

The Bible Standard

WHO HATH BELIEVED OUR REPORT?



From Our Own Correspondent

JERUSALEM, NISAN 16 —

Not peace, but uneasy calm, sits over the city as the stooges of our priestly god-fathers put their spin on the events of the past few days. The arrest and hasty mock trial of one Jesus of Nazareth, and his crucifixion on Friday as a political activist, smacks so much more of expediency than of justice that the ruling religious fraternity fears a showdown, and a careful whitewash operation is evidently under way.

This Jesus has been known during the past 3 years as a charismatic preacher who spoke of a coming kingdom and aroused considerable interest and sympathy among the populace, and even among some — it is rumored — as eminent as members of the Sanhedrin.

Though probably regarded by most as harmless and perhaps deluded, there were occasions when his castigation of clerical hypocrites threatened his own safety. But it seemed that last week he felt the time had come to throw caution to the winds. Challenged by the Scribes and Pharisees on various aspects of his teaching, he had an answer for everything — and they

didn't like it. He was furious at the commercialization of the Passover customs in the temple yard (a public scandal), and caused a mighty fracas by overturning the merchants' cash boxes and releasing the doves on sale. The place was crowded and everybody heard him declare it a "den of thieves." Of course the incident is being played down now (like everything else this weekend) — just a slight accident, they say.

A Conspiracy

The arrest was a clandestine affair, made at about midnight in collusion (I heard on reliable authority) with one of the preacher's disaffected followers, whose palm was greased by the priests. The situation was hot to handle and, true to form, Annas, crafty puppet master, having determined on the fate of Jesus, tossed him to Caiaphas to deal with. Equally corrupt, but of less forceful character, Caiaphas continued the charade along with a council of the Sanhedrin. Of course this national legislature has to set the seal on any major judicial decision, and called from their beds at an ungodly hour, most were not disposed to argue against the whims of Rome's official appointees, or scruple at turning a blind

eye to an obvious frame-up of the accused.

Accused of what — Sedition? Criminal activity? Treason? No! His crime (for the records) was that he claimed to be the Messiah — the Son of God. This was more than enough to satisfy a corrupt court and they ratified the death sentence on the grounds of blasphemy.

Pilate Blackmailed

I saw Jesus early on Friday morning being taken to the Procurator. The poor fellow had been badly knocked about. Blasphemy means nothing under Roman law, and Pilate at once saw through the priestly sharp practice. Though as ruthless as any man, he seemed reluctant to be involved in the execution of an innocent victim, and sent Jesus to Herod who, after indulging his usual malicious sport with the poor creature, sent him back.

Pilate could have freed the prisoner and did try reasoning with his accusers, but the situation was nasty and a crafty charge of disloyalty to Caesar did the trick. Pilate signed the death warrant, and publicly washed his hands of the whole business.

The crucifixion was hurried through, ostensibly because of the approaching Sabbath, but doubtless more for

reasons of expediency. It was a strangely dark day and the preacher died well before evening. They put him in a borrowed tomb — and that should have been the end of the story. But it isn't, and the powers that be are at their wits' end to know how to handle the repercussions.

Fact or Fiction?

The preacher's disciples — who nearly all disappeared into the woodwork during his trial and crucifixion — now say that he is still alive, or rather, that he has been "raised" from the dead! Behind closed doors I have interviewed some of them, who seem to be in a state of awestruck euphoria, but are utterly convinced and serious in their claim.

They say that early this morning when their women-folk went to see to the proper decencies for burial, the tomb was open and Jesus had vanished. That much could be explained. *But can a dead man live again?* And could he be caught and crucified afresh? It looks as though Annas and the whole caboodle have bitten off more than they can chew this time, and the think-tank is hard at work trying to suppress the rumors. Watch this space!

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"LIFT UP A STANDARD FOR THE PEOPLE" — ISA. 62: 10

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Who Hath Believed Our Report?

— ISAIAH 53: 1 —

A RHETORICAL QUESTION? Perhaps. Yet there is an underlying note of frustration, a reluctance to accept that such epoch-making events can be dismissed as unworthy of credit by intelligent thinkers.

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” (Isa. 53: 1). The prophet, moved by God’s holy spirit, looks far into the future and records for posterity the sad reality that though the inspired and inspiring Gospel message would be bestowed first on God’s chosen nation, Israel, and then carried to the uttermost parts of the earth, its universal acceptance is by no means assured. And this has been the common experience of God’s faithful reporters since our Lord’s first advent, even to our own day.

The Kingdom message so often falls on unwilling ears and is met with a raised eyebrow and a pitying expression. “How can you believe such things?” they ask. “Look at the world today — if Christ died for the sins of the world, why is there still such evil and injustice?”

Has the Gospel witness, then, been a failure? Did Christ die in vain? Or worse — have we ourselves been deceived and become *false* witnesses, raising unrealistic hopes, impossible of fulfillment? God forbid!

For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar. — Rom. 3: 3, 4

God’s Plan of Salvation in all its beauty, logic, and simplicity, is far beyond the bounds of human invention. So satisfying and thrilling to believers, it means nothing to most men and women. Today it is considered clever to be cynical — to question everything, doubt every man, trust nobody. The simple trust that once marked the characters of many ordinary folk is now rare. Why is this? The Apostle Paul again gives the answer (2 Cor. 4: 4):

The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Modern developments in communications have lent Satan, the god of this world, an invaluable tool for the furtherance of his deceptive strategy. He is a master of disinformation and has powerful servants in radio, television, and the press, all well able to delude even the educated. Further, in this time of great increase of knowledge, he is adept at perverting potential blessings to evil ends, exploiting men’s greed. And he turns the spotlight on all that is degrading and demoralizing, appealing to the baser instincts of godless people, so that evil proliferates and threatens the very survival of the human race.

Marvel, then, that there are *some* who have believed Isaiah’s report, some who have accepted the witness of God’s

faithful servants — the glad tidings of great joy which (in due time) shall be to all people!

“BEHOLD MY SERVANT”

Isaiah’s pain and grief are powerfully conveyed in his report. He sees in prospect the advent of Israel’s Messiah, whose unquestioning loyalty to His Heavenly Father brings upon Him the reproaches of an uncomprehending people. That the promised Deliverer should come as a “suffering servant” is abhorrent, and He is summarily rejected.

The report begins at verse 13 of chapter 52, where God speaks of the mission of His Servant, first giving a kind and comforting assurance of ultimate triumph: “He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” This outcome is restated at the end of the prophecy, a further consolation that the harrowing events described therein will achieve the Divine purpose in due time.

That our Lord Jesus should come as a servant does not reduce Him to the status of a slave. Rather, He is God’s honored messenger whose supreme desire is to do His Father’s will. “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa. 40: 7).

THE FACE OF JESUS

Most representations of the features of the Savior do not appeal to our modern sense of beauty. Medieval art, in particular, often shows Him as an ascetic, pallid and poor specimen of humanity. Was Jesus really like that? Based on Isaiah’s words in verses 2 and 3 some have suggested that Jesus’ personal appearance *was* inferior to that of other men. “He hath no form nor comeliness . . . no beauty that we should desire him . . . and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” Again: “His visage was so marred” (Isa. 52: 14). Undoubtedly our dear Redeemer’s face bore the marks of sorrow. His deeply sympathetic heart was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” and His grief that His own “received Him not” would add a certain sadness to his expression (Heb. 4: 15; John 1: 11).

But during Jesus’ time on earth, how did ordinary men, women, and children regard Him? Was He rather unattractive? Unapproachable? Somewhat forbidding? On the contrary, it is clear that He had in superlative measure that rare quality that can attract a little child, inspire confidence in the weak, and draw strong men to lifelong love and devotion. A child does not spontaneously approach one of miserable countenance or repulsive appearance, and it is unlikely that the common people would have listened gladly to a prophet of doom with a face to match.

But was it evident that He was uncontaminated by the common Adamic imperfection? We are not told, but in the

**“Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone. . . .
Unto you therefore which believe he is precious:
but unto them which be disobedient, the stone
which the builders disallowed, the same is
made the head of the corner, and a stone of
stumbling, and a rock of offence”**

— 1 PET. 2: 6-8 —

poetic language of Song of Solomon 5: 16, Jesus was “altogether lovely”! Even when Jesus was broken-hearted, bruised, ridiculed and tormented, and facing imminent death, Pontius Pilate could marvel at His dignity and noble demeanor, and almost involuntarily exclaim: “Behold the man!” (John 19: 5).

TO WHOM IS THE ARM OF THE LORD REVEALED?

Very few see in our Lord Jesus the powerful arm, the omnipotence of God, stretched out for the aid of our fallen race. Few realize that the sacrifice made at Calvary is the foundation upon which God’s Kingdom will be established for the blessing and uplifting of all families of the earth.

It must be remembered that our Lord believed it of Himself and did not fear to declare before the High Priest: “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power” (Matt. 26: 64) — fury and disbelief distorting the features of those who heard. Later, after His resurrection, He told the disciples: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28: 18). Remaining on earth 40 days, appearing from time to time in their midst, He strengthened their faith and enkindled such a zeal as would send them and their successors to the ends of the earth, witnessing to all nations — Divinely appointed reporters imparting the Gospel of salvation, the glad tidings, the *good news*, to a world predominantly deaf, blind, and unbelieving.

THE REPORT

“We have found the Messiah” (John 1: 41). This astonishing declaration by the Apostle Andrew at the commencement of Jesus’ ministry sent a shock-wave of excitement through the watchers of that day, those trusting in God’s promise of a great Deliverer. These were not put off by His humble origins and apparent insignificance. His compelling message held them in thrall. They had found the Messiah!

Had He come as a glorious king, a mighty military leader, of noble birth, with all the trappings of earthly prestige and honor, their report would undoubtedly have hit the headlines and mobilized the religious and political powers of the day into frenzied action. But — an itinerant preacher? A friend of publicans and sinners? An upstart from nowhere?

Joining the prophet across the centuries in the great publishing work, the disciples of Christ since His death have shared with Isaiah the accusation of false witness, the bitterness of rejection, and the ridicule of the worldly-wise. The message of a Savior suffering for the sins of the world has not been pleasing to the ears of a “faithless and perverse generation,” who feel they have no need of salvation and persuade themselves, in spite of every evidence to the contrary, that every day, in every way, they are getting better and better.

And still the report is carried far and wide by those whom the Lord has blessed with understanding. It is never stale news. It makes plain a Divine Plan to rescue dying humanity from the just sentence passed upon them, and to give them an opportunity to gain perfect everlasting life. Too good to be true? We have the testimony not only of Isaiah, but also of all the prophets since the world began, that “the times of restitution of all things” will come (Acts 3: 21). That the price for sin must first be paid is the burden of our message, and this feature of the Gospel is still the chief stone of stumbling and rock of offense to both the houses of Israel — the Jewish house and the Christian house. Only a few accept the great foundation of faith, the Ransom (Isa. 8: 14; 1 Pet. 2: 7, 8).

A Tender Plant

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground” (Isa. 53: 2). The tender plant in the Hebrew suggests a sapling, such as often grows from the root of a felled tree. Long after King David’s genealogical tree had apparently dried up and the nation had lost its sovereignty, new life was to emerge from the root-stock. The prophet gives a similar thought in chapter 11: 1: “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” The phenomenon is viewed in this verse from the standpoint of the Christ’s future glory and power during His Messianic kingdom.

But Jesus as a “tender plant” is the weak, yet promising shoot, unregarded during His first advent by all but a very few. Out of the apparent dormancy of God’s ancient promises to Israel, the Messiah emerges, but He is a Suffering Servant, come to make a sacrifice for sin, and they do not desire Him.

A Man of Sorrows

Sorrow was the bitter consequence of sin at the dawn of human history. Who can doubt that the Creator Himself, passing sentence on the guilty pair, was sad at heart? To the woman, He said: “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,” and to the man: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen. 3: 16, 17).

While the human race suffers the sorrows and pains of death, the Father’s own sorrow is reflected in the Son’s deep and abounding sympathy for others. Looking upon the rich

young ruler who went away sorrowing, Jesus loved him (Mark 10: 21). From His standpoint of human perfection, Jesus, in Whom was no sin, would have been acutely sensitive to the unhappy predicament of humanity in general. In helping and healing, in teaching and giving of Himself, He carried our sorrows.

Acquainted with Grief

The grief here is sickness, weakness or disease. It seems reasonable to accept that Jesus, though not affected by the degeneracy of human nature under the curse, and perfect in his physique, could suffer the common woes of other men. The Scriptures bear record that vitality went out of Him when He healed the diseases of others. When scourged, He bled; when beaten, He was bruised. His ministry of 3½ years was of such an intense sacrificial nature that when the time came for the trial and crucifixion, it was manifestly true that He had “poured out his soul unto death.”

Nor is His sorrow and grief yet at an end. Though raised to the Father’s right hand, a sharer of the Divine nature, His sacrifice complete, still He carries our sorrows and bears our griefs. Our own experience tells us that He often lifts from our sagging spirits the heavier part of our “cross.” And we have the assurance that we are not tried and tested in our Christian walk beyond our ability to bear, but a “way to escape” is provided (1 Cor. 10: 13). God directs the issue on our behalf. We may not always realize how often the powers of Heaven are sent to our aid at times of need!

It is not God’s purpose at the present time to relieve us of our responsibility towards the unbelieving world. Rather, it is an essential feature of His Plan that those who receive the report and join in the witnessing work also share in Christ’s sufferings, entering into the world’s distress, gladly bearing their portion of sorrow and grief, that they might be well prepared in due time to share in the uplifting of all mankind to the image and likeness of God, as when first created.

Wounded for Our Transgressions

“Without shedding of blood is no remission” of sins (Heb. 9: 22). To shed blood implies a sacrificial death, and not what is termed a natural death, though strictly speaking no man dies a natural death, as by nature man was intended to live forever. As far as the satisfaction of Justice was concerned, Jesus might have been put to death by any other means, the underlying principle being a life for a life — the life of Jesus for the life of Adam. (See *Bible Question Box in this issue.*)

Neither, to redeem mankind, was it necessary that our Lord should be wounded and His blood spilled on the ground. But we have the record of the Apostle John that “one of the soldiers . . . pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water” (John 19: 34). Here we have evidence not only of the actual death of Jesus, but see in this narrative the wonderful attention to detail in the Divine arrangements, in that the shed blood is seen to be effective in the lifting of the curse from the ground itself. This will reverse the common experience of labor and toil, as generations gained their bread by the sweat of their brow. In the time appointed, “the earth shall yield her increase” (Ezek. 34: 27), and God says in effect: “In joy shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life!” (See Isa. 35: 1, 2, 10.)

Bruised for Our Iniquities

He was *crushed*, beaten to pieces, destroyed. This is the thought in the Hebrew. It does not imply a literal shattering of the body of our Lord, for we know that the prophecy of Psa. 34: 20 was fulfilled: “A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19: 36; compare Exod. 12: 46 and Num. 9: 12). But how crushed was our dear Savior’s spirit as He came to the climax of His mission! In the extremity of His agony He prayed to the Father: “If thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done . . . and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22: 42, 44).

Which of His disciples witnessed this phenomenon? The three chosen watchers were overtaken by sleep, but one faithful follower saw and heard and remembered. How could he ever forget? And later he reported

what he had witnessed that fateful night to Luke, the beloved physician who, under Divine inspiration, recorded it for the instruction and encouragement of all who would lay down their lives along with their Lord.

What the prophet Isaiah saw in prospect, the companions of the Lord Jesus saw as current events. Both sensed but dimly the glorious outcome, but we who have believed their report have also the benefit of hindsight, and can trace the leadings of Divine love through the many centuries that have passed since the Suffering Servant made His soul an offering for sin.

. . . And with His Stripes We are Healed

While chastisement does imply corporal punishment, it also has the thought of instruction, correction, reproof, administered from the best of motives. Thus the Apostle encourages the brethren to accept gladly the Lord’s fatherly concern for their welfare: “Whom the Lord loveth he chas-



teneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12: 6, 7). Surprising as it may seem, our Lord Jesus was not excluded from this aspect of the Father's parental care. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5: 8, 9).

It was the chastisement of *our* peace that was upon Him that we might have peace with God, freedom from sin's condemnation. His wounding, His bruising, His chastening, unmistakably affirm the substitutionary character of our Savior's sufferings. Truly, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"!

Sheep Gone Astray

Yes, Isaiah continues — we all went astray like sheep, following one another into wrong paths. Even those of the faith of Abraham, God's people, have wandered out of the fold, and our Shepherd has taken the blame. And if we are lost, how much more His other sheep, not of this fold? These, too, wander through life unaware that they are lost. Their years pass and are then forgotten. No purpose emerges that explains their short existence, no sure hope of future life and happiness. Astray in understanding and direction, wayward and far from the Shepherd's leading, there is a world of men, women, and children as so many lost sheep and lost lambs.

As Isaiah's successors in carrying the report, we recognize that the Good Shepherd has rescued us and keeps us safely in His fold, returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Pet. 2: 25). But what of our worldly companions, the lost, the leaderless? What hope is there for our dear ones who are "turned every one to his own way"? *They will be gathered!*

"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold . . . they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10: 16). The thought is echoed by St. Paul: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph. 1: 10). The salvation and gathering of the as yet unbelieving world is a story so far untold. It belongs to that future dispensation — in the fullness of time — when Christ, no longer the Suffering Servant, reveals Himself as that great Shepherd of the sheep, and — paradoxically — as the Lamb whose sacrifice for sin brings new life to a dying world.

Oppressed, Afflicted, Mute

We have no direct evidence as to how many witnessed and later recounted to the writers of the Gospels the events of that fateful night when Jesus was brought to trial. Their evidence indicates that not every person present was hostile, yet any sympathetic onlookers must surely have felt frustrated at the Lord's meek submission to the humiliation, the injustice and the browbeating. If He had spoken in His own defense, if He had chosen to open His mouth, to argue His

case — who knows? — Scribes and Pharisees, Doctors of the Law, even High Priests, may have succumbed to the eloquence of Him who spoke as never man spoke.

But so far as seeking to deliver Himself from the death He knew was permitted by the Father, He was dumb. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18: 11). Seeing their Lord taken, unresisting, as a lamb to the slaughter, probably marked the beginning of a more mature understanding on the part of His disciples. Jesus was the Passover Lamb! Welcomed into the hearts and homes of the people of God on the 10th day of Nisan, He was ready to be sacrificed on the 14th day.

They recalled the proclamation of John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." They began to realize with appalling clarity what Jesus had meant, when in solemn tones He charged them at the Passover supper that in future, they must keep that feast in remembrance of Himself. With what amazement the disciples saw the meaning of Isaiah's report, and with what rejoicing they made it their own message, preaching to all nations the Gospel of salvation through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who Shall Declare His Generation?

There are several ways in which these words might be understood, all implying that the circumstances surrounding the Messiah's advent are cloaked in some obscurity. Isaiah may be asking: Who of His day and generation would admit the facts? — only the few who became His followers and were despised as He was. The powers of darkness would certainly hide the truth from the great majority.

The prophet may be referring to the mystery of Jesus' birth. How few knew of His Divine lineage? How few believed or confessed that the despised, rejected, and crucified one was the only-begotten Son of God, made flesh for the very purpose of giving Himself a Ransom for all? Some might still be living then who remembered the angelic message of peace on earth, and had visited the babe in Bethlehem. But how many truly comprehended the Light that had then come into the world?

Again, Isaiah may well be asking: Who could suspect that He who was cut off childless would, in some as yet inexplicable sense, *see His seed* — generate a family? Moved by the holy spirit, the prophet faithfully recorded his message, but the clearer understanding of it was reserved for those who later were blessed by the personal ministry of Christ. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10). "My flesh . . . I will give for the life of the world" (John 6: 51). Thus another prophecy became clear — the One had appeared who would become the everlasting Father — Lifegiver, to the human race (Isa. 9: 6). Surely a large part of the "joy set before him" was the recovery from the grave of the peoples of earth, to be given to Him as His rightful inheritance (Psa. 2: 8).

The Pleasure of the LORD

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” All the bitter experiences of the Suffering Servant, apparently so unjust, so unreasonable, and so contrary to anything mankind could have expected, God was pleased to permit.

It was not that the Heavenly Father *took pleasure* in the harrowing scenes at the trial and crucifixion of His Son. No loving earthly father — or mother — could witness dispassionately such sufferings as Jesus endured. How the heart of Mary the mother of our Lord must have bled for her first-born! Rather, having given His only-begotten Son to save a perishing world, Jehovah took upon Himself the ultimate responsibility. As Jesus said to Pilate: “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19: 11).

The Father could, from His standpoint of perfect wisdom and foreknowledge, look upon the painful, sacrificial aspect of the redemption process with satisfaction and serenity, knowing that the outcome would be glory for Christ and blessing for earth’s afflicted multitudes, who would become His children. The Son, also, would then “see of the travail of his soul, and . . . be satisfied.”

He Shall Divide the Spoil

The “spoil” which comes to our dear Redeemer as the one who gained the victory over sin and death, He proposes to share with the faithful among His followers, called “the strong.” They are not strong in their own strength, but they are able to do all things in the strength of Christ their Master (Phil. 4: 13). The rewards of the great conquest over evil — amazing thought — will be theirs also: everlasting fellowship with the Father and the Son, the privilege of bringing blessing to all families of the earth, and the prospect of entering into future ages of glory as the Kingdom of Christ continues and extends its beneficent reign unto all eternity!

WHO HATH BELIEVED OUR REPORT?

We are now the reporters. Today ours is the responsibility and the privilege of publishing the news of salvation through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus. This is done in many ways: by the printed page in magazines, tracts, booklets and other aids to Bible study. In public places such as libraries, waiting rooms, supermarkets, hospitals, our good news may attract the attention of someone needing comfort, or another seeking a basis for positive faith in an uncertain world. The report now goes out electronically on the world-wide web, and by this means some may be captured who were at first unaware of their need for salvation.

And the spoken word has still a powerful place in our witness, not only in public gatherings and conventions, but — perhaps more importantly — by the personal witness to individuals, whenever and wherever one can be found with

Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem from the death of Uzziah until the middle of Hezekiah’s reign (740-701 BCE). Of noble family, he was closely connected with the royal court and, especially under Hezekiah, was prominent in public affairs. According to legend, he was put to death by Manasseh. The prophet protests strongly against moral laxity. Kindness, pity, and justice to the poor and underprivileged are more significant to God than offering sacrifices.

The hand of God is predominant in all historical events — He opposes all treaties with neighboring states: Israel as the people of God must trust solely in Him. The people of God will be punished for its sins but not exterminated; a remnant will return and renew the link between God and the Land of Israel. Isaiah is the seer of eternal peace at the end of the days when the Lord’s Anointed shall judge the nations.

Isa. 52: 13 – 53: 12 is interpreted by most Jewish commentators as referring to the Jewish people, but considered by the Christian Church as foretelling the Passion of Jesus.

Isaiah’s prophecies of redemption and comfort have been of supreme importance both in Judaism and Christianity.

— *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopaedia*

a hearing ear. Eloquence is unnecessary. The love of Christ in our hearts will find us the words to suit the occasion.

Unbelief is still the common reaction to our message, sometimes opposition or mockery, often indifference. But because Christ makes intercession at the Throne of God for the condemned and dying human race, the time must come when that true Light “which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” shines into all hearts and illuminates all minds. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (John 1: 9; Isa. 11: 9). Then, with faithful Isaiah, we shall rejoice to hear earth’s rescued millions exclaim: “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him . . . this is the LORD; . . . we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isa. 25: 9).

* * *

FORGIVING AND BEING FORGIVEN

“Forgive people when they sin against you. If you do, your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you.”

MATTHEW 6: 14 — NEW LIGHT BIBLE

“**LORD, HOW OFT** shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?” (Matt. 18: 21). St. Peter’s question to Jesus is one that many of us ask from time to time during our Christian walk. Being far from perfect ourselves, and often in the company of those who are selfish, critical, and inconsiderate of others’ rights, it is natural for us to ask when we are offended or persecuted, “How long should I forgive this behavior?” Or even, “*Should* I be forgiving at all?”

Jesus’ answer to Peter makes quite clear our proper reaction to those who treat us unjustly: “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (v. 22). There is something in the human mind which naturally appreciates justice and takes special note of any injustice done toward us. The attitude of the world in general is to demand what they consider to be their just rights, even to the extent of using violence to achieve their aims, with little or no regard for the just rights of others. But as followers of Christ, we are seeking to live by His precepts and example, showing compassion — mercy — to those whose weaknesses lead them into wrongdoing.

It is true that justice is the foundation of Divine government — that God is just. But He is also loving and kind, and to be in the Divine likeness we must govern our own conduct on the basis of justice, while viewing the conduct of others by the rules of love, sympathy, generosity and forgiveness. In advising Peter to forgive a brother seventy times seven, we see the great breadth of generosity in our Savior’s heart, a recognition of the frailty even of those called to be “brethren.” And at His crucifixion, Jesus’ prayer, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” manifested His great compassion towards His bitterest enemies (Luke 23: 34).

BEING FORGIVEN OURSELVES

So far as our personal standing before the Lord is concerned, we have learned that in order to enjoy His forgiveness, we have something to do. While we have nothing of real worth to offer, certain conditions must be fulfilled:

- (1) repentance toward God;
- (2) faith toward our Lord Jesus; and
- (3) conduct in harmony with God’s will.

Those who have taken these steps experience the mercy of God, and as they develop in the graces of the Spirit become proportionately more merciful to others. To accomplish such a radical change of heart requires a powerful influence, and the consciousness of sins forgiven, and of being at peace with God, is a great incentive to help us exercise

toward others that same quality of mercy we ourselves have received. During our experience in the School of Christ, this should become our natural response to the needs of those not so blessed as we are.

In our daily lives and in our own homes we must be careful not to arouse needless opposition and prejudice. Finding fault with those we love — marriage partners, children, brothers, and sisters — who are not immoral or wicked, but who are merely worldly, will only stumble them. We should never force upon the unconsecrated the constraints that we ourselves have undertaken as footstep followers of Jesus.

MUST OTHERS REPENT?

Another statement on forgiveness seems to imply that before it is granted, it should at least be desired, if not actually requested (Luke 17: 3, 4). For one to say, “I am sorry,” implies repentance, and forgiveness should be readily shown. Yet our Lord’s conduct makes it clear that even where no evidence of repentance is seen, we should in our hearts forgive, even if wisdom leads us to wait for evidence of repentance before *expressing* that forgiveness. There may be occasions when it is proper to rebuke a wrongdoer, perhaps a fellow-Christian, and this should be done only after careful consideration and prayer, and in a spirit of humility and helpfulness.

While it is not our business to try to put the world right at the present time, as “children of light” it may sometimes be proper — and sometimes even a duty — to speak or act in opposition to darkness. But simply letting the light shine in our daily lives is in itself a reproof of sin, which may touch the hearts of the less depraved and draw them into the light. Experience often teaches us, however, that the more depraved may be infuriated, rather than blessed, by the evident goodness of others. As the Apostle John puts it: “Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” (John 3: 19, 20).

When will the present unbelieving world repent and experience the Divine forgiveness already provided for, in that Christ died for the sins of the world? Their opportunity will come when Christ’s Kingdom is established among men. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26: 9).

Praise God for the prospect of a world at peace with themselves and with their Creator!

* * *

BIBLE QUESTION BOX



Q Mark 15: 25 indicates that Jesus was crucified in the third hour. However, in John 19: 14, we read: “And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he [Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!” If Jesus’ trial before Pilate was going on in the sixth hour, how could He have been crucified in the third hour?

A Matt. 27: 45, 46 and Luke 23: 44 show that Jesus was put on the cross prior to the sixth hour, and that darkness was over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, with Jesus’ death on the cross coming at “about the ninth hour” (corresponding to about 3 p.m. our time). Apparently, Matthew, Mark, and Luke followed the Jewish custom of reckoning each 24-hour day as beginning at 6 p.m. (the first 12 hours being the night hours — from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and the final 12 hours being the day hours — from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

John, however, followed the practice of the province in which he resided and for which he was writing, namely, the Roman custom of reckoning each 24-hour day as beginning at midnight. This is corroborated by Pilate’s wife urging Pilate to have nothing to do with condemning the just man Jesus: “For I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him” (Matt. 27: 19 — from midnight onward).

When John says it was “about the sixth hour,” he meant 6:00 that (Friday) morning when He was still on trial before Pilate. John notes that “it was the preparation of the passover” (John 19: 31; compare Luke 23: 54). The term “the preparation” in the New Testament and in contemporary language and literature commonly applies to the sixth day of the week (corresponding to our Friday — though it was from 6 p.m. Thursday to 6 p.m. Friday by Jewish reckoning). On that day, preparation was made and meals were provided for the seventh day, the Sabbath or rest day (corresponding to our Saturday — from 6 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Saturday).

Jesus and His Apostles ate the Passover lamb, and Jesus instituted the Memorial of His death, on Nisan 14 (Thursday evening — “the same night in which he was betrayed” — 1 Cor. 11: 23). As the antitypical Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5: 7), Jesus was crucified and died — during the day part of Nisan 14, on what we call Friday, at the time corresponding to about 3 p.m. our time, before the Sabbath set in at 6 p.m.

Q Could Jesus have laid down His life as a ransom-price for Adam and his race without being crucified?

A Divine Justice did not require Jesus to die by crucifixion (die on a tree) for the Gentiles. Another kind of sacrificial death would have been sufficient for them. With the Jews, though, the matter is different. Note some comments from Gal. 3: 10-13:

- “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (v. 10). No imperfect man could come up to the standards of a perfect man expressed in the Law (Lev. 18: 5).

- “No man is justified by the law in the sight of God” (v. 11). No one could even be justified in God’s sight by the works of the Law (Rom. 3: 20; 7: 10; Gal. 2: 16).

- “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (v. 13; compare Deut. 21: 22, 23). Divine providence directed that the Romans should adopt the cross as a symbol of ignomy. Paul here addresses not Christians in general, but only Jews who had become Christians. They had been redeemed not only from the Law’s sentence, but also released from the Adamic condemnation. Jews alone were under the Law Covenant and its curse, but were saved from its curse by Christ, Who, as their Substitute, died on a tree.

Though Christ died for both Gentiles and Jews, the curse of the *Law* remained upon those Jews who did not accept Christ, for they continued under the Law, for “what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law” (Rom. 3: 19).

Gentiles, who never were under the Law Covenant, could not, of course, be released from it. They suffer from the sentence of death that came upon Adam, but no particular form of death as their substitute was implied. Nor would a Gentile seeking to become a Christian need to first come under the Law Covenant before accepting Christ.

A Jew desiring release from the Law Covenant, needed by faith to recognize that Christ fulfilled the terms of the Law Covenant, and then by consecration be transferred from Moses into Christ, accepting Him as their Lord and Savior, as the following verses prove:

Though Jesus has already redeemed those Jews who have not accepted Him and all mankind in one sense, by laying down the ransom-price, He has not yet applied that ransom-price on their behalf.

- “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10: 4). He was the fulfillment of the Law for every Jew who believed on Him.

- “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2: 14). Jesus made a full end of the Law Covenant for Himself and all believing Jews who came unto the Father through Him.

Israel, as a nation, agreed to the terms of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai, delivered through Moses, their mediator. In order to meet all the requirements of the nation, the one who would redeem Israel from the harmful effects of the Law Covenant, must suffer the extreme penalty imposed by that Covenant — die on a tree. Christ is that One Who redeemed Israel, not as individuals, but as a nation; therefore, it was necessary that He be crucified.

Though Jesus has already redeemed those Jews who have not accepted Him and all mankind in one sense, by laying down the ransom-price, He has not yet applied that ransom-price on their behalf. Jesus and His Church, as the better Mediator than Moses, will in due time establish “a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah,” by transferring those under the Law Covenant

into the New Covenant (Jer. 31: 31-34; Rom. 11: 26, 27). This will take place after the world’s great Time of Trouble and the final overthrow of Satan’s empire (Dan. 12: 1; Matt. 24: 21).

When the New Covenant goes into effect, all who become subject to its arrangements will be blessed. Eventually all mankind will come under Israel’s New Covenant.

Q How many of Adam’s race are to benefit from Jesus’ death?

A Jesus, “was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” He “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (Heb. 2: 9; 1 Tim. 2: 6). None of Adam’s race go unransomed.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15: 22). During the Gospel Age, only the Church has been on trial for life, but God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness,” for Jesus “is the propitiation for our [the Church’s] sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (Acts 17: 31; 1 John 2: 2).

Jesus is the Redeemer of both the Church and the world. The time will come, therefore, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea,” for Jesus is “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” He “will draw all men” unto Himself (Isa. 11: 9; John 1: 9; 12: 32). All are guaranteed a fair trial for everlasting life — the Church in this Age, and the world in the Age to come.

* * *

of interest . . .

The channels on Mars that have puzzled scientists for years may have been carved by melting snow. Other explanations have included water bubbling up from underground springs. This newest theory, put forward by U.S. geologist Philip Christensen, a professor at Arizona State University at Tempe, depends on the slight “wobble” of the planet. Over the course of thousands of years, Mars tilts on its axis, changing by more than 20 degrees. The resultant tilt toward the sun causes a heating of the surface, which creates water vapor that falls as snow near the planet’s middle latitude, or equator. If the snow is later melted by the Sun as the axis of the planet changes, this could cause sufficient water run-off to gouge the gullies observed on the planet.

The gullies were first discovered in 2000 by Mars Global Surveyor, suggesting that liquid water was present near the surface of the planet within the past few thousand years. This prompted greater interest in Mars exploration. The U.S. space agency, NASA, is sending two rovers to Mars later this year to gather data. A landing craft delivered by the European Space Agency will also dig for water.

— Reported by the *British Broadcasting Corporation* and the journal, *Nature*

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MEMORIAL DATE FOR 2003

Our Lord's Memorial falls on Monday, April 14, after 6:00 p.m.

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2003

At-a-glance

France: August 1-3

Nigeria: *Umunkiri*, June 27-29; *Danfodio Road Primary School, Aba*, Abia State, November 28-30

Poland: *Rzeszow*, July 12-14; *Krakow*, July 15-17; *Lodz*, July 18-20; *Bydgoszcz*, July 21-23

United Kingdom: *Hyde*, England, August 1-3

United States: *Florida*, March 14-16; *Massachusetts*, April 25-27; *Michigan*, May 24-26; *Philadelphia Area*, July 3-6; *Ohio*, August 15-17; *Illinois*, October 3-5; *Oklahoma*, November 7-9

Details

United States

Florida, March 14-16 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: (New Location) Oceanfront Comfort Inn, 1515 N. First St., Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250; telephone: (800) 654-8776. *Rates and Reservations:* \$72.00 for 1-4 guests, plus 13% tax. Reservations must be made directly with the hotel, and by February 15: *be sure to inform them that you are attending the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement Convention to secure the special rate.* Please make all other inquiries to Mrs. Beverly Blaine (Class Secretary), 3569 Anderson Drive, Ormond Beach, FL 32176; telephone (386) 441-9836.

Massachusetts, April 25-27 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: Holiday Inn, 245 Whiting Farms Road, Holyoke, MA 01040; telephone: (413) 534-3311 *Rates and Reservations:* \$82.28 (includes tax), for 1-2 people; noon meals \$12.95 donation. Reservations must be made directly with the hotel by March 24: *mention the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement Convention to secure special rate.* Please inform us how many are expected to attend meals and if transportation from the airport is required. Contact Mr. and Mrs. G. Vanags, 982 E. St. North, Suffield, CT 06078; or Mr. and Mrs. D. Herzig; telephone: (860) 478-3847; e-mail: dansue@herzig.net.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

The General Editor, Bernard W. Hedman

Massachusetts Convention, April 25-27

Carl W. Seebald

Massachusetts Convention, April 25-27

Ralph Herzig

Florida Convention, March 14-16; Massachusetts Convention, April 25-27

Richard Blaine

Florida Convention, March 14-16

John Treble

Florida Convention, March 14-16

Gerald Herzig

Florida Convention, March 14-16

Robert Herzig

Auburn, Mass., March 9; Springfield, Mass., April 6; Massachusetts Convention, April 25-27

Jan Wojnar

Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, March 30; New Haven, Conn., May 18; Massachusetts Convention, April 25-27

John Detzler

Ukraine, June 28-30; Germany, July 5-6; Rzeszow, Poland, July 12-14; Krakow, Poland, July 15-17; Lodz, Poland, July 18-20; Bydgoszcz, Poland, July 21-23; France Convention, August 1-3

Leon Snyder

March: Muskegon, Michigan, 2; Cincinnati, Ohio, 9; Iuka, Miss., 10; Florida Convention, 14-16; Ft. Lauderdale, 19, 20; Sebring, Florida 21; New Port Richey, Florida, 23; Keystone Heights, Florida, 30.

April: Waycross, Georgia, 1, 2; Marietta, Georgia, 5, 6; Reidsville, N. Carolina, 8; Wilmington, N. Carolina, 9; Manteo, N. Carolina, 10; Norfolk, Virginia, 11; Springfield, Mass., 13, 14; Pittsfield, Mass., 16, 17; Wrentham, Mass., 18; Auburn, Mass., 19; New Haven, Conn., 20; Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, 23; Massachusetts Convention, 25-27; Erie, Pennsylvania, 28; Canton, Ohio, 29; Sand Ridge, W. Virginia, 30

Baron Duncan

Pittsfield, Mass., April 13; Massachusetts Convention, April 25-27

Tom Cimbura

Florida Convention, March 14-16. *April:* West Palm Beach, Florida, 5, 6; Barbados, 8-10; Trinidad, 11-15; Jamaica Convention, 18-21; Keystone Heights, Florida, 23

Don Lewis

Florida Convention, March 14-16; Chicago, May 3, 4

James Shaw

Mustang, Oklahoma, April 27

Marek Piotrowski

Seattle, Washington, March 29, 30

Evangelists' Services

Jon Hanning, Erie, Pennsylvania, March 1, 2; Marietta, Georgia, March 20; Cleveland, Georgia, March 21; Chickamauga, March 22; Sand Ridge, W. Virginia, May 10, 11

Harry Hammer, Grand Rapids, Michigan, April 5; Muskegon, April 6

David Lounsbury, New York City, March 2

Richard Piquene, Independence, Kansas, March 30

Harold Solomon, Boston, Mass., March 23 and May 25

Robert Steenrod, Derry, Pennsylvania, April 6

Edward Tomkiewicz, Minneapolis, March 29, 30

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