and dying of Christ can only be imputed, for it is a historical event, both infinite and unrepeatable. This is not to deny the necessity of the *impartation* of the communicable attributes of the divine nature through the gift of the Holy Spirit. But this impartation of God's righteous character must not be confused with the Pauline article of "the righteousness of faith."



The Book of Hebrews' Interpretation of the Christ Event: The Yom Kippur of God

The book of Hebrews has one theme—the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The whole presentation is wonderfully objective. The author does talk about going on to perfection (Heb. 6:1), but not in the way of mystic pietists who make the whole subject of perfection internal and experiential. Aside from a few practical exhortations, the writer of Hebrews does not dwell on the subjective experience of the believer. He focuses our attention on that work of eternal efficacy which has been done by an infinite Person.

The apostles had a Spirit-filled experience. It was an experience of being completely caught up in the wonder and grandeur of the Christ event. It seemed that they could talk of nothing else. It was absolutely their only message. What they wrote was inspired by the Holy Spirit. If we want to know what the Spirit inspired these men to talk about, the book of Hebrews is a prime example. This Spirit-breathed book is another explication of the Christ event. Here the Spirit glorifies Christ as He takes the marvelous things of the gospel of Christ and shows them unto us (see John 16:13-15). This is the Pentecostal experience we need to dwell on today. It is as different from experience-centered Pentecostalism as heaven is from earth.

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Hebrews does have a very distinctive way of viewing the Christ event. It is seen as the fulfillment of the ritual law. The Jews had a magnificent religious ritual centered in the temple service. They were very proud of it, not the least reason being that God Himself had given it to them. Hebrews shows that the Person and work of Jesus Christ is the reality of the entire sacrificial system. For this reason the writer does not use words and expressions reminiscent of the law court, but of the sanctuary and its services of worship. Hence there is the prominence of such words as *purge, purify, cleanse, sanctify, consecrate* and *perfect*. Like all the great expositions of the New Testament, Hebrews drives us back into the Old Testament to obtain the key to understanding the distinctive way in which it sets forth the meaning of the Christ event.

The Old Covenant and the Tabernacle Ritual

The writer to the Hebrews links two things of the Old Testament in inseparable connection—(1) the covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai and (2) the tabernacle ritual. We must therefore go back to the Old Testament to find out what this covenant was and how it was related to the tabernacle of Moses.

Old Testament scholars generally agree that the *covenant* is fundamental to an understanding of the Old Testament. The word *covenant* (Hebrew, *berith*) occurs over 250 times in the Old Testament, with more than 150 of these occurrences referring to the covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai. The word is always singular. God often refers to it simply as “My covenant.” The word itself means a *bond, a compact, an agreement, a treaty, a solemn pledge*. Covenants between individuals were commonly formed by both the Hebrews and their neighbors in the ancient world. These were called parity covenants, or covenants between equals. Then there was another type of covenant called a *suzerainty* covenant. This was a treaty between a king and His subjects. G.E. Mendenhall,¹ K. Baltger² and others have shown that the Sinai covenant formulary reflects the Hittite suzerainty treaties. At Sinai, Israel was incorporated as a nation under God. He was their King, pledged to give them succor and protection. They were His subjects, pledged to love and loyal obedience.

The Sinaitic covenant may also be compared to the marriage covenant. In solemn pledge God became the Husband of Israel (Jer. 31:32). It was a covenant which demanded *chesed* (covenant loyalty, faithfulness) on the part of both parties. Throughout their subsequent history, God is constantly presented as *chesed*—faithful and loyal—to His sinful and unworthy people. On the other hand, Israel was constantly unfaithful; she was not

chesed. The prophets represented the nation as guilty of marital infidelity.

The words of this Old Testament covenant are “the Ten Commandments” (Ex. 34; Deut. 4:13). The form of the Decalogue resembles the form of the suzerainty treaty. First, there is the very characteristic preamble: “I am the Lord thy God. . . .” Then, in classical treaty form there follows the historical prologue: “. . . which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Ex. 20:2. The main element in the covenant is “the words of the covenant,” “the Ten Commandments,” or “the testimony [Hebrew, *eduth*].” These are the oath-bound stipulations which constitute the covenant order of life. The covenant blessings and cursings are interspersed among the stipulations (Ex. 20:6, 7, 12). The covenant also contains the King’s seal. Meredith Kline points out that “the Sabbath sign presented in the midst of the ten words [is] the equivalent of the suzerain’s dynastic seal.” —Meredith G. Kline, *The Treaty of the Great King* (Eerdmans), p. 18. Finally, the covenant was deposited in the sacred ark and kept in the most holy place of the tabernacle. Consequently, the Ten Commandments are called “the words of the covenant.” The tables of stone on which they were written are called the “tables of the testimony [*eduth*],” the ark is “the ark of the covenant,” and the tabernacle itself, where the ark was located, is called “the tabernacle of the testimony” (see Ex. 31:18; 32:15; 34:29; Num. 10:33; Ex. 38:21).

It is a grave mistake to suppose that God actually imposed a legalistic covenant of works upon Israel. The people were not asked to keep the Ten Commandments as a method or way of redemption, but as a result of redemption (Ex. 20:2).

¹G.E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel, the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955).

²K. Baltger, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Semitic and Early Christian Writings*, tr. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).



It is a grave mistake to suppose that God actually imposed a legalistic covenant of works upon His people. This is clearly contrary to the Old Testament record. The giving of the Ten Commandments was preceded by the great deliverance from Egypt. This was an Old Testament act of salvation by grace alone, surely! The people were not asked to keep the Ten Commandments as a method or way of redemption, but as a result of redemption (Ex. 20:2). Israel was not chosen as God's elect people because she kept the law, but in order that she might keep the law. The commandments were presented as the way of life for a people *already* redeemed. They pointed out how Israel was to show her gratitude for salvation in concrete acts of loving devotion. Furthermore, Deuteronomy makes it quite clear that Israel would not be given the promised land for her righteousness, but solely because of God's covenant faithfulness (Deut. 9:6).

This covenant arrangement had "ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." Heb. 9:1. We must see the relationship between the tabernacle ritual and the covenant. Israel could remain in covenant relationship with God only as she continued to live in harmony with the stipulations of the covenant—the testimony, or *eduth*. The people had pledged themselves to do this (Ex. 19:5-8), but God knew that it was not in them to do it (Deut. 5:29). While

The high point of the sanctuary service was the tenth day of the seventh month, known as the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur.

He would not tolerate open and flagrant rebellion (which would break the covenant), He would make provision for sins of human weakness. By the blood sacrifice of animals (substitution) and by the mediation of a high priest (representation), He would show Israel how they could continue to meet the claims of His Ten Commandment law and thereby continue to live in covenant fellowship with Him. The sins of Israel would be imputed to the sanctuary so that God could not behold iniquity in Jacob (Num. 23:21).

In the daily ritual the priests offered God's sacrifice at the brazen altar and ministered in the first apartment of the tabernacle. This was a ritual of continual forgiveness. The high point of the service was the tenth day of the seventh month, known as the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur. While the congregation gathered at the tabernacle

to afflict their souls in remembrance of sin, the high priest did three things for Israel. (1) He offered the yearly sacrifice (Lev. 16:9). (2) He took the blood within the holy of holies and sprinkled it upon the lid of the ark (Hebrew, *kapporeth*; Greek, *hilasterion*; Luther's translation, mercy seat).³ This fully satisfied the stipulations of the covenant and was therefore called "an atonement." It also cleansed the sanctuary from the defilement of Israel's sins (Lev. 16:15-19). (3) In the high priest, Israel had unrestricted access into the presence of God, which presence was manifested in the holy Shekinah above the mercy seat (Lev. 16:30).

This ritual had no merit in itself, but it did illustrate the principles of salvation by substitution, representation and imputation. It pointed away to the coming redemption on God's great day. Especially did Yom Kippur express Israel's eschatological hope. It was a yearly reminder of the great day of judgment, when God would "finish the transgression, make an end of sins, . . . make reconciliation for iniquity, and . . . bring in everlasting righteousness." Dan. 9:24 (cf. Lev. 16:16, 21).

In the history of the chosen people the time came when they had become utterly unfaithful to the covenant. It was not a case of "sins of ignorance," but as the prophets called it, adultery and harlotry. Finally the great divorce took place. The favored wife was stripped of her God-given adornments, the sanctuary was razed to the ground, and the people were cast out as exiles.

The Promise of a New Era

Yet the Babylonian rule was not "a full end." Jer. 4:27. In great wrath God forsook His people, but the prophets spoke of a new beginning. Isaiah declared that there would be a glorious new exodus. Jeremiah spoke of the restoration in terms of a "new covenant." Ezekiel promised a new Davidic King and a new temple of glorious dimensions.

As we pointed out earlier, these grand hopes, so often written in terms suggesting a grand eschatological event, did not fully materialize at the end of the seventy years in Babylon. True, there was a restoration of very humble proportions to Palestine. But there was no new Davidic king. The restored temple was so inferior to the former one that many wept when its foundation was laid. Besides, there was no ark of the holy covenant in the new temple. The Jews would have to wait for the coming of God's Messiah for the complete fulfillment of all those promises.

In the fullness of time Messiah arrived to "confirm the covenant" by His own blood. Standing at the transition point between the old era and the new, we hear Jesus declaring, "This [cup] is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26:28. To Jews steeped in Old Testament history and the

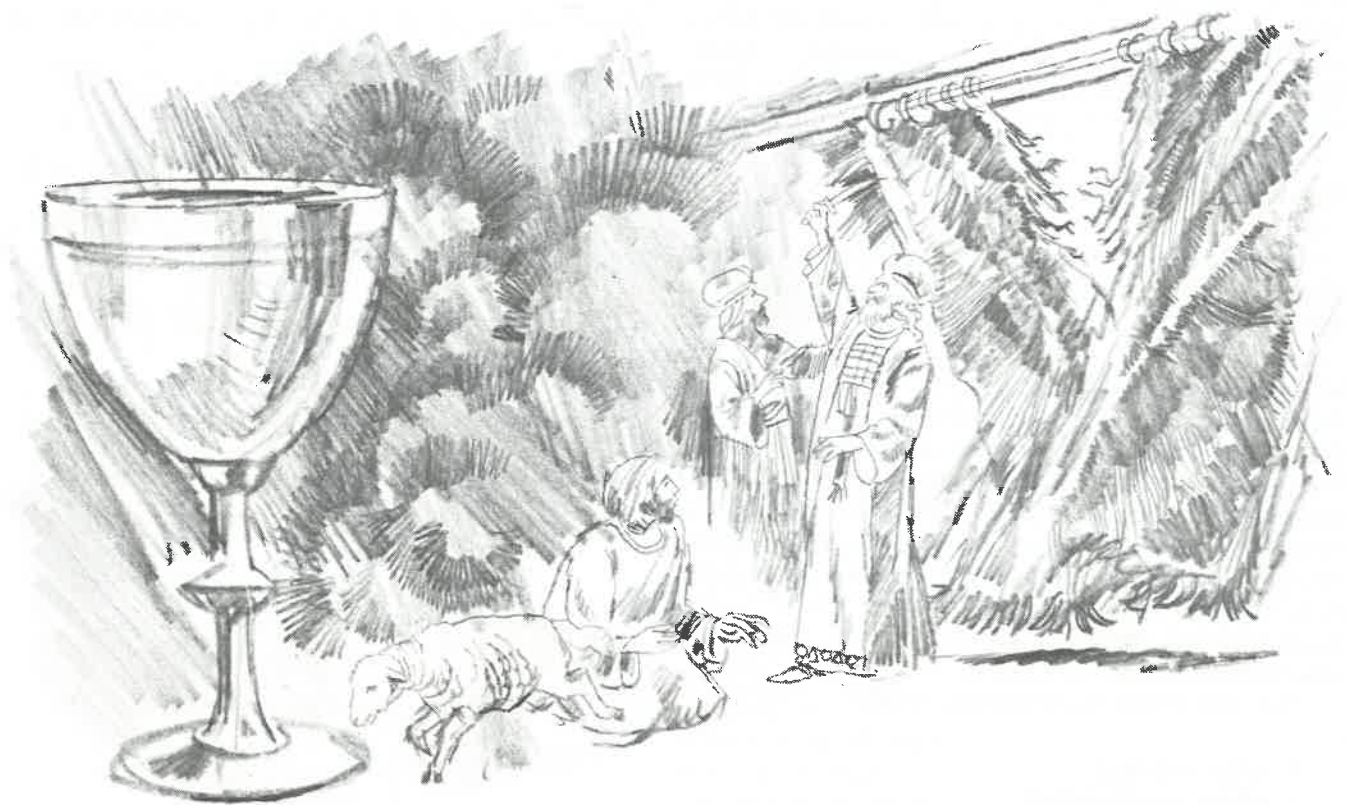


hope of Old Testament prophets, what could this mean but that the hour had finally arrived for the new exodus, the deliverance of all deliverances? The words "new covenant" surely signify the inauguration of the new kingdom, the new temple and the new Israel.

According to the prophecy of Daniel, Messiah would "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease"—that is, put an end to the whole Jewish sacrificial system (Dan. 9:27). This He accomplished by being "cut off, but not for Himself." Dan. 9:26. At the very moment of His death on the cross, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Mark 15:38. This signified that the entire ritual law had come to an end, having met its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. We are reminded of the words of Jesus that not a jot or tittle could pass from the law "till all be fulfilled." Matt. 5:18. Since there are things which have passed from the law (such as the ritual service), it is clear that every part of the tabernacle ritual, including those parts that especially pointed to eschatological events, has met its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Now the message of Hebrews can come into focus. The writer reasons that the words "new covenant" imply a new sanctuary and a new priesthood (Heb. 9). The earthly sanctuary, being associated with the old covenant, is made obsolete by the new and better arrangement. The old order is not lampooned, for we must not forget that it was ordained as a "divine service." Heb. 9:1. St. Paul

³The original word means something like *place of atonement, propitiation or expiation*.



The words “new covenant” surely signify the inauguration of the new kingdom, the new temple and the new Israel.

Every part of the tabernacle ritual, including those parts that especially pointed to eschatological events, has met its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

could even call the old covenant “glorious.” But it is “done away” by that which does “exceed in glory.” (2 Cor. 3:7-11). The writer to the Hebrews repeatedly calls the new covenant “better” (Heb. 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24). The earthly service with its animal sacrifices was only “a shadow of good things to come.” Heb. 10:1. The blood of animals could never take away sin or perfect the worshipers (Heb. 10:1-4). It was a mere “pattern” or “figure” of the heavenly sanctuary, where Jesus Christ ministers for us (Heb. 9:23, 24). In the Christ event the reality has come. There is no need to continue acting out the shadow.

The “new covenant” does not mean a new religion or a new ethic. This becomes clear when we look at Jeremiah’s prophecy of the new covenant (see Jer. 31:31-34). The moral constitution—the divine stipulations (*eduth*)—is the same. The new covenant does not promise a new ethic, but a new heart (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10). The temple in which Jesus is the Mediator is said to be in heaven (Heb. 8:1, 2). The Revelator declares, “Then God’s temple in heaven was laid open, and within the temple was seen the ark of His covenant.” Rev. 11:19, NEB. Again he says, “. . . the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony [the *eduth*, or Ten Commandments] in heaven was opened.” Rev. 15:5. While the new covenant means a new temple and a new priesthood, it does not mean a change

in the moral order. The Ten Commandments are still there in the new covenant temple. The constitution, therefore, is the same, but it is under a new and better administration. Let us therefore be careful to distinguish between those things which change and those things which never change.

The New and Living Way

The book of Hebrews presents Christ as the new High Priest of the new and better covenant. The first seven chapters of the book spell out His qualifications for being "such an High Priest." Heb. 8:1. He is better than angels because He is divine (Heb. 1). As the new Head, the new Adam of the race, He is made like us in every respect essential to human nature (Heb. 2). He is greater than Moses or Joshua and qualified to lead us into God's true rest (Heb. 3, 4). He is greater than the Aaronic priests, who died, because, as a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, He has the power of an endless life (Heb. 5, 6, 7). Since the Person of our High Priest is infinitely better than the priesthood of the old order, His work is also infinitely better.

The High Priest must do three things:

1. Offer sacrifice.
2. Make an atonement.
3. Provide access to God's presence.

1. Sacrifice. If Christ is High Priest, He must offer sacrifice. The apostle declares:

For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.—Heb. 7:26, 27.

For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have somewhat also to offer.—Heb. 8:3.

. . . nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.—Heb. 9:25, 26.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. . . . And every

The "new covenant" does not mean a new religion or a new ethic. It does not promise a new ethic, but a new heart. It does not mean a change in the moral order.

The High Priest must do three things: (1) offer sacrifice, (2) make an atonement, and (3) provide access to God's presence.



priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.—Heb. 10:1-14.

The apostle does not merely contrast Christ's Self-offering with the offerings of the daily ritual, but with the offering made by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. On that day Aaron laid aside his gorgeous high-priestly robes and offered the Day of Atonement sacrifice in the plain linen robe of the common priest. So Christ laid aside His royal robes, was made like unto His brethren, and offered His day of atonement sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim. Unlike the Levitical offerings, this offering never has to be repeated. Christ's blood has eternal efficacy for all who believe in its merits.

2. Atonement. When the high priest of the tabernacle ritual had offered the yearly (Day of Atonement) sacrifice, He took the blood within the holy of holies and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, beneath which were the words of the covenant that promised life to all who satisfied its claims. This action of the high priest typically satisfied the demands of the law. Hence it was called "the atonement" (see Lev. 16).

The high priest of the old order went often into the sanctuary with the blood of bulls and goats to make an atonement, to purge and purify the people, and secure their acceptance before God. But Christ by His own blood purged the sins of His people (Heb. 1:3), put them away (Heb. 9:26), perfected His people forever (Heb. 10:14), and secured their eternal release (Heb. 9:12). This He did once, *before* He entered God's presence and sat down at His right hand (Heb. 1:3; 9:12, 24). In this respect the Melchisedec priesthood is not a *parallel* of the old order, but a *contrast* (see Heb. 7:27; 9:25).⁴

This means that the cross fulfilled the type of the high priest's sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement. This was not done by His entering into God's presence as Aaron entered the holy of holies, but rather by the offering of Himself once and for all time upon the cross. The message of Hebrews is this: *What the high priest could not do, even on the Day of Atonement, Christ has done.* Purification, purging, perfecting—whatever expressions might be used to describe the high-priestly act of making atonement—all this was accomplished in the Christ event.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make *reconcilia-*

The cross fulfilled the type of the high priest's sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement.

What the high priest could not do, even on the Day of Atonement, Christ has done.

⁴This should be compared with Paul's treatment of the two Adams in Romans 5:15, 18: "But not as the offense, so is the free gift. . . . not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift. . . ." Christ transcends the type in such a way that the truth must be presented in terms of contrast rather than exact parallel.

tion for the sins of the people." Heb. 2:17. This act of reconciliation was accomplished in the death of Christ. Yet the word translated "reconciliation" is *hilaskesthai*, meaning "to make propitiation." It is the verb form of *hilasterion*, which is the word the Septuagint uses to translate *kipporeth*, the lid of the sacred ark. The word translated "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5 is *hilasterion*. In Romans 3:25 Paul says that Christ was set forth on the cross to be a *hilasterion*. That is to say that by His death the stipulations of the covenant were fully satisfied. Christ Himself became our Mercy Seat. What does all this mean? It means that Calvary was the fulfillment of Yom Kippur.

At this point we must notice an important connection between St. Paul's interpretation of the Christ event and its interpretation given in the book of Hebrews. In Romans, Calvary is presented as the revelation of God's judgment day. In Hebrews it is seen as Yom Kippur. This proves beyond all question that the Jewish Day of Atonement was a true type of the eschatological day of judgment and that the Jews were quite right in regarding it as such (see *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, pp. 280-285). The tragedy lay in their failure to see its fulfillment in the Christ event.

3. Access to God's Presence. It was only on the Day of Atonement that Israel, in the person of their high priest, could enter into God's presence. But the blood of Christ gives us "boldness to enter" into the real sanctuary "by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil. . . ." Heb. 10:19, 20. No longer must we await the coming of the high priest to find direct access to God's presence. The great sacrifice has been made. The veil has been rent by Christ's death. The way into the holiest has been laid open. Christ has thrown open every compartment of the temple, that every believing soul may have free access to God. Through Christ the hidden glory of the holy of holies stands revealed. The mercy seat, upon which rested the glory of God in the holy of holies, is open to all. By the efficacy of this living Mercy Seat, every true believer has fellowship with God. This is the glorious benefit of the covenant whose oath-bound stipulations have been met on our behalf by the life and death of Jesus Christ. He is both the Fulfiller and the Executor of the covenant. Believers are the beneficiaries. Faith in Jesus gives the ultimate blessing of full and free access to God's presence, as it is written, ". . . in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Ps. 16:11.

Christ has thrown open every compartment of the temple, that every believing soul may have free access to God. Through Christ the hidden glory of the holy of holies stands revealed.



The Johannine Interpretation of the Christ Event: The Eternal Life of God

The apostle John interprets the Christ event in terms of "eternal life." The words *life* and *eternal life* are used about fifty times in the Johannine literature.

... for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. . . —1 John 1:2.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.—1 John 5:11-13.

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.—John 3:16.

... but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.—John 20:31.

The background of John's concept of eternal life is the Old Testament.

The background of John's concept of eternal life is the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Scriptures God is presented as the "living God," who is the only fountain of life (Ps. 36:9). When man sinned in the beginning, he was driven from Paradise, where he had access to the tree of life (Gen. 3:22). Separated from God, man is only mortal.

The conviction deepens throughout the Old Testament that in the age to come there will be life for the man who has fellowship with God.

... in the later writings of the Old Testament we find the picture of the healing river, or living waters, which will flow out from Jerusalem in the Messianic Age (Ezek. 47. 1-12; Zech.

“Both in the Synoptics and in John, eternal life is the life of the eschatological age to come.” —George Eldon Ladd.

14.8; Joel 3.18; cf. Isa. 12.3; 33.21), bringing life to the world. St. John, in whose writing Jewish eschatology is adapted to Christian ends with consummate skill, fastens on the idea and represents Christ as the fulfillment of the promise of ‘living water’ (John 4.10) in the latter days: ‘The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into the life of the (new) Age’ (John 4:14). . . .

Thus, the conception of life, which the New Testament takes over from later Judaism, is thoroughly eschatological. —Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 71, 72.

The New Testament expression, “eternal life [Greek, *zoe aionios*],” is taken from Daniel 12:2: “. . . many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life [Septuagint, *zoe aionios*]. . . .” Richardson points out that “the phrase is entirely Jewish” and “is not found in pagan religious and philosophical writers until long after the New Testament period.” —*Ibid.*, p. 73.

There are two points we need to notice about this *zoe aionios*:

1. It is the life of the resurrection, not only in Daniel, but in Johannine literature. John reports Jesus as saying, “. . . every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:40 (see also John 6:39, 44; 5:25-29). “There is never a hint in his [John’s] gospel that the Greek idea of immortality, the mere survival of the soul, has replaced the Semitic concept of life” — that is to say, the life of the whole man in true creaturely existence (R. Schnachanburg, *God’s Rule and Kingdom* (1963), p. 280; cited in George Eldon Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth*, p. 72).

2. *Zoe aionios* is a Hebrew expression which really means “life of the age to come.” Its meaning is primarily qualitative. Says Richardson:

The fact is that in the New Testament *zoe*, or more fully *zoe aionios*, is an eschatological conception; it is one of the characteristic marks of the Age to Come, like glory, light, etc. In the contemporary rabbinic conception, the Age to Come (cf. Mark 10.30, *ho erchomenos aion*; Heb. 6.5, *ho mellon*



“There is never a hint in his [John’s] gospel that the Greek idea of immortality, the mere survival of the soul, has replaced the Semitic concept of life.” — R. Schnachanburg.

aion), as distinct from this age (*ho nun aion* or *ho aion houtos*), was to be characterized by *zoe*, that is, *zoe aionios*, the life of the (coming) *aion*. Thus, what appears in EVV as 'eternal life' or 'life everlasting' really means 'the life of the Age to Come'. The phrase *zoe aionios* need not necessarily imply ever-lasting life (e.g. Enoch 10.10), but the usual meaning is life after death indefinitely prolonged in the World to Come (Dan. 12.2; Test. Asher 5.2; Ps. Sol. 3.16; 11 (4) Esd. 7.12f.; 8.52-54).—Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 74.

Ladd agrees, saying, "Both in the Synoptics and in John, eternal life is the life of the eschatological age to come."—Ladd, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

John's message of eternal life, therefore, is the apostle's way of presenting Jesus as the fulfillment of the hopes of the Old Testament. Yet it is a radical break with Judaism on two counts:

1. Judaism taught that this eternal life would only appear in God's last day, or in the age to come. John declares that this eschatological day of salvation has already arrived in the Person of Jesus. In Him the life of the age to come has appeared. Eternity has broken into history. This message is every bit as startling as the Synoptic message that the kingdom of God has arrived in Jesus Christ, or the Pauline message that the eschatological judgment with its acquitting verdict has already been revealed in the Christ event, or the message of Hebrews that Calvary is Yom Kippur.

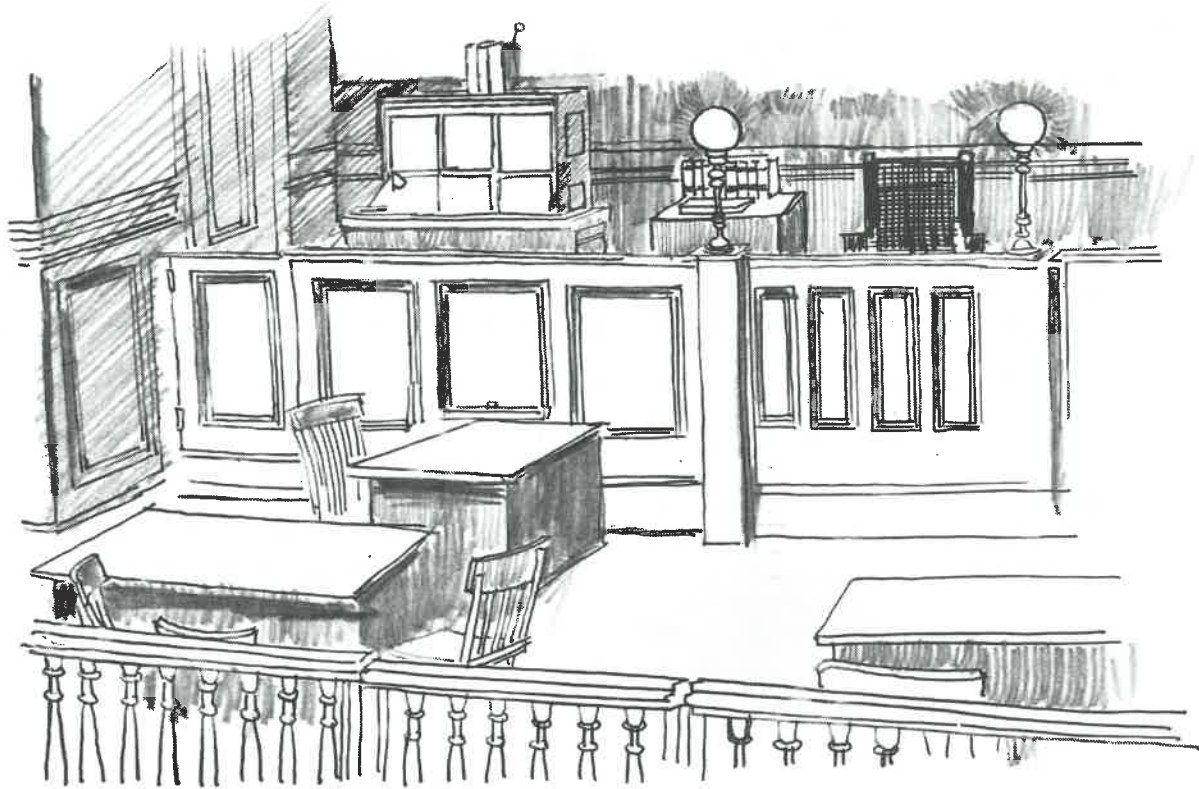
2. Judaism had come to believe that this "water of life" or "bread of life" was found in the Torah (the Law). Its faithful study and practice, it was said, would obtain for man the coveted life of the age to come. Said a noted Rabbi, "The Torah is great, because it gives to those that practice it life in this age and in the age to come."—Pirge Aboth 6.7. But John's gospel denies that life can be found in this fashion (John 5:39, 40), even as Paul denies the claim that the law can give life (Gal. 3:21). The life of the age to come has been brought to us by God's Son. He is that living Bread, who gives eternal life (John 6:39-44). Men cannot acquire it by works, but only by believing on the name of the Son of God (John 6:28, 29). Even the apostle Paul did not press faith as the receptive instrument of salvation more than John, for John speaks about believing on Jesus more than 100 times. He declares that the purpose of writing his gospel is that we might believe and, by believing, possess the life of the age to come (John 20:31). If Paul is to be noted for his accent on justification by faith, John is to be noted for his theme of eternal life by faith. Yet they are both talking about two aspects of one reality. To Paul, justification is God's verdict of life (Rom. 5:18) and is accompanied by the gift of God's life-giving Spirit (Rom. 8:10). To John, believing on Jesus means a verdict of no condemnation, a passing from death unto life (John 5:24).

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The major difference between the Synoptics and John is that the former speak of eternal life as future (at the last-day resurrection), while John speaks of eternal life as a possession of believers now.

In the Synoptic Gospels we find that 'eternal life is synonymous with the kingdom of God (see Mark 10:15-17). The major difference between the Synoptics and John is that the former speak of eternal life as future (at the last-day resurrection), while John speaks of eternal life as a possession of believers now.

We must be careful at this point to think and speak in the framework of the Bible. The believer does not possess this life as an inherent quality any more than he possesses God's justifying righteousness as a property in His own nature. He possesses this life only by faith. Eternal life dwells in Him only "in faith." It has not become a quality of his humanity. Just as in the midst of his sinfulness he is righteous, so in the midst of his self-evident mortality he has life. *By faith he is what he is not*. In himself he is not righteous and not immortal, but in Christ he is both righteous and immortal. The Christian's righteousness before God is not in Himself, but in the One in whom he believes. In the same way, his life is extrinsic, outside of himself in the Person of Christ. ". . . your life," says Paul, "is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:3 (cf. 1 John 5:11, 12). This life will be an empirical possession of the believer only when Jesus comes again at the consummation of world history (Col. 3:4).



The Eschatological Hope of the New Testament

The gospel is the good news that all the grand eschatological hopes of the Old Testament have met their fulfillment in the Christ event. In the Person of Jesus Christ the kingdom of God, the righteous judgment of God, the Yom Kippur, and the life of the age to come have broken into history. The New Testament everywhere proclaims that the last days have arrived, and the signs of the resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit are seen as full proof of this (Acts 2:16, 17). It is this eschatological character of the gospel which makes it so dynamic and urgent. This is what explains the power of the early church's witness to Jesus Christ.

But these mighty happenings in Jesus Christ are evident only to faith. The gospel interprets that this is what really took place in Christ's death and resurrection. Faith alone can see it. When it is said that a believer enters the kingdom, or is justified at God's tribunal, or has eternal life, this means that he possesses these glorious benefits only in faith. Christ has returned to heaven. The kingdom, the righteousness of God, and eternal life are all in

Him, and therefore they are, as Peter says, "reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Pet. 1:4, 5.

The New Testament, therefore, has two focal points—the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. At

The New Testament has two focal points—the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. At His first advent He inaugurated the blessings of the new age; at the time of His return He will consummate them.

His first advent He *inaugurated* the blessings of the new age; at the time of His return He will *consummate* them. These two focal points may be clearly seen in the Synoptic message of the kingdom, the Pauline message of the righteous judgment of God, the book of Hebrews' message of Yom Kippur, and the Johannine message of eternal life.

Jesus declared that His kingdom had arrived in His Person. His mighty deeds were the signs of that kingdom. Yet Jesus just as clearly spoke about a future consummation of the kingdom at the end of the world (Matt. 24). His disciples must pray, "Thy kingdom come." Matt. 6:10. They must preach "this gospel of the kingdom . . . for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matt. 24:14. The setting up of the kingdom of glory is clearly future, for Jesus declared, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations. . . ." Matt. 25:31, 32.

Paul preached that the righteous judgment of God and its acquitting verdict are revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ. Yet he just as clearly spoke of a future judgment at the consummation of the age. ". . . He hath appointed a day," declared the apostle, "in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained. . . ." Acts 17:31. There will yet be "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Rom. 2:16. Contrary to those who say that the believing community will not be judged, Paul declared repeatedly that there will be a final judgment according to works. All will be included, "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Rom. 14:10.

The writer of Hebrews not only sees the Yom Kippur in the Christ event, but he also points to the certainty of the return of Jesus Christ. After the high priest offered the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, he came out of the sanctuary to bless the waiting people. So the church is now represented as standing in the outer court, waiting for the glorious appearing of the High Priest who will return from the temple in heaven to bless His watching, waiting people with the actual possession of all the covenant blessings. The writer of Hebrews says, ". . . so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look [Greek, eagerly wait] for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Heb. 9:28. Again he says, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Heb. 10:37. The events of the Jewish seventh month, with its climactic feasts of Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles (Harvest), as well as the Jubilee, portray events of eschatological significance and therefore must be seen in association with events connected with Christ's second advent. Sir Isaac Newton, in his commentary on the Revelation, was one of the first to draw attention to the numerous allusions to the Jewish seventh month in the book of Revelation.

The events of the Jewish seventh month, with its climactic feasts of Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles (Harvest), as well as the Jubilee, portray events of eschatological significance and therefore must be seen in association with events connected with Christ's second advent.



Sir Isaac Newton

John declares that eternal life, the life of the age to come, has been manifested to us in Jesus Christ. It is already a possession of those who believe. The Synoptics speak of eternal life as future—that is, it will be granted on the future resurrection day. This is not a contradiction of John's message. John also associates this gift of eternal life with the resurrection at the last day (John 6:39-44). He also cites Jesus' promise, ". . . I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. Paul too can speak of eternal life as a future hope (Rom. 2:7; 5:21). In fact, he speaks of "the hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5), "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:29), "the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8), "the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7), and "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13. Obviously, these are all aspects of the one hope which is consummated at the coming (*parousia*), or appearing (*epiphany*), or revelation (*apocalypse*), of Jesus Christ.¹

The two focal points of the New Testament (the first and second advents) are related to *faith* and *hope*. The message of the first advent creates faith—faith which sees that eschatology has already taken place in Jesus Christ. The message of the second advent inspires hope—hope that all the blessings which are now possessed by faith will become an empirical possession at the return of Jesus Christ. The church must live in "the times between," in the tension between the "now" and the "not yet," between having and not having. There must be both faith and hope. Faith in what Christ has already done inspires hope in the certainty of Christ's coming again. Hope in the coming glory of God both refreshes faith when it is tried by suffering and restrains faith when it would prematurely seize the glory that shall be.

The Epistle of Paul is about faith in "the times between." Peter does not appear to present any distinctive interpretation of the Christ event (such as kingdom of God, righteousness of God, etc.). In his first Epistle he speaks of the trial of faith. In the second he warns against the perversion of faith through any form of careless or ungodly behavior. Because the Christian's faith is a holy faith, it will produce a holy life as the Christian is both "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. . . ." 2 Pet. 3:12.

James is not unlike Peter. He argues that a faith which does not work in godly behavior is only the faith of devils.

The Shape and Certainty of Things to Come

The desire to know the nature of future (last-day) events is deeply ingrained in human nature. Christians, too, want to know about the events connected with the age

¹These are the three New Testament words used to designate the second advent of Jesus Christ.

Faith in what Christ has already done inspires hope in the certainty of Christ's coming again. Hope in the coming glory of God both refreshes faith when it is tried by suffering and restrains faith when it would prematurely seize the glory that shall be.

Since eschatology has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the events of the last day can only be an unfolding of what has already happened. The Christ event, therefore, is the shape of things to come.

to come. God does not deny these anxious scannings of the future. He meets them in the last book of the Bible. The Revelation was written to inform the church about “things which must shortly come to pass,” the “things which must be hereafter.” Rev. 1:1; 4:1. It tells the truth about the future. That future is “the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Rev. 1:1.

Christ is the Truth. He is the truth about God, for all that we can know about God has been revealed in Jesus Christ. He is the truth about man, for He was man as man was meant to be. He is the truth about the past, because He is the mirror of election and the full disclosure of what God planned from eternity. And He is the truth about the future. What shall come has already been. Since eschatology has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the events of the last day can only be an unfolding of what has already happened. The Christ event is not only the mirror of the past, but the mirror of the future. In the death and resurrection of Christ we see the outpouring of God’s wrath, the nature of hell, the righteous judgment of God, the Yom Kippur, the resurrection, the defeat and casting out of Satan, victory over sin and death, and the life everlasting.

The Christ event, therefore, is the shape of things to come. Was the law brought forth and honored in this Christ event? So it will be in the events of the last judgment. Was the penalty of the law exacted in the Christ event? So it will be in the events of the last day. Was the wrath of God a terrible reality at Calvary? So it will be at the end. Does faith tell us that we had an Intercessor and High Priest at Calvary? So shall we have One in our day of judgment. Was not Christ our Mercy Seat at the cross? So will He be on our day of final reckoning. Did not God’s reckoning with sin in Christ’s death precede the glorious resurrection? So it will be with our final reckoning and resurrection (or translation) at the end time. And so we could go on. Eschatology is the cosmic disclosure of what has already happened in Jesus Christ. He is the truth of the future. His redemptive act is the shape of things to come.

The Christ event is also that which makes the future certain. The eschatological events portrayed in the Revelation “must . . . come to pass” because in Jesus Christ they have already come to pass. The Christ event does not negate the necessity of a final judgment and its

The two focal points of the New Testament—the Christ event and eschatology—do not compete with each other for our attention. Each advent highlights the other.

The gospel is like a telescope through which we look at the final scenes. It brings them into sharp focus and makes them appear so very near that it seems as if we could reach out and touch them.

attendant events. It makes it certain. Paul declares that Christ’s resurrection from the dead is God’s “assurance unto all men” that “He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained.” Acts 17:31. In Daniel 9:24-27 we are told that the redemptive acts of the Messiah *seal up*, or *confirm* and *establish*, the certainty of the whole vision of divine restoration at the end of the days.

This means that the two focal points of the New Testament—the Christ event and eschatology—do not compete with each other for our attention. Each advent highlights the other.

A reflection on the scenes of Calvary highlights the end-time events. The gospel is like a telescope through which we look at the final scenes. It brings them into sharp focus and makes them appear so very near that it seems as if we could reach out and touch them. That

is why the apostolic church (and every church wherein the gospel is truly received) sees the end as near. It stands on tiptoe, awaiting the appearing of Jesus Christ and all the events of the age to come.

Conversely, a true reflection on eschatology will highlight the gospel. As we reflect on the great tribunal before which we must render account, on the holy law which is to judge us, and on the prospect of both the glory and the wrath of God, how this leads us to the comfort and assurances of the gospel!

We must press this point about the two advents' highlighting rather than competing with each other. There are those of us who have presented the gospel in such a way that the events of the end time are negated. The judgment which took place in Christ has been used to deny that there will be any final judgment of the believer. The inauguration of the kingdom at Christ's first advent has been used to negate the setting up of His kingdom of glory at the end. We have overlooked how the ritual of Yom Kippur also points to events connected with Christ's second coming. Eternal life in the *now* has been used to empty the final resurrection of all meaning. On the other hand, there are groups who have tried to emphasize the importance of eschatology so much that they have been suspected of denying the finished work of Christ and the full reality of present salvation in Him. They have been slow to recognize that the valid end-time events which they proclaim are not made unnecessary, but even more certain, when their fulfillment is seen in the Christ event.

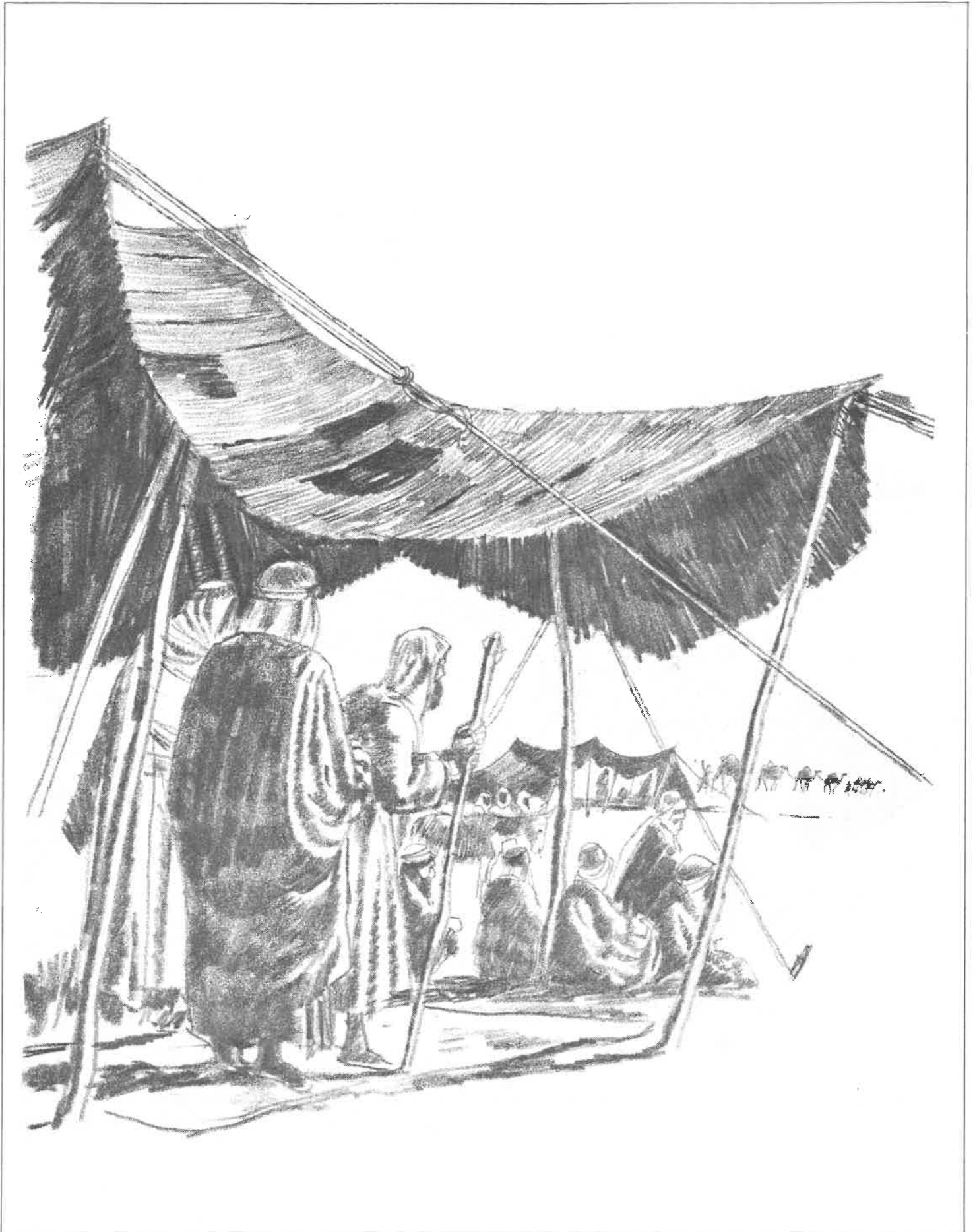
It seems that the true biblical tension between inaugurated eschatology (the Christ event) and consummated eschatology (the end of history) has been as difficult for the church to maintain as the true biblical tension between law and gospel. We have before us plenty of examples of what takes place when Christians fail to look at the end-time events through the telescope of the gospel. The result is "eschatological legalism" of the first order. If anyone wants full proof of this, let him consider how many people have been "cast out of the synagogue" and treated as apostates because they failed to confess to some fantastic "dispensational" detail. That is legalism indeed! The church can hold to a true eschatology only as she tenaciously holds to the gospel.

It is equally true that the church can hold to the gospel only as she holds to her eschatological hope. The church is essentially an eschatological community which lives in "the times between." Knowing that the last events have already been inaugurated in Jesus Christ, she looks for the speedy consummation at the return of her Lord. How can she view the events of the end as being far off when she not only sees that they have already happened in her Head, but that she herself, in the present gift of the Holy Spirit, has the down payment, or first fruits, of her inheritance? (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:13). Believers have been "made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to

come." Heb. 6:4, 5. They know that in Christ the world of the old order has passed away. The new has already come, and by faith they are part of this new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Their justification is the assurance of their coming glorification (Rom. 5:1; 8:30). As they remember what has happened and what has been given to them, they eagerly anticipate the end and see signs of the end in many things. Because they are already in Christ and part of the new age, they cannot give ultimate allegiance or significance to anything of the old order. They cannot settle down here as if this world were their home. But as a true eschatological community, they, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, live in tents, having no continuing city, but seeking one to come. This eschatological hope characterizes all of New Testament ethics. If the church loses her sense of the shortness of time and her expectancy of the end, it is proof that she has also lost the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Toward a Full Recovery of Eschatological Hope



Martin Luther

Whenever the church is full of the gospel, she is full of eschatological hope. The New Testament church burned with ardent desire and enthusiastic expectancy of Christ's soon return. Paul even found it necessary to warn some against neglecting their daily work as they waited for the *parousia*.

This bright hope of the return of Jesus soon faded from the church. It was revived to some extent in the Reformation, especially by Luther. As the gospel came into sharper focus, so did the eschaton. To Luther, the end was no longer the doomsday of medieval thought, but the "happy last day." Sometimes he saw it close at hand. But the bright eschatological hope of Luther soon faded in the era of Protestant scholasticism and church building. By the time of Daniel Whitby (1638-1726) the church could even accept the idea of 1,000 years of Christian supremacy before the coming of the Lord.

In the last 100 years eschatology has become a major preoccupation in some sections of the church. But in many cases it is a "carnal," speculative or Judaistic type of eschatology that is not really related to the gospel of the Christ event. It is not eschatology seen through the telescope of the gospel. It is not the hope of a cosmic disclosure of what has already happened in Jesus Christ.

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Consequently, instead of highlighting the gospel, this type of eschatology competes with the gospel at best and utterly denies the gospel at worst.

We need to look at the causes behind the church's loss of eschatological hope and then try to understand the principles necessary for a true recovery of that hope.

Causes Behind the Loss of Eschatological Hope

The gospel proclaims that the kingdom of God, the judgment of God, the Yom Kippur of God, and the life of the age to come have been inaugurated in Jesus Christ. Christ has returned to heaven. The kingdom of the gospel is the kingdom of heaven. It is not only of heavenly origin, but it is in heaven and may be entered only by faith (Col. 1:13). Paul declares, ". . . our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven. . . ." Phil. 3:20. Peter also says that the believer's inheritance is in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). That is why the people of God are exhorted, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:2. In the same way, the righteousness which is of faith is not on earth, not in the believer, but in heaven! The believer therefore waits in faith for the "hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5), with which the righteous Judge will crown him "at that day." 2 Tim. 4:8. And of course, the life of the believer is in heaven, "hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:3. Although eschatology has been inaugurated in Christ, it has yet to be consummated.

It is this tension between what has been inaugurated and what is yet to be consummated which creates an "earnest expectation . . . for the *manifestation* of the sons of God." Rom. 8:19. The New Testament church is essentially an eschatological community, already part of the new age and the new creation by faith, but waiting for this to be manifested in empirical reality at the coming of Christ.

However, the church soon ceased to be such an eschatological community. She lost that faith which is directed to heaven. That which the church has in heaven at God's right hand was cast down to the earth (see Dan. 8:11, 12). To be specific:

1. The church ceased to truly pray, "Thy kingdom come," for instead of entering the kingdom only by faith and waiting for its manifestation, she began to conceive of herself as the kingdom of God on earth. The man who formulated this idea into a systematic theology was Augustine. The church itself was set forth as the stone of Daniel 2, the kingdom of God which overthrows and replaces the kingdoms of this world. Why wait for the kingdom to come when the church is thought to be the reality of this eschatological hope?

Instead of being a community which confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, having no continuing city but seeking one to come (Heb. 11:9-16),



St. Augustine

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The church substituted righteousness on earth (infused righteousness) for the righteousness in heaven (imputed righteousness) as the ground of justification with God.

The church itself was made to be the tabernacle of the new covenant. Her human priesthood presumed to be the antitype of the Aaronic priests and the Levitical tabernacle.

the church settled down to become a permanent institution. She became a divinized institution which claimed complete monopoly over the treasures of salvation. In thus putting the kingdom on earth, the great St. Augustine became the father of the papal system and the horrors of the Inquisition.

2. The judgment of God was also cast down to the earth. Luther saw that the church in itself was always a "poor sinful creature," holy only in its Head. But Augustine's exaltation of the church led her to presume to be God's supreme tribunal on earth. As judge, she justified herself and condemned others. The saints fell "by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days." Dan. 11:33. The church substituted righteousness on earth (infused righteousness) for the righteousness in heaven (imputed righteousness) as the ground of justification with God. The Pauline truth of righteousness by faith was cast to the earth and utterly lost. Moreover, the rules and enactments of the church on earth were substituted for the commandments of God in heaven (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 11:19, 15:5).

3. The sanctuary of the new covenant is not on earth, but in heaven (Heb. 8:1; Rev. 11:19; 15:5). Christ alone is the Minister of this sanctuary, the only Mediator between God and man. From this temple in heaven He executes His own will and testament, makes intercession for the saints, and rules as Priest upon His throne. But the spirit of antichrist, working in the church, cast the new covenant temple and its service of intercession to the ground. The church itself was made to be the tabernacle of the new covenant. Her human priesthood presumed to be the antitype of the Aaronic priests and the Levitical tabernacle. They polluted "the sanctuary of strength" (that which was the stronghold of the church's faith and life) and substituted "the abomination that maketh desolate." Dan. 11:31 (cf. Rev. 17:4, 5).

4. The biblical truth of life only in Christ was also cast to the earth in the church's claim to inherent immortality. This error was parallel to the doctrine of justification by an inherent (infused) righteousness. We cannot here pause to discuss the various errors which spring from this unscriptural notion of natural immortality, except to say that Luther was brave enough to call it a "monstrous error" which came from "the dunghill of Roman decretals."—Martin Luther, *Assertion of All the Articles Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull*, Nov. 29, 1520.

How do these four major errors relate to a loss of eschatological hope? When the kingdom of God, the righteousness of God, the sanctuary of God, and the immortal life of God are seen to be in Christ alone, in heaven alone, and possessed in the *now* by faith alone, then the church earnestly prays, waits and rejoices in the prospect of Christ's coming—for it is only then that

salvation will become an actual possession. But when all these things are prematurely seized and cast down to the earth, real eschatological hope ceases to be. In her attempt to fulfill life and history, the church loses both faith in the gospel and hope in the second coming of Christ.

In the recovery of the gospel in the sixteenth century, we see a partial recovery of New Testament eschatology. Yet is it not all too evident that the spirit of casting truth from heaven to earth has been at work in the church since then? The medieval church put the church and her traditions in the place of the kingdom of God and the authority of His Word. Today it is a preoccupation with subjective religious experience which has cast down the truth to the earth. As a consequence, "most modern Protestant scholars have adopted the Roman view of the doctrine of justification, as Doellinger pointed out in his lectures on reunion of the Christian Church. . . . modern Protestant theology . . . develops doctrine from 'experience' and other subjective sources, and has discarded the Christian doctrine of justification."—F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (Concordia, 1951), Vol. 2, p. 555.

There are a few teachers, like stars in a tempestuous night, who hold to the truth and primacy of the New Testament doctrine of forensic justification, but these are the exception, not the rule. Religious internalism has not only led whole sections of the church away from the objective gospel, but it has led them to deny and repudiate the necessity of any objective law as a rule of life for the Christian. It is said that an inward experience called "love" or an inner voice called "Spirit" now provides the believer with infallible guidance. With this wholesale rejection of what the Reformers called "the third use of the law,"¹ the church has virtually joined hands with those who teach situation ethics or moral relativism. In some cases it seems that the church will sanction almost any abominable thing so long as it is done in "a loving spirit." Only as men confess the reality of a law external to themselves will they appreciate the value of a righteousness which is also external to themselves.

When the gospel is lost, New Testament eschatology is lost. Much of the eschatology which currently fascinates so many evangelical minds is not New Testament eschatology, for it is not an unfolding and disclosure of what has already happened in Christ. It is an eschatology that has no real relationship to the Christ event. People take passages from the Old Testament and interpret them eschatologically without any reference to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This is a Judaizing eschatology that is contrary to the apostolic gospel.

¹The three uses of the law are:

First use—social, to restrain wickedness.

Second use—to convict of sin and drive us to Christ.

Third use—a rule of life to show Christians how they should live in praise of grace.

In her attempt to fulfill life and history, the church loses both faith in the gospel and hope in the second coming of Christ.

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Principles Necessary for a Recovery of New Testament Eschatology

If the church is to be awake and alive, she must be a genuinely eschatological community, waiting on tip-toe for the *parousia*. She must know when Christ's coming "is near, even at the doors." Matt. 24:33. Let us therefore make a summary of the elements necessary for a recovery of New Testament eschatology:

1. The Christ event as the fulfillment of all Old Testament hopes must not only be the starting point, but the vantage point from which everything else is seen. We must become as preoccupied with expounding its significance and witnessing to its glory as was the New Testament church. The essence of Christian experience is to be caught up in the wonder and grace of Christ, our Substitute, Representative, Righteousness, Propitiation, Reconciliation, Redemption, Mediator, Intercessor, High Priest, Atonement and Life. Christian witnessing is witnessing to a vicarious experience and not to our own.

2. The objective, outside-of-me nature of the great Christian truths must be grasped. The fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and promises is *in Christ*. The kingdom of God, the righteousness of God, the sanctuary of God, and the eternal life of God are all in heaven. We enter them and possess these blessings only by faith. "*Righteousness by faith*" means to be where we are not and to be what we are not.

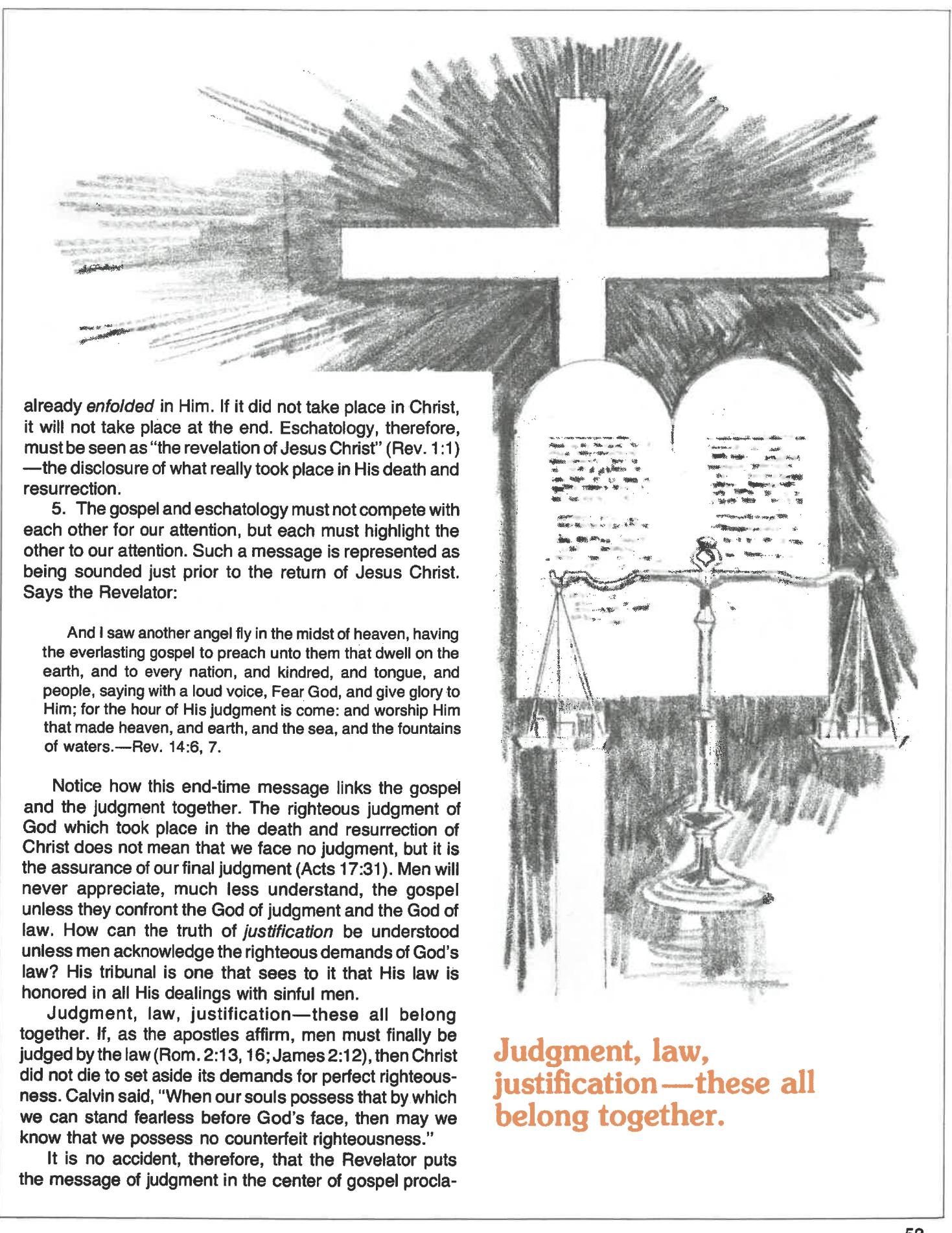
3. The fulfillment in Christ of the eschatological hopes of the Old Testament will not lead us to ignore their future consummation at the time of Christ's second advent. We will not only see how the eschatological things of Daniel 2, 7, 8 and 12 were fulfilled in Christ, but we will seek to understand how they are to be consummated in "the time of the end." Dan. 12:4.

4. The Christ event must be seen as the mirror of eschatology. What *unfolds* at the end can only be what is

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already *enfolded* in Him. If it did not take place in Christ, it will not take place at the end. Eschatology, therefore, must be seen as “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1) —the disclosure of what really took place in His death and resurrection.

5. The gospel and eschatology must not compete with each other for our attention, but each must highlight the other to our attention. Such a message is represented as being sounded just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Says the Revelator:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.—Rev. 14:6, 7.

Notice how this end-time message links the gospel and the judgment together. The righteous judgment of God which took place in the death and resurrection of Christ does not mean that we face no judgment, but it is the assurance of our final judgment (Acts 17:31). Men will never appreciate, much less understand, the gospel unless they confront the God of judgment and the God of law. How can the truth of *justification* be understood unless men acknowledge the righteous demands of God’s law? His tribunal is one that sees to it that His law is honored in all His dealings with sinful men.

Judgment, law, justification—these all belong together. If, as the apostles affirm, men must finally be judged by the law (Rom. 2:13, 16; James 2:12), then Christ did not die to set aside its demands for perfect righteousness. Calvin said, “When our souls possess that by which we can stand fearless before God’s face, then may we know that we possess no counterfeit righteousness.”

It is no accident, therefore, that the Revelator puts the message of judgment in the center of gospel procla-

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mation. The judgment was the center of Old Testament hopes and is given clear expression in the book of Daniel.² It is by God's act of judgment that the kingdom is established (Dan. 2), the sanctuary of God vindicated (Dan. 8), and God's people delivered from death to life in the age to come (Dan. 12).

The Reformers were not wrong in putting justification at the center of the New Testament message, for *justification* is the verdict of the Judge in His work of judgment. We have seen that Paul's message to the Romans is a revelation of the righteous judgment of God—a judgment which condemns all sinners, intervenes in their hopeless predicament, demonstrates God's wrath in punishing the Representative of the race, declares the believing sinner righteous, and which honors the law (the character of God) in the whole procedure (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-31).

We have seen that "the kingdom of God" really means *the rule of God*. As king, He has a law which is called "the royal law." James 2:8. This law is not only honored in His judgment, but *established*. Establishing God's kingdom means the establishing of the authority of His law.

To be sure, entering the kingdom means freedom, but it is the freedom that comes by subjection to the divine authority of "the royal law," "the law of liberty." James 2:8, 12.

We have observed that the words, or stipulations, of the covenant have not passed away with the old covenant, but have passed under the new and better administration. Let all with eyes to see look at that new covenant temple in heaven, which contains both the ark and the "testimony" (Rev. 11:19; 15:5). The antichrist has polluted (Dan. 11:31), blasphemed (Rev. 13:6) and trodden this temple underfoot (Dan. 8:11, 12) until the cry has gone up for God to arise in judgment and vindicate His sanctuary (compare Dan. 8:13 with Rev. 6:9-11; Ps. 43:1-5; Zech. 1:12, 16).

God's act of judgment is also that which justifies and delivers His people. This is true whether we look at the judgment Christologically or eschatologically. It is the decree of the Judge which releases the believer from the pit of sin, and it is the eschatological decree of the judgment which brings the believer's body from the grave. Life comes to man only by a favorable decree of the Judge. Justification—that is, to be judged righteous at the divine tribunal—is a verdict of eternal life (Rom. 5:18). By faith eternal life is a present possession, yet it remains the "hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2), which shall be brought to us at the appearing of the One "who is our life." Col. 3:4.

What is "life" but to be in harmony with God, to be in His kingdom, under His rule, and in His presence? This is what the gospel teaches us to *believe we are*, and this is what eschatology teaches us to *hope we shall be*.

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²Daniel means God is my Judge.

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