

# **THE NEW COVENANT NEWS**



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**Ransom Revisited**

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**Reconciliation**

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**News and Notes**

# RANSOM REVISITED

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The focal point of the Bible's narrative is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The benefit to mankind which is derived from Christ's sacrifice forms the substance of the New Testament's 'good news', and it is no exaggeration to say that the truth concerning His sacrifice is the most important information any of us will ever encounter, because it is the very basis of salvation. Consequently, if there is one area of doctrine in which we need absolute clarity of understanding, it is this, and anything which obscures or compromises that understanding should be avoided.

I realised, while preparing a talk on Romans 3:21-26 some years ago, that what the apostle Paul had written there regarding God's justice clashed in principle with my perception of the Ransom. This prompted me to search the New Testament for statements that attributed a specific objective to Christ's death, and what I found gave me cause to wonder whether a teaching that I had long accepted as a fundamental of the faith might actually lack adequate scriptural support. The following article is a comprehensive summary of the matter as I presently see it.

## **The 'Corresponding Price' Doctrine**

Death came upon the human race because of Adam's sin; that is clearly stated in Scripture (Romans 5:12,15-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22; Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24); however, the belief I shared with many is that without a sacrificial offering specifically for Adam, life could not be returned to mankind. Divine justice, I believed, required a life to be offered which was equivalent in value to the life that Adam forfeited, that is, the life of a sinless human being, as Adam had been before the transgression. That requirement I accepted as having been met by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and while His life was also given as a sin-offering, it was the 'corresponding price' for Adam which constituted the 'ransom' mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:6, Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45.

In explaining my change of mind, I should begin with Romans 3, and the passage that first caused me to question the validity of the above view of Christ's sacrifice:

"For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth *to be* a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to shew his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing, *I say*, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26; RV).

According to this, all men are sinners and unworthy of everlasting life, however, God has set in place an arrangement to deliver the human race from sin. He will graciously justify, or reckon righteousness to, those who have faith in Christ, whom God has set forth as “a propitiation” [more correctly, a “mercy-seat” (Strong’s Gk.#2435 *hilasterion*) - see note (i) below] or “sacrifice of atonement” (NIV) ]. This way of describing Christ’s sacrifice does not permit it to be understood as anything other than an offering for sin.

However, in my confident belief that ransom and sin offering were separate issues, I had failed to appreciate the significance of the last part of verse 26: “... that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.”

It is by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice for sin that God is able to reckon righteousness to the believer in Jesus and while so doing remain just, or righteous, Himself. I was able to find no other passage in the New Testament with which to compare this; nothing else which deals with the terms of God’s justice; certainly nothing which might qualify Romans 3:26 or lead us to believe that it only partly addresses the issue. My immediate thought was, that if there was any other matter of justice which had kept man from everlasting life, this statement could not stand alone. If an equivalent price for Adam was required, why did Paul not make mention of it?

This omission became more incomprehensible when I considered the ramifications of justification by faith. In the chapters of Romans that follow, Paul explained at length that justification, or imputed righteousness, is the means God has provided to enable us to be reconciled to Him (Romans 5:6-11); and what is reconciliation, if not the undoing of the alienation from God caused by sin?

Romans 5:1,2

"Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (RV).

The striking feature of the last verse is its contrast with Romans 3:23. Where sin had caused all to fall short of the glory of God, that is, righteousness and eternal life, justification by faith in Christ restores that hope, exclusively on the basis of His atonement for sin. If justification leads to eternal life, that in itself implies a resurrection (John 6:54). At this point I saw no alternative but to go back and re-examine the Ransom teaching from first principles.

### **The Ransom Texts**

1 Timothy 2:3-7

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

**For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.** Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity." (KJV).

The facts presented in verses 5 and 6 are without doubt the key points of the truth which God wishes all men to understand, and are the foundation of the Gospel which Paul was appointed to preach (vss.7,11). Christ's sacrifice is here defined as "a ransom for all", without further qualification, and it is the testimony concerning this "ransom for all" which was to take place "in due time", an obvious reference to the going forth of the Gospel. If the Gospel is indeed this testimony, it follows that we should be able to accommodate in the description, "a ransom for all", the Gospel teaching concerning the purpose of Christ's death. Consider firstly Paul's own definition of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved; I make known, I say, in what words I preached it unto you, if ye hold it fast, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, How that **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures**; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures;" (RV).

The scriptures to which Paul referred were of course those of the Old Testament, and the most important prophecy concerning the work of the Messiah was Isaiah 53, which centred on the atonement for sin: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." "....for the transgression of my people he was stricken." "Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering.." "...because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (from Isaiah 53:6-12; NIV).

There are also some fifty clear and unequivocal statements in the New Testament which ascribe a purpose to Christ's death (see appended list), and we find that the Old and New Testaments are in complete agreement on this subject. Almost without exception, Christ's death is connected with the forgiveness of sins, and the weight of direct evidence strongly suggests that "ransom" is a figurative way of describing Christ's atoning sacrifice on behalf of all people.

### **"Ransom": The Greek Words *lutron* and *antilutron***

Matthew 20:28

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

In Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, 'ransom' is a translation of the Greek *lutron* [#3083], which is derived from the verb *luō* [#3089], meaning to 'loosen' (literally or figuratively). Consequently, according to Dr. James Strong, *lutron* is "something to *loosen* with, i.e., a redemption *price*".

In 1 Timothy 2:6, however, the word translated 'ransom' is *antilutron* [#487], and a grammatical argument which equates the life that Christ gave up on the cross to Adam's life has been based on this word.

1 Timothy 2:5,6

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

The Greek phrase translated "a ransom for all" is *antilutron huper pantōn*, where *huper* [#5228] means 'for the sake of' (Strong), or 'in behalf of' (Diaglott, Moulton). *Antilutron* is a more descriptive term than *lutron*, and while Dr. Strong defines it in his Concordance as 'a *redemption-price*', he states concerning the prefix *anti* [#473], that it is "often used in composition to denote contrast, requital, substitution, correspondence, etc." It is the last of these alternatives that has been emphasised in defining *antilutron* as a 'corresponding price'.

Allowing that 'a corresponding price' is an acceptable translation of *antilutron*, the question remains, to whom or what does the price correspond? Inasmuch as Christ "gave himself a *corresponding price* for all", the obvious sense is that the 'price' corresponds to 'all'. There is nothing in the context to suggest that the price corresponds exclusively to Adam, and to draw that inference we would need to find the concept firmly established by other scriptures.

Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45

The ransom referred to in the Gospels must be regarded as identical to that of 1 Timothy 2:6, despite the use of the simpler Greek noun, *lutron*. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28).

The word *anti* is present in the Greek text of Matthew 20:28, but not in composition with *lutron*. In this verse "a ransom for many" is *lutron anti pollōn*, where *anti* occupies the same position as *huper* in 1 Timothy 2:6, and in so doing assumes the same meaning as *huper*, i.e., 'in behalf of' (Bauer's Lexicon). Thus Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 teach that Christ's death constituted the payment of a redemption price, but without introducing the idea of correspondence, suggesting that in 1 Timothy 2:6 *antilutron* has been used simply for emphasis.

## CHRIST AND ADAM

If 'ransom', as descriptive of Christ's sacrifice, had the significance which I formerly attributed to it, would it not be reasonable to expect that to be set forward plainly and openly in the New Testament? Surely the need to assemble a teaching of such gravity from inferences and supposition is questionable. While the apostle Paul did make a number of comparisons between Christ and Adam, which we shall examine, there is no explicit statement of the 'corresponding price' doctrine, nor any association of 'ransom' or similar terms with Adam. From where then has the idea come, that Christ's life was a ransom or 'corresponding price' for Adam?

Judging from personal experience, I think the apparent similarity between Christ as a sinless human being and Adam before he disobeyed has distracted us from seeing the apostle Paul's juxtaposition of Christ and Adam in the broader context of his message, and we have taken it as affirmation of a *connection* between Christ and Adam. To this have been added assumptions about God's justice and the curse imposed on Adam for his disobedience, assumptions which have made the payment of a perfect life for a perfect life seem logical and necessary.

### The Christ-Adam Texts

(1) Romans 5:12-21

"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:- for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come." (5:12-14; RV).

The last clause, "a figure of him that was to come", that is, 'a figure' of Christ, certainly points to some resemblance between Adam and Christ. The word translated "figure" is *tupos* [#5179], which is defined in Strong's Concordance as "a *die* (as *struck*), i.e., (by impl.) a *stamp* or *scar*; by analogy a *shape*, i.e., a *statue*, (fig.) *style* or *resemblance*; spec. a *sampler* ("*type*"), i.e., a *model* (for imitation) or *instance* (for warning)."

Any analogy is limited by its context, that is, by the purpose to which it has been applied, and one should read no more into it than the writer has intended. The subsequent verses reveal what the apostle meant by Adam being 'a figure' of Christ:

"But not as the trespass, so also *is* the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many." (5:15; RV).

In this and the ensuing verses Paul contrasted in various ways the condemnation of mankind through Adam's transgression with the "free gift" of

righteousness by faith which has come through Christ's sacrifice. In each case, the adverse outcome of the action of "one", Adam, has been opposed to the beneficial outcome of the action of "one", Jesus Christ.

"And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgement *came* of one unto condemnation, but the free gift *came* of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, *even* Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass *the judgement came* unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men unto justification of life. For as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous." (5:16-19; RV).

Throughout this series there are two common threads. Firstly, sin which led to death has in each case been contrasted with righteousness which leads to life. Given this fourfold reiteration, the conclusion is hard to avoid that the righteousness which comes through faith in Christ is sufficient by itself to enable the restoration of that which sin has taken away. Secondly, these opposite outcomes have each stemmed from the action of a single human being whose obedience was on trial, and it is in this sense that Adam is "a figure" of Christ.

(2) 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

"But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (RV).

Paul's outline of the Gospel in the first four verses of this chapter has already been quoted above: "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures". Whereas the apostle's theme in Romans 5 was justification by faith, here it is the raising of the dead, in answer to those in the Corinthian church who claimed that there is no resurrection (vs.12). However, the teaching in verses 21 and 22 is essentially the same as that of Romans 5:12-19, and of John's Gospel:

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11: 25,26; RV).

As in Romans 5, life is tied to faith in Jesus Christ, which again implies that the one thing required to open the way for the resurrection of the dead was a means of dealing with the problem of sin. Those who have died in faith will

be raised to eternal life; the rest of the dead will be raised so that they might believe and never die (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians.4:16,17; Hebrews.11:39,40; John 5:24-29).

(3) 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

"So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (RV).

This final contrast between Adam and Christ is part of Paul's response to those who were sceptical about the resurrection: "But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" (vs.35). The apostle's answer was that the body which goes into the grave is not the body with which the believers in Jesus will be raised; that as Christ has been raised a spirit being, so His elect will also be raised in this form. Adam was "of the earth, earthy" (Genesis 2:7), and the human race which sprang from him bore "the image of the earthy" (Genesis 5:3). On the other hand, the risen Christ is "of heaven", and so the Church when raised from the dead will "bear the image of the heavenly" (1 John 3:2).

Given the context in which this epithet has been used, "the last Adam" almost certainly alludes to Christ's future fatherhood through the resurrection (Isaiah 9:6; Psalm.45:16), in this instance specifically of the Church. There is nothing in this comparison with Adam that relates directly to Christ's sacrifice.

### **Hebrews 2:6-9**

The quotation of Psalm 8:4-6, together with the apostle's reference to Christ's sacrifice in verse 9, is regarded by many as a bulwark of the 'corresponding price' doctrine, and for a long time I accepted that these lines from the Old Testament had been used to show Christ's equivalence to Adam in his first estate. Only in the course of a recent, more critical study did I recognise that the apostle had quoted this portion of Psalm 8 for quite a different reason.

If one reads from the beginning of the epistle, it will be observed that the passage in question is part of a lengthy discourse which includes no less than eight quotes from the Old Testament, each chosen for its testimony to the superiority of the risen Christ over the heavenly angels. The Psalm 8 quote is the last of these, and is connected to the preceding argument by verse 5; "For not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak." (Hebrews 2:5).

This verse is crucial to the understanding of what follows, because it attaches a specific purpose to the quotation from Psalm 8, that purpose being to show that God has placed "the world to come" under Christ's rulership.



Hebrews 2:6-8; "But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, [And didst set him over the works of thy hands:]\* Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet." (RV). [\*Codex Vaticanus omits this last part of verse 7.]

There is a difficult choice to be made here. In my experience it has always been treated as self-evident that the subject of Psalm 8: 5 and 6 is Adam; however, judging by Paul's comments in Hebrews 2, verses 5 and 9, he regarded this portion of Psalm 8 purely as a Messianic prophecy. The decision we are faced with is this: do we allow a fixed perception of Psalm 8 to override the apostle's interpretation of the passage?

Bearing in mind that this forms part of an extensive treatise showing Christ's post-resurrection superiority to the angels, the statement in verse 7, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels", is most appropriate to indicate that limited period, i.e., "the days of his flesh" (Heb.5:7), when Christ was not above the angels.

The next line follows naturally as a prophecy of the glory and honour received by Christ when raised to God's right hand (Rom.8:34). The placing of "all things in subjection under his feet" was a prediction of the power also given to Him at that time, as confirmed by scriptures such as 1Corinthians 15:27 and Ephesians 1:22, both of which quote this same line from Psalm 8; also Matthew 28:18, "All power is given to me in heaven and earth"; as well as a number of others. All this leads logically to the apostle's statement in verse 8:

Hebrews 2:8; "For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see **not yet** all things subjected to him." (RV)

That is, God has decreed that all things will be subject to Christ, as stated in verse 5. The fact that this has not yet been accomplished agrees perfectly with Psalm 110:1, cited in verse 13 of the previous chapter: "Sit thou on my right hand, **Till** I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet." (RV), and with 1 Corinthians 15:28; "And when all things have been subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all." (RV).

The word "but" at the beginning of Hebrews 2:9 acknowledges the fact that even though all things have not yet been subjected to Christ, we do see the substantial fulfilment of the prophecy quoted in verses 6 to 8. In my opinion, the Diaglott rendering well expresses the apostle's summation: "But we behold Jesus, on account of the suffering of death crowned with glory and

honour, having been made for a little while inferior to angels, so that, by God's favour, he might taste of death on behalf of every one." (Hebrews 2:9; Diaglott).

### **"A little lower than the angels"**

There is also a significant grammatical question concerning the wording at the beginning of verse 7. The Greek *brachus* [Strong #1024], translated "a little" in the KJV, means 'short' or 'little' (with regard to space, time or quantity), but most translations of Hebrews 2:7 do not comply with this definition. According to Bauer's Lexicon (p.147), the rendering, "a little lower than the angels", is a departure from the general rule regarding *brachus*, due to the fact that Hebrews 2:7 "quotes Psalm 8:6 which is usually regarded as referring to rank" [see note (ii) below]. In the margin of the King James, Revised and American Standard Versions, the alternative rendering appears: "for a little while lower than [or, inferior to] the angels", and the Revised Standard Version actually incorporates this wording in the main text. The Diaglott word-for-word reads; "Thou didst make him less a little while than messengers; with glory and honour thou didst crown him; all things thou didst place under the feet of him." (Hebrews 2:7; Diaglott).

Translated in this way, the passage could not be speaking of Adam. In either case, viewed in context, there is no allusion to Adam in Hebrews 2:6-9. In the rest of the epistle, of which the ninth and tenth chapters deal in depth with the significance of Christ's sacrifice, Adam is not mentioned. Neither, it must be said, does the word 'ransom' occur in Hebrews, but if we understand 'ransom' to refer to Christ's atoning sacrifice for sin, then the Ransom does indeed feature prominently in this epistle.

### **Eternal Life through the Mosaic Law**

Romans 3:19,20; "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgement of God: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for through the law *cometh* the knowledge of sin." (RV).

Because Paul has made the point so strongly that it was beyond man's ability to obtain righteousness through the Law, we tend to overlook the fact that God actually did promise eternal life to those who kept its commandments in full (Leviticus 18:5; Nehemiah 9:29; Ezekiel 20:11,13,21).

Luke 10:25-28; "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." (RV).

By His answer Jesus confirmed the promise of the Law, and Paul himself cited Leviticus 18:5; "For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness of the law shall live thereby." (Romans 10:5; RV).

Here is revealed to us the motivation behind Jewish zeal for the Law: the Jews sought righteousness, that is, freedom from sin, by means of the works of the Law, in the hope of gaining eternal life (John 5:39). In practice this was not feasible because, as Paul explained, the Law was "weak through the flesh" (Romans 8:3); [see note (iii) below]; but the fact that the promise of life was written into the Law meant that it was only the transgression of the Law which kept the Israelite from righteousness, and therefore from eternal life. Such could not have been the case, had God's justice also required the payment of a life equivalent to that which Adam forfeited.

If unrighteousness was in fact the only thing standing in the way of eternal life, then as far as God's justice was concerned, sin was the only relevant matter. We can thus appreciate why Paul went to such lengths to explain and to emphasise man's dependence upon Jesus Christ for that vital thing which had proved impossibly elusive under the Law, the obtaining of righteousness.

"We *being* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, save through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:15,16; RV). And in verse 21 of the same chapter, the apostle implied that this was the sole purpose of Christ's death; "I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought." (Galatians 2:21; RV).

There would seem to be only one way of understanding Paul's words here. If man had been able to gain through the Law of Moses the righteousness necessary to eternal life, there would have been no need for Christ's sacrifice. Plainly, Christ's death related exclusively to the matter of sin.

### **"I will ransom them from the power of the grave"**

The scriptures which have been discussed so far have only served to strengthen the conclusion drawn from the collection of texts which specify the purpose of Christ's death, namely that the word 'ransom' designates His sacrificial offering for the sins of the world.

What has also become apparent is that His sacrifice has opened the way for the resurrection of the dead, not by providing an equivalent price for Adam, but by providing a means of dealing with the root of the problem, sin. This gives us a different perspective on those Old Testament scriptures that speak of a ransom from the grave, or from death:

Job 33:24; "Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." (RV).

Psalms 49:7; "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is costly, And must be let alone for ever:) That he should still live alway That he should not see corruption." (RV).

Hosea 13:14; "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." (RV).

Paul quoted part of Hosea's prophecy in 1 Corinthians 15:55: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?", following it with this statement: "The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". (1 Corinthians 15:56,57; RV).

According to Paul, Jesus Christ has ensured the Church's victory over death by freeing them from the condemnation of the Law (Romans 4:15; 5:13; 7:5,8,13; Galatians 3:13; 4:5), and making possible the granting of imputed righteousness, which has freed them from sin (Romans 3:21-28; 4:23-25). The power of sin and its sting of death have been nullified through Christ's sacrifice, and thereby the Church is 'ransomed from the power of the grave'.

The same truth is expressed in Romans 5:20 and 21; "And the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound; But where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (RV).

These scriptures prove conclusively that death is no more than the consequence of sin, and if sin is dethroned through God's grace in the imputation of righteousness to those of faith in Christ, then the resurrection to eternal life will follow as a matter of course.

But what about the rest of mankind, we may ask, considering that Christ's life was given "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2) and as "a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6)? How can those who have not believed and been justified be raised? In my opinion, the answer is that we should view the raising of the dead as a means to an end, and inseparable from that end. In the case of the Church and the faithful of pre-Christian times, that end is eternal life (Revelation 20:6; Hebrews 11:35); for the rest of the dead, life will be returned to them provisionally, that they might have the opportunity to come to God through Jesus Christ during His thousand-year reign (John 5:29; Revelation 7:9,10; 20:12,13; 21:6,7,24-27; 22:1,2). Those who do so will also have been 'ransomed from the power of the grave'.

## **The condemnation of Adam**

This summary would not be complete without some attention being given to the reasoning behind the idea of a ransom for Adam. Since it has been linked to his condemnation, I have quoted that part of Genesis 3 that records the pronouncement of God's judgement:

Genesis 3:17-19; 22-24

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (RV).

It can be seen that the condemnation of Adam involved an adverse change in his living conditions, and the certainty that he would eventually die. Both aspects were given effect by expelling Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, thus involving Adam's descendants in the consequences of his disobedience. (Romans 5:12-19).

The perceived necessity of a ransom for Adam is founded on the presumption that God, having condemned Adam and his posterity to death, could not arbitrarily remove that condemnation without rescinding His original judgement, and from this stems the idea that He was prevented by considerations of justice from raising the dead or repealing the Adamic curse. This view is without scriptural support: it has been pointed out that the New Testament acknowledges no matter of justice for which God required a redemptive price to be paid other than sin, and not specifically Adam's sin, but the sins of all mankind. (Romans 3:26; 1 John 2:2). Rather than focusing on the reason for Adam's condemnation, as the Bible does, it fixes upon the condemnation itself; on the effect rather than the cause. This preoccupation with the penalty all but eclipses the fact that God's judgement of Adam was in response to Adam's sin.

The Bible's position on life and death is encapsulated in those scriptures (a number have been cited above) which show that sin leads to death, and righteousness to eternal life. The vital issues are therefore moral, not physical. Adam's principal loss was not his life, but his righteousness, and we have seen that it is in the area of sin and righteousness that questions of God's justice properly belong.

## Life for life

Nonetheless, based on the above premise it has been theorized that the scales of divine justice could be brought into balance by the offering of a life equivalent to that which Adam possessed before the transgression in Eden, that is, the life of a human being unblemished by sin. Again, this is conjectural, despite its appeal to the requirement of 'life for life' in the Mosaic Law. I have quoted some of these Old Testament passages at length, so that they can be seen in their proper context:

Exodus 21:22-25; "And if men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart, and yet no mischief follow: he shall surely be fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. **But if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.**" (RV).

Numbers 35:30-34; "Whoso killeth any person, the manslayer shall be slain at the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person that he die. Moreover ye shall take no ransom for the life of the manslayer, which is guilty of death: but ye shall surely put him to death. And ye shall take no ransom for him that is fled to his city of refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. **So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood, it polluteth the land: and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.** And thou shalt not defile the land which ye inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell: for I the LORD dwell in the midst of the children of Israel." (RV).

Deuteronomy 19:15-21; "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established. If an unrighteous witness rise up against any man to testify against him of wrong doing; then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges which shall be in those days; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his brother: so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil in the midst of thee. **And thine eye shall not pity; life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.**" (RV).

These ordinances relate to the unlawful taking of life, and incorporate the principle established in God's words to Noah after the flood: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." (Genesis 9:6; RV).

The Law of Moses prescribed the death penalty for a wide range of offences, relatively few of which involved the killing of another human being. Even if we take into account only those crimes that did involve the taking of life, or the intention to take life, we can see from the stringent rules regarding proof of guilt that the criterion for applying the death penalty was not equivalence or substitution, but individual responsibility. This is most graphically explained in Numbers 35:33 above: "and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it". The phrase "life for life" is therefore a compact way of expressing the law of Genesis 9:6, and its meaning cannot be broadened beyond this specific application.

Yet it is upon this that the 'corresponding price' teaching has relied for its theoretical basis, and for a bridge to those New Testament scriptures concerning Christ which seem in an indirect way to qualify Him as a substitute for Adam. There is certainly no lack of scriptural evidence that Jesus Christ was a human being, that He became such principally "for the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9; Philippians 2:7-9), and that He was unique among the human race in being without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5). In this last respect Christ was indeed like Adam before his disobedience, but the scriptures do not draw attention to that fact, or base any teaching upon it. What they do make clear, though, is that as a sinless human being, Christ was qualified to fulfil God's purpose as the "once for all" sacrifice for sin (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:26,27; 9:11-14,26; 10:10) and that this itself constitutes the Ransom.

## NOTES

(i) This word [*#2435 hilasterion*] appears only twice in the New Testament; Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5.

(ii) Paul quoted this portion of Psalm 8 word for word from the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament translated at Alexandria in Egypt about 300 BC. Comparison with the Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5 confirms that *brachus ti* is a faithful translation of the Hebrew word *me'at* [*#4592*], which in the KJV has been translated "a little while" in Job 24:24; Psalm 37:10; Isaiah 10:25; 29:17; Jeremiah 51:33 and Haggai 2:6.

(iii) Galatians 3:10-12; "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. Now that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them."

As shown by the words of Christ and of Paul quoted earlier in this article, the Law was theoretically empowered to justify. "The righteous shall live by faith" is not a contradiction of Leviticus 18:5, but is the prophetic affirmation that

man would fall short of the Law's requirements, and justification must be obtained by another means, i.e., through faith. This is what Paul meant by the Law being "weak through the flesh" - it was man's weakness to which he was referring. (Romans 3:31; 7:10-14).

## REFERENCES

A summary of those scriptures that directly connect Christ's death, or His body or blood, with some objective:

to make His life a sin offering (Isaiah 53:10);  
to ratify the New Covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians .8:25; Hebrews 10:29);  
as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45);  
as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6);  
for the life of the world (John 6:51);  
for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28);  
for our trespasses (Romans 4:25);  
as an offering for sin (Romans 8:3);  
unto sin (Romans 6:10);  
for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:4);  
to be sin on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21);  
for the sins of the people (Hebrews 7:27);  
to put away sin (Hebrews 9:26);  
to bear the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28);  
to offer one sacrifice for sins forever (Hebrews 10:12);  
to bear our sins in His body upon the tree (1 Peter 2:24);  
to suffer for sins once (1 Peter 3:18);  
to cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7);  
to loose us from our sins (Revelation 1:5);  
for our redemption, the forgiveness of our trespasses (Ephesians 1:7);  
to redeem us from all iniquity (Titus 2:14);  
to obtain eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12);  
for the redemption of transgressions under the first covenant (Hebrews 9:15);  
to redeem the believers (1 Peter 1:18,19);  
unto justification (of life) (Romans 5:16,18);  
to make many righteous (Romans 5:19);  
to purchase the believer (Acts 20:28);  
to buy the believer with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23);  
to purchase men of every ..... nation (Revelation 5:9);  
to sanctify the believer (Hebrews 10:10,29);  
to perfect them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:14);  
to sanctify the people (Hebrews 13:12);  
as a propitiation by faith (Romans 3:25);  
to reconcile us to God (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:22);  
to make peace (Colossians 1:20);  
to give the believer access into the holy place (Hebrews 10:19);  
to make us dead to the Law (Romans 7:4);



to redeem us from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13; 4:5);  
to cleanse the conscience from dead works (Hebrews 9:14);  
that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living (Romans 14:9);  
as our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7);  
to bring to nought the Devil (Hebrews 2:14).



## RECONCILIATION

Paper written by Jenny Roe

When I was about seven years old, my best friend and neighbour, Annamaree, had to finish playing early on Saturdays in order to 'have her head washed'. This was a curious Saturday evening ritual which deprived me of my friend for at least an hour or two early, for a number of months. Mum explained that 'having her head washed' meant 'having her hair washed'. And why the ritual? Annamaree was a member of a devout Roman Catholic family, and she was about to make her first communion. Purity of body was considered to be a pre-requisite to coming to the Lord. When my parents explained this to me, I remember feeling respect for the devotion and sincerity of my neighbours, but a little put out that the priest should come between Annamaree and me!

Loyal Roman Catholic children today make their reconciliation, that is, they make peace between themselves and God. The Collins Dictionary defines reconciliation as harmonising, bringing back into friendship, or accepting or causing acceptance of an unpleasant situation. I would like to look at three situations in the Bible where reconciliation is, in my opinion, the crux of each account.

The first deals with the apostle Paul and his falling out with Barnabas over a matter concerning the evangelist Mark.

Acts 15: 36 to 40 [NIV]

*"Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."*

The NIV footnote suggests that some years later Paul sent words of praise and appreciation about Barnabas, indicating that the original contention had been settled. In both Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 23 and 24 Paul warmly included Mark in his narrative, embracing him as a *"fellow worker for the Lord"*.

Colossians 4:10 [NIV]

*"My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)"*

Philemon 23 and 24 [NIV]

*"Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers."*

Paul warmly included Mark in his narrative, embracing him as a *"fellow worker"* for the Lord.

Reconciliation had been achieved.

How was the contention settled?

Who approached whom first?

We don't know those details, but the important result of reconciliation eventuated, and the harmony which should always exist between Christians was re-established.

The second situation of reconciliation comes from the book of Samuel, and deals with the intelligent, beautiful and diplomatic Abigail. The time in history was just after the death of the prophet Samuel. The people of Israel were still mourning for him. Saul was King of Israel, and David, future heir to the throne, was leading an outlaw band of about 600 men in the desert of Maon. Maon means refuge, and the commentary that I consulted showed hills and caves, which would have provided abundant safety from Saul for David's men.

In the neighbouring pastures to David and his men lived Nabal, a wealthy property owner. Nabal was surly and mean.

1 Samuel 25: 1 to 3 [NIV]

*"Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Maon. A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he*

*was shearing in Carmel. His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband, a Calebite, was surly and mean in his dealings."*

David sent messengers to Nabal requesting any food he might have to spare. It was harvest and shearing time, a time to celebrate, and David and his men had protected Nabal's flocks and shepherds for many months. As befitting his name (Nabal means 'a fool'), Nabal saw David's request in a hostile light.

1 Samuel 25: 10 and 11 [NIV]

*"Nabal answered David's servants, 'Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?' "*

A somewhat inhospitable reply!

Nabal's own men saw the injustice and lack of wisdom on their master's part, and reported it to his wife, the lovely Abigail. They told her that David's men had been badly treated, and did not deserve this response.

Who has not heard and smiled at the saying, 'The way to a man's heart is through his stomach'? Abigail, wise woman, must have understood this too, and promptly set about applying her diplomacy and womanly charm.

She prepared: 200 loaves of bread; 2 skins of wine; 5 sheep; 7 litres of roasted grain; 100 raisin cakes; and 2 sakes of pressed figs.

Imagine, if you can, a similar scene to this.

David was riding a mountain path with his men, muttering about how useless had been his attempts at peace-making. He had been insulted. His men had cared for Nabal's possessions and in return had been unappreciated and rebuffed. David's darker side was coming to the fore. He would slaughter every one of Nabal's men.

Riding through a deep ravine on her donkey, Abigail confronted David and his men. David was pulled up short by the appearance of a beautiful and gracious woman riding towards him.

Notice her diplomacy and tact.

1 Samuel 25: 27, 28, 30 and 31 [NIV]

*"And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you. Please forgive your servant's offense, for the LORD*

*will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the LORD's battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. .... When the LORD has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD has brought my master success, remember your servant."*

Immediately David changed his tune.

1 Samuel 25: 32 to 35 [NIV]

*"David said to Abigail, 'Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.' Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, 'Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.'"*

Ten days later the foolish and tight-fisted Nabal "*became like a stone*", and died. The Scriptures tell us that David took Abigail as his wise and worthy wife.

If we psycho-analyse Abigail's actions, we can perhaps learn some guidelines for ourselves when life's circumstances warrant actions leading to a need for reconciliation.

- (a) She verified that her information was reliable.
- (b) Decisive (no 'wait an see' or 'tomorrow' for Abigail).
- (c) She sprang into action.
- (d) She planned words and events which would calm David.
- (e) She flattered David by calling him "*my master*".
- (f) She was genuinely concerned for his integrity, and that of his men. She did not want him to be ruled by his temper, as was his predecessor, Saul.
- (g) With her knowledge of David's victories against the Philistines, she appealed to his integrity as future King of Israel.
- (h) She took him gifts. (It's hard to be angry when someone gives you a gift, especially a hand-made gift.)
- (i) She used her womanly charm for good. A beautiful woman brings joy to the beholder, and even more so, as in the Biblical cases, if her intentions and character are upright.
- (j) She was humble; "*Upon me alone, Lord, be the guilt*", were her words (1 Samuel 25:24).

Abigail's forethought, tact, thoughtfulness, kindness, political correctness and knowledge of human nature brought about a peaceful reconciliation. Using her brains and her beauty, she averted the death of perhaps thousands, and the enmity which would have followed perhaps for countless generations after her.

Nabal's foolishness was in sharp contrast to Abigail's wisdom. Her quick action saved her whole household from disaster, and prevented David's rash revenge. The behaviour and response of Nabal and Saul were very similar, and Nabal's sudden death foreshadowed Saul's forthcoming fate.

We have now looked at two examples of 'reconciliation'; one from the New Testament and the other from the Old Testament. The first account was of Paul and Barnabas who disputed, were later reconciled and continued as fellow-workers in spreading the Gospel. The second example of reconciliation was Abigail's wise and intelligent placating of David, and the consequent reconciliation, averting widespread bloodshed and potential repercussions.

The third example of reconciliation is found in the book of Matthew, in the 18th chapter, verses 15 to 20.

*"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*

I do not offer the thoughts I give with any dogmatism, and neither is the conventional thought on these verses untrue. I simply offer an alternative point of view.

The key words are in verse 20 of this passage; *"For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them."*

In verse 15, the word *"brother"* means a believer, male or female. The word *"fault"* may still be applicable in a congregation of immature Christians, but it was especially relevant in the early Church when God's expectations and laws were mostly communicated by word of mouth, and believers had to remember previous teaching.

In verse 16 the word "every" is important. Witnesses must hear both sides of the matter. This is a fair requirement..

In verse 17 the word "pagan" would probably mean any Gentile, and "tax collector" would be one who had a bad reputation and was considered a traitor.

Verse 18 is less clear. I suggest that the words "bound" and "loose" refer to the verdict. If the believer is "bound", guilty is the verdict; if "loose", then the verdict is innocent.

Verse 19 seems to be a re-assurance that if two or three believers are sincerely attempting to reconcile a matter, God will answer their prayers.

A cross reference that supports this idea is Matthew 7:7: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you".

In verse 20, the key seems to me to be the resolution of the disagreement; the reconciliation. It says, "where two or three come together in my name". The coming together seems to me to be the coming together in harmony, the reconciliation. The disagreement mentioned in verse 15 has been resolved.

The verse is frequently quoted, especially amongst Christians where a gathering is unexpectedly small. Those at the meeting will look at the small numbers and comfort and encourage each other with the words, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them".

Strictly speaking, the statement alone is not untrue. But I do not believe that is the meaning of those words, given the context before and after.

The believer, individually, is promised Christ's presence throughout life. It says in Matthew 28:20; "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age". Christ was speaking to the disciples who were separated and sent out into the world. By extension, we believe that these words apply to us. Christ is with us always, individually. We do not need two or three people together in order to receive this promise.

Look again at verses 15 to 17 of Matthew 18. These verses deal with brethren falling out, or having a disagreement to cope with. Verses 21 and 22 continue with a logical corollary.

So I would suggest that the words "Where two or three are gathered together" refer to a successful reconciliation where brethren are brought into harmony after a disagreement.

This passage from Matthew contains wise counsel for us, individually and as a congregation. Because we have the printed Scriptures to peruse and contemplate, we are less likely than early believers to be unclear about our moral and social obligations.

But if a contentious issue arises, the procedure seems to be clear:

- the person wronged speaks privately to the offender;
- if the believer ignores the matter, two or three others must spend time in discussion;
- the little group must commit the matter in prayer, asking God for His wisdom;
- if the accused person is found to be guilty, he or she will do either of two things -
  - (a) resolve not to repeat the offence, or
  - (b) refuse to listen.

If the believer repents, full acceptance back into fellowship should follow, with no more believers ever needing to know about the incident. If the believer refuses to listen, after reasonable time and effort have ensued, it would seem that the believer should be gently persuaded not to continue in fellowship. Our prayer would be that this would never happen today.

Large religious organisations have followed this practice in the past, and some still do so today, but our prayer would always be that this matter would not eventuate in our congregation. No two people see eye to eye on every scriptural matter, but we make compromises. We endeavour to respect the rights of others to hold different points of view, and we communicate and continue to love. God looks on our hearts. He is judging our intentions.

May reconciliation always be our aim as we strive to serve our perfect master day by day throughout our lives.

2 Corinthians 5: 17 to 20 [NIV]

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."*

Let us never lose sight of the fact that our own individual eternal reconciliation is totally dependent on the grace of our gracious God and loving heavenly Father.



## NEWS AND NOTES

### Change of Name

To simplify the business operations of the group, the decision was taken to phase out the use of the name Christian Bible Students, Melbourne (CBSM). Instead, all functions will be managed by the New Covenant Fellowship (NCF), which is a registered charitable company. Please note that this is an administrative change only; all activities of the group, including Sunday meetings, conferences, newsletters and distribution of publications, will continue unchanged.

### Website Update

The group is planning to update its website to make it easier to access and navigate. This will also involve a change of web and email addresses to reflect the change of name of the administering entity from CBSM to NCF. We will notify readers when this change takes effect. For the moment all website and email addresses remain the same ([cbsm.org.au](http://cbsm.org.au)).

### 2017 Conference

Planning is well underway for our 2017 conference, to be held from Friday 7<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2017 in Ballarat. The theme chosen for the conference is “Parables About the Kingdom”. For further information please contact [enquiries@cbsm.org.au](mailto:enquiries@cbsm.org.au).



### THE NEW COVENANT NEWS

The New Covenant News is compiled by an editor responsible to the New Covenant Fellowship. The thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of all of the members of the group, and readers are requested to heed the words: ***“Prove all things”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



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