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A People for His Name

by Colin Giles

At a recent convention we discussed whether events that were then occurring in Israel were indicating that God's favour was returning to that nation. Consideration of this subject is liable to some differences of understanding. I am conscious that it presents some difficulties in understanding the many associated prophecies connected with this subject. I have heard many comments on this subject, and some have been helpful in clarifying my own understanding, but what I shall say is my own conclusion on the subject reached after some thought on the matter.

Before considering the main subject there are two principles that I need to establish.

1. The first is that the New Testament is helpful in establishing the meaning of Old Testament prophecies. The principle that I wish to establish is that given in Hebrews 1:1-2. *"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son."* The meaning here is that to the fathers God's word was given part by part and by many different methods. At one time the word came in direct prompts, at another in typical ordinances or acts, in another in parables or psalms. But now he speaks to us through His Son. I believe that the conclusion that we reach from this is that the manifold successive partial disclosures of God's will give place to one that is complete and final. It was given by a son who spoke with his Father's authority and with a complete knowledge of his will and purpose. The saying, 'The new is in the old contained. The old is in the new explained', gives some of its meaning.

2. The second principle is to understand how it is that God hardens the heart. You may like to formulate your own understanding and then check that it applies in all situations. My own understanding is that God works on the perversity of human nature. It is that spirit that says 'I will not', even when our better nature is being appealed to. It is the spirit that says 'I won't, I will do it my way'. It was this same spirit that caused Pharaoh to rebel and go on to punish Israel. This danger is to some extent found in the Lord's Prayer in the words the *"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil"*. The Christian is so conscious of his or her weakness that the plea is to be spared from challenging situations, though a contrary view would be that the trial of our faith is more precious than gold which is itself tested by fire.

Now I will come to the main topic of this presentation, which is 'A People for His Name'. There are a number of promises that were made to the nation of Israel that are now shared with the Gentiles. They are centred around one theme of the promise given to the nation as recorded in Exodus 19:5,6. *"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: ... and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."*

This is confirmed in a number of places in the New Testament. The first reference is in 1 Peter 2:9, although it is not quoted in the same form as that in Exodus.

"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

Peter expanded the sense of the original promises by including *"But ye are an elect race"*, and also re-arranged them in a different order in that he had, *"a people for God's own possession"* first and then enhanced the word *"kingdom"* with the attribute of *"royal"* and extended the word *"priests"* by *"hood"* thus giving priesthood, which restored the sense of them being an organised body of people. Added to the original promise of being a chosen people is the work which they are called to do, in that *"ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light"*.

The other place where the promise is repeated is in the book of Revelation, where it occurs three times. *"... and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* (Revelation 1:6); *"and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth"*. (Revelation 5:9,10); and *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years"* (Revelation 20:6).

It should be noted that the reading of Revelation 1:6 that I have used is different from that in the KJV. The reasons for the differences are not clear to me but they are in line with the latest recensions.

Note also that details are added to the original promise as they explain the purpose of these people by the words *“in that they reign upon earth, and shall reign with Christ”*.

The promise of being a people for his name as given to the remnant of Israel and those gathered from the Gentiles was expressed by James at that first council in Jerusalem, when he summed up the debate about whether the Gentiles should be admitted into the household of faith without being circumcised and bound by all the ritual of the law.

“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; And I will build again the ruins thereof, And I will set it up: That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old.” (Acts 15:13-18).

James seems to have had some presidential role in the church at Jerusalem, because he both summed up the discussion and suggested the resolution that was put to the Apostles and Elders and the church for their approval. He quoted from the prophet Amos, a somewhat minor prophet, a lesson suitable for that occasion. It is of interest to note that he quoted from the Septuagint version as his argument turns on the fact that it differs from the Hebrew. *“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations that are called by my name, saith Jehovah that doeth this.”* (Amos 9:11,12).

There is not time to discuss this, but it indicates that at the meeting they spoke in the Greek language. As Titus was present, and it was around him that discussion was centred, it was of vital interest to him to understand the discussion (Galatians 2:1). It was James who summed up the testimony of Peter about the Gentiles receiving the blessings of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28,29). This prompted him to say that God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. James then quoted Amos as being in agreement with this in both the tabernacle of David being restored and the Gentiles being admitted. A comment that I have read suggests that there is a future order of these events shown by the use of the word *“first”* in verse 14 and then the words *“after this”* indicate a time delay until part of the

prophecy is fulfilled. It seems contrary, to me, of the statement that the words of the prophet are a fulfilment of the events described by Peter. The remnant of the nation was then seeking the Lord and it was on the basis of this conclusion that the resolution was passed not to trouble the Gentiles.

I have previously referred to 1 Peter 1:9, which mentions that we are called to be a people of God, but the next verse is also informative; *“who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”* (1 Peter 2:10). The same prophesy was quoted by Paul in Romans 9:26.

This verse echoes the message of Hosea, another minor prophet, but like Amos was one of the last prophets sent to Northern Kingdom of Israel to inform them that they were about to be carried away as captives. Hosea was told to explain how God felt about them in a very unusual way. Hosea was told to marry a prostitute, something as shocking then as it would be today, especially for someone who was to be God’s spokesman. There were three children born to that marriage and the names that were given to them by God contained a message for the people.

The first child was a boy named *“Jezreel”*, which means ‘God sows it’. Although there was an immediate message to punish to the house of Jehu, the name tells of a scattering as well as a planting. This foreshadows a future prospect for Israel.

The second child was a girl who was named *“Lo-ru-ha-mah”*, which means, ‘not pitied’. The message was that God was about to change from showing mercy to his children to sending the long-promised punishment.

The third child was a boy named *“Lo-amm”*, which means ‘not my people’. The child was evidently not Hosea’s, as his wife had returned to her old ways. The message was that God was about to remove his protection from the people. By these illustrations God was telling the people how he felt about them, but it also left a hope that, after God had chastised them, the people would return to their God. It is quite remarkable that both Peter and Paul found in this minor prophet a lesson for the future.

The concluding lesson from Hosea is given in chapter 2:21-23. *“And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith Jehovah, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer the grain, and the new wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel. And I*

will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

These verses referred to by both Peter and Paul tell of blessings returning to the people of God and applied to all believers. The nation was once 'the people', but both Peter and Paul used the term in a wider sense to all those that now have the received favour. The term, 'the people', explains the relationship that they have, but not the detail of that relationship. Thinking about how to explain that relationship as far as its benefits, obligations and responsibilities, I thought of Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg speech which encapsulated in a few words the hopes of that nation. I will quote part of what was most likely his first draft of that speech.

'It is rather for us, the living, we here be dedicated to the great task remaining before us that, from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve these dead shall not have died in vain, that the nation, shall have a new freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'

There is also a further responsibly and duty contained in the promises and that is of being a priesthood. The work of a priest is not explained in detail, but the work of our great high priest gives us a guide. *"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."* (Hebrews 2:18).

To complete my thoughts about the promises given to us, I should make some comment on how I understand the promises given to Israel as a nation. Some of the promises given in the Old Testament, because they use figures of speech, mean that they are not exactly defined, which makes them difficult to understand. Even when they are quoted in the New Testament their meaning can still have a wide range of meanings. The most helpful discussion of the subject I find is Paul's discussion in Romans chapters 9 and 11. I will quote a few verses; *"And so I ask, 'They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?' Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full participation mean. ... For if their rejection results in reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance bring but life from the dead?"* (Romans 11:11,12,15).

To summarise this:

Israel	What happened
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Their Stumbling	Riches for the World
Their Fall	Riches for the Gentiles
Their full participation	How much more (riches)?

And the thought repeated in verse 15

Their Rejection	Reconciliation of the World
Their acceptance	Life from the Dead?

The line of argument is that if such great benefits flowed from the failure of Israel to accept her Messiah, think what greater benefits will flow from them once again being accepted. Will not that mean life from the dead? Paul puts this statement in a question form and assumes that the hearer will know the answer. I would understand that the term *“Life from the dead”* should be understood in the natural sense of it meaning the beginning of the resurrection. From this I conclude that the acceptance of Israel again and the resurrection of the dead occur together.

From verse 25 of that chapter a different line of argument is followed in that God’s promises are not abrogated in that there is a time limit to the gathering of the Gentiles. *“For I want to let you know about this secret, brothers, so that you will not claim to be wiser than you are: Stubbornness has come to part of Israel until the full number of the gentiles comes to faith. In this way, all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.”* (Romans 11:25,26).

“For just as you disobeyed God in the past but now have received his mercy because of their disobedience, so they, too, have now disobeyed. As a result, they may receive mercy because of the mercy shown to you.” (Romans 11:30,31).

Who was disobedient	Why they received mercy
Gentiles	Disobedience of Jews
Jews	By the same mercy shown to Gentiles

Whether we can take the recent immigration of people back into Israel as being of particular significance may be a matter of opinion, although my point

is that the times of the gathering of the Gentiles is not yet complete so the blessings of the kingdom have not yet begun. Paul stated on Mars Hill that God fixes the boundary of nations so all movements of people into new areas is in accordance with his will.

The lesson contained in 1 Thessalonians 5:1 is that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night and then it goes on to explain that the suddenness of his coming should not catch us by surprise. If this is the lesson then no particular world event would herald the establishment of his kingdom.

I also wish to give a few thoughts on how the hardening of Israel's heart is to be reversed. As I commented before, the hardening comes through the events that God sends on people. For demonstrating how the hardening can be reversed I will consider the life of Paul and his conversion.

1. Paul's hardness of heart before his conversion is documented by his statement that he was exceedingly mad against the Christians, indicating his perversity of spirit in that he resisted the prompting of the mind. This is indicated by the statement, *"It is hard for thee to kick against the goad"* (Acts 26:14). The goad was the stick used to guide the bullock team.

2. Paul saw the glorified Jesus (Acts 9:5) which changed the way he understood the work of the Messiah. The stumbling block for the Jews is that their expectation of the work of the Messiah is that of a powerful ruler (Isaiah 9:6).

3. Paul was not disobedient to that vision, which alerts us that it is still possible to reject even a demonstration of such power.

4. Although Jesus promised that he would send Paul unto the Gentiles, that did not happen immediately, as he spent three years in Arabia. There, presumably, he studied the scripture to know how God was working out his purposes. Paul also spent time in Tarsus before being called to the work as an evangelist. Paul needed training also in his ministry work.

5. Paul's work of preaching the gospel resulted in a necessary personal development. He expressed it in the words of Philippians 3:16, *"That I may know him and the power that flows from Jesus"*.

So, to apply these lessons to Israel these would be:

1. That part of Israel is now hardened in refusing the gospel message.
2. The appearance of Jesus in great power and glory which will be a convincing influence in changing their attitude.
3. They will need to be obedient.
4. From their deep knowledge they will teach themselves about the work of Jesus as being a saviour.
5. They will come to know the Lord.

But you may quote to me Zechariah 8:23 as being the work of Israel in the kingdom. *“This is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies says: ‘In the future, ten men speaking all the languages of the nations will grab hold of one Jewish person by the hem of his garment and say, ‘Let us go up to Jerusalem with you, because we heard that God is with you.’”*

It is difficult to apply this prophecy, like others in the Old Testament, with any exactness as to the time of its application and function, because it uses a figure of speech, unless you think the figure is to be taken literally. The next chapter in Zechariah speaks of the coming of the Messiah at his first advent, riding on an ass, so the prophecies are not given in sequence. What the verse explains to me is that the Jews would make good history teachers as they can explain the background to God’s plan. Chapter nine of Romans lists all the advantages of the Jew in that they know the many promises.

There are two main reasons why we learn about history.

1. Why things are the way they are. i.e. it explains who we are.
2. The saying ‘Those who don’t learn from history are bound to make the same mistake’, contains the lesson that we should learn from past events.

For these two reasons I can understand the part that the Jew is to play in the kingdom, but the verse does not indicate that the Jew is to be entrusted with a leadership position. The King of that kingdom will be Jesus who will reign with those called to be a people for his name.

I have given my understanding of how those who are called to be a people for his name play their part in the coming kingdom. I trust that I have given reasons for my understanding and that you find them worthy of consideration. I realise that the subject is much debated and I do not usually enter into such debate.



DAVID'S PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE

Psalm 102

by Russell Collins

Introduction

Psalm 102 is the second in the trilogy which consists of Psalms 101, 102 and 103. Psalm 101 speaks of God's mercy and judgment, Psalm 102 is a prayer for deliverance from suffering and distress, while Psalm 103 is a deeply-moving hymn of praise to God for His forgiving love and so many blessings.

In Psalm 102 David in his distress prayed to God (verses 1 to 11), and found confidence in God's purposes and over-ruling providence (verses 12 to 22) and also in God's unchangeableness (verses 23 to 28).

David's Distress and Suffering

1. *A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.
Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.*
2. *Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.*
3. *For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.*
4. *My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.*
5. *By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.*
6. *I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.*
7. *I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.*
8. *Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.*
9. *For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,*
10. *Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.*
11. *My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.*

The words of verse 1 are very memorable and are often quoted: "*Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee*". These words answer David's question in Psalm 101:2, "*O when wilt thou come unto me?*"

The words in verse 2, "*In the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily*" seem to suggest David's confidence that the Lord would hear his prayers and respond to them.

In verses 3 to 9 David's words indicate that he must have been suffering physical illness and pain as well as mental and spiritual distress. His *"days are consumed like smoke"* (verse 3) seems expressive of the passing of time during illness, of which the patient is unaware or barely aware. David's *"bones are burned as an hearth"* (verse 3), indicating a burning, raging fever, while his heart *"is smitten, and withered like grass"* (verse 4) seems in these words to express the weakness and frailty we all feel when very ill, and food has no appeal for us, as David wrote, *"I forget to eat my bread"*. David's distress was great, expressed by *"the voice of my groaning"*, and his bodily condition weak, indicated by his words *"my bones cleave to my skin"* (verse 5).

David's distress was further compounded by feelings of loneliness and misery expressed in the similes; *"I am like a pelican of the wilderness"* and *"an owl of the desert"* (verse 6), and *"as a sparrow alone upon the house-top"* (verse 7).

The picture widens as we are told of David's enemies, who reproached him daily, were mad against him and sworn against him. David's enemies were probably those who would act and behave unrighteously in his administration and in his kingdom, and who David dismissed from his service and punished with imprisonment or exile. There seems no clear indication that enemies outside Israel, heathen tribes and peoples, were included here, though they may well have been.

We are reminded here that great David's greater Son, Jesus Christ, was hated by those who were *"filled with madness"* against Him. The Jewish people behaved in this unreasonable and unjustifiable way. Luke 6:11 *"And they are filled with madness: and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus."* (Luke 6:11).

So also did Paul before he was called by Jesus. *"And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."* (Acts 26:11).

Jesus gave no cause or reason why anyone should hate Him. *"But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."* (John 15:25).

In this way (as in other ways also) David pre-figured Christ, the Messiah who was in David's day still to come of David's line.

It would seem that David's statement in verse 9 that he had "*eaten ashes like bread*" is poetic. Ashes represent mourning, and were in former times cast upon the head in sorrow, and the mourner lay on them or was seated in them.

"And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying." (2 Samuel 13:19).

"And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes." (Job 2:8).

David's tears, however, are probably meant to be understood literally, as they fell from his eyes into the cup from which he was drinking (verse 9).

David was in deep sorrow because of the transgressions of his people, for which cause He was suffering God's indignation and wrath (verse 10). David was Israel's king, and as such was lifted up and also cast down by God (verse 10). He was like "*a shadow that declineth*" (verse 11), that is, on the point of vanishing, and was "*withered like grass*", that is, soon to be removed and cast aside.

It seems from David's great distress and misery that he feared that his line and the future of Zion were in great jeopardy. But, under inspiration, David was reassured of God's purposes and the future of Zion.

The Purposes of God

12. *But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.*
13. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.*
14. *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.*
15. *So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.*
16. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*
17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*
18. *This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.*
19. *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth;*

20. *To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death;*
21. *To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;*
22. *When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.*

"But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever" wrote David in verse 12. The permanence of God ensures the fulfilment of His promises, and the permanence of David's throne as promised by God (1 Chronicles 17:14). It seemed that David's line was threatened with extinction at the Babylonian captivity, but we know from the New Testament genealogies that his line was preserved, and Jesus the Messiah was born of David's royal line through Mary, a direct descendant of King David (Luke 3:23-38). Because of the Lord God's mighty deeds of deliverance of the whole human race from the consequence of disobedience, death, He will be remembered to all generations for ever (verse 12).

The next ten verses (13 to 22) may be understood to foretell the deliverance of the nation from captivity in Babylon, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, but the scope of the prophecy widens beyond these events still future from David's day.

Certain phrases and expressions take the fulfilment of the words into God's kingdom. *"All the kings of the earth (shall fear) thy glory"*, *"When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord"* extend the fulfilment of the Psalmist's words beyond Babylon into God's kingdom.

The Lord God is pictured as looking down on the whole tragedy of the human condition, and determining *"to loose those that are appointed to death"*, that is, the whole human race, and bring them all to thankfulness and to the praise of His name. We in these latter days know that He has laid the basis for this eventual deliverance in Jesus Christ.

God's Unchangeable Nature and Existence

23. *He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.*
24. *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.*

In verses 23 and 24 David seems to lament the brevity of his life, and contrasts it in the verses that follow with the unchangeable nature and existence of God.

The Change from Old to New

The thoughts in verses 25 to 28 are taken up by the writer of Hebrews. The Psalmist wrote:

25. *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.*
26. *They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:*
27. *But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*
28. *The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.*

The writer of Hebrews applied the Psalmist's words in Hebrews 1:10-12.

“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

Symbolic language is used in these verses, the *"earth"* signifying the social order among its peoples, and the *"heavens"* the governmental or ruling authorities. In the beginning, the Lord established the social order by creating our first parents, from whom the whole human race has developed. That social order came to an end with the flood of Noah's day (2 Peter 3:5,6). After the flood a new *"heavens and earth"* came into existence, some aspects of which still endure to this day (2 Peter 3:7).

The *"earth"* and the *"heavens"* specifically referred to in Hebrews 1:10-12 are in all probability the Jewish arrangement under the Law Covenant. The foundation of this *"earth"* or social order was laid under the direction of Moses, while the *"heavens"* or ruling authorities consisted of Moses, the mediator of the Covenant, and Aaron the High Priest, both of whom were subject to Yahweh, Who proclaimed Himself their ruler.

This arrangement looked promising and the people were eager for it, but it was doomed to perish because the people could not keep God's Law. All people, including the Israelites, were condemned through Adam's disobedience (1 Corinthians 15:22), and to correct their attitude that the people thought that the Law would bring them life (Galatians 3:21; Luke 10:28), the purposes of the Law were firstly to show the sinfulness of

sin (Romans 7:13) and the unremitting hopelessness of their position before God, and secondly to lead them unto Christ, the promised Messiah (Colossians 3:24).

The Jewish arrangement waxed old as a garment, but although the Lord in His mercy and patience patched it up time after time, it could not last for ever. It did last for more than fifteen centuries, then was folded up and laid aside by the Lord Jesus Christ. "*Who nailed it to His cross*" (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13, Galatians 3:13). Jesus said that to put a new patch on an old garment is useless, and to put new wine into old, already stretched wine skins is also useless (Matthew 9:16,17).

And so the greatness of the Lord Jesus is shown in that He was involved in laying the foundation of the Law Covenant, and was also the One Who nearly two thousand years later accomplished its destruction and replacement.

"And they shall be changed, but thou art the same" (verses 26 and 27 of Psalm 102; Hebrews 1:12). God's purpose to have an Israel was not frustrated by the failure of the Jews to take advantage of their privileges. God desired a people for His name, and demonstrated that the Law was unsuitable as a means of choosing His people.

Therefore, the Jewish "*heavens and earth*" under the Law Covenant arrangement were changed, and a New Covenant, with the Lord Jesus Christ as its Mediator, was inaugurated, ratified by Jesus' sacrifice and shed blood, and under this new arrangement the people of God are to be chosen. The new people of God consist of a "*remnant*" of people from the Jewish nation and Gentile believers who together become the "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6:16).

So here is a change from the old Law Covenant operation to the New Covenant operation accomplished by Jesus Christ. He had lived for the entire period covered by the Law Covenant, and continues to live to carry on all operations of the New Covenant with His character and purpose unchanged by the long passage of time and by the opposition and indifference of people and even of angels.

Jesus has been highly exalted by the Father by being given "*life in himself*" (John 5:26), a quality of life not given to the angels, so that He is now like God, whose "*years shall have no end*" (verse 27 of Psalm 102). Jesus was also exalted by being confirmed as the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

Conclusion

And so, it is in the Lord Jesus that *"the children of thy servants shall continue, And their seed shall be established before thee"* (verse 28). The seed of promise is of course the Lord Jesus (Galatians 3:16), and God's children are those by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26); for, as the Apostle wrote, *"... if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Galatians 3:29).



LOYALTY

by Merv Buckmaster

When Jesus instructed the disciples, Peter and John, to prepare the Passover (Luke 22:8), none of the twelve was aware of the changes to their worship that were to come about in the succeeding few hours, nor in the days ahead of them. They were aware that some of the Jews were planning to be rid of Jesus, but they felt safe with him despite the threat to themselves. During the Passover meal, when he told them that he would be betrayed and go to his death, they were *"exceeding sorrowful"* (Matthew 26:22).

After that final Passover Jesus then performed for them a simple ceremony using the bread and wine left over from the Passover meal of unleavened bread, wine and bitter herbs partaken with some singing of the hallel; and instructed them to make the ceremony a memorial to him, while he was absent from them.

This was not a request but a command (Luke 22:19). The Lord had always kept the twelve disciples separate from his other followers with the declaration that, *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."* (John 15:14-16). The apostles were given a commission to spread God's message of salvation and to call others from among the Jews, and later the gentiles, to become Jesus' friends. And so we congregate each year, on the anniversary of that simple ceremony which replaced the Passover, in response to that commission and to Jesus' command.

The disciples, two thousand years ago, would have had only a distant appreciation of the first Passover, eaten in response to God's command, about fifteen hundred years previously. In the same way we can have only a distant appreciation of the first Lord's Supper that was instituted by him to be a memorial to him.

Nevertheless, this commemoration, almost two thousand years after the events of that fateful night, brings into sharper focus the truth and significance of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and all mankind. Our participation in the brief and simple annual rite is a demonstration of our faith in the merit of that sacrifice. By giving this witness to our heavenly Father, and to any outsiders who may notice our devotions, we strengthen our faithfulness to the affirmation we made at our baptism, and thus display our loyalty to the king who will come to reign on earth when God's appointed time comes.

The apostles said to the Lord, "*Increase our faith*" (Luke 17:5), and we are encouraged by their plea to grow in faith. Without the personal presence of Jesus our loyalty is more susceptible than theirs to the distractions of our everyday circumstances. There is the warning in Hebrews "*... that we must lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us*" (Hebrews 12:1) returning to deeper devotion to God after any episode of distraction.

The Christian life was ever thus, and Simon Barjona is an example of someone whose loyalty suffered in spite of his faith. Jesus saw Simon, later named Peter, and Andrew his brother, when they were fishing in the Sea of Galilee, and he called them to follow him. The two men must have been ready for the appearance of their Messiah because they immediately left their fishing nets and followed Jesus (Matthew 4:18-20).

I expect that each of us has, at some time, met a person, or persons whose presence carried with it a sense of wonder. And I am confident that Jesus had such a presence, and to a greater degree than any other man. He was aware of his responsibility to his heavenly Father when he was only twelve years old (Luke 2:49). He knew and understood the Old Testament scriptures (Luke 4:21). He knew the characters of the men he chose to work with him (John 1:47). He calmed the storm on the sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27). He rode an unbroken donkey colt (Matthew 21:2,7). He healed the sick: he fed thousands of people, and cast out evil spirits. No other man has had such a powerful and inspirational personality.

Thus, Peter and Andrew trusted in the Lord from the time of their first meeting. The same thing happened with James and John the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21,22), and with Philip and Nathanael (John 1:43 et seq.). And in the call to Matthew (Matthew 9:9).

Peter's trust was developing into faith when he tried to walk to Jesus on the water, but his faith wavered and the Lord rescued him (Matthew 14:28-31). However, Peter's faith was firmly established when Jesus asked the disciples who he was, and Peter made the confession, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). At the transfiguration scene Peter was very enthusiastic to honour the Lord, and Moses and Elijah, but was loyal enough to accept Jesus' instruction to tell no man of the experience (Matthew 17).

Some time after that Peter seemed to have some doubt about his standing before God, and he asked Jesus about forgiveness. He was told a parable that showed how justice was tempered by mercy so that forgiveness could follow (Matthew 18). A further question from Peter may indicate a touch of insecurity in that he asked about the reward the disciples could expect for their service to the Lord (Matthew 19:27). Again the Lord assured him in response to the display of Peter's devotion.

Through those times of working with the Lord and learning from him, Peter was fully loyal, but when Jesus questioned that loyalty, Peter denied that he would be offended when he was accused of his association with the Son of the living God. In the stress of the situation after Jesus' arrest, Peter's loyalty faltered and he denied that he knew the Lord. At the rooster's cry he remembered what Jesus had told him, "*and he went out and wept bitterly.*" (Matthew 26:75). We are not told, and perhaps we do not need to be told, of his repentance and prayer for forgiveness.

After the resurrection, when the women told the disciples that Jesus' tomb was empty, "*Peter got up and ran to the tomb to look. He bent down and saw the empty linen wrappings, then went away wondering what had happened*" (Luke 24:12). His loyalty, subdued by those dramatic events, was restored later when, at Jesus' instruction he drew the net full of fish from the sea of Tiberias, and he and the other disciples were fed by the Lord on the lake shore. At that meeting he was strengthened with temporal provisions, and was also strengthened spiritually when challenged to declare his love for Jesus (John 21).

Peter was motivated to greater activity by the Lord's expression of confidence in him, and he led the attempt to elect Matthias to replace Judas, and so restore the number of apostles to twelve (Acts 1:15-26).

That election was not in accordance with the Lord's will. The apostles had to wait to be strengthened for their commission to preach the gospel and establish the church, by the gift of the holy spirit, at Pentecost. On that occasion it was Peter who showed forth the new dispensation that God had established through the life, death and resurrection of his Son.

"Listen to these words, fellow Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. In accordance with his own plan God had already decided that Jesus would be handed over to you; and you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him. But God raised him from death, setting him free from its power, because it was impossible that death should hold him prisoner Therefore I clearly state to everyone in Israel that God has made Jesus, whom you crucified, to be Lord and Messiah." (Acts 2:22,36).

And from the account of the apostles' work recorded in the book of the Acts, it is clear that Peter showed an inspirational faith, loyalty and zeal. Having met the Lord, having learned from him and having responded to the call to serve the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the story of Peter, among many other stories of lives of faith, should encourage us to remain faithful to God, loyal to Jesus and zealous in obeying his commands; just as his friends, the disciples did, centuries ago.

And so each year we come together in response to Jesus' command to remember him, and thus acknowledge the over-arching plan of Yahweh our God, because it is in him we have life, and from him the promise of everlasting life to come.

And while that special celebration is required only once a year, we must also remember the challenge to maintain our loyalty to our saviour every day, following the example of Simon Peter, by growing in grace (2 Peter 3:18), building our faith upon Jesus Christ, the sure foundation of God's plan of redemption (Ephesians 2:20).



"Ye are my Friends, if ..."

(John 15:14)

Am I a friend of the Master,
Ever fulfilling the right,
Never a wrong word to grieve Him,
Even when 'out of His sight'?

Friend? Do I always exalt Him,
Not caring who it is hears?
Is He ashamed of my friendship?
Am I the cause of His tears?

It was not I chose this friendship:
He loved me before I Him knew.
He died to save me and all others;
His great love my heart to Him drew.

I would return His affection,
Love Him as He still loves me,
Gladly announcing to others
'My Saviour doth also love thee'.

(From the late John Thompson)



WASH YOUR HANDS

by Jenny Roe

'Wash your hands before dinner please

Do you remember being delayed from sitting at the dinner table by this seemingly aggravating instruction? We have probably all given similar instructions to our children and grandchildren. Do you enter hospitals smelling like antiseptic because you have used the mandatory hand-wash dispenser at the entrance of the medical precinct? At my school each class follows the hand-washing routine before lunch, some students carrying their own mini antiseptic hand-wash. Sandwiches filled with mild tasting ingredients can sometimes taste like "Dettol" sandwiches! With the coronavirus pandemic now causing widespread distress, people are even more aware of this basic hand-washing requirement.

Such hygienic measures go back into the Old Testament writings. Long before doctors and scientists knew why hand-washing was a pre-requisite to eating, God put laws into place to protect the health of his people.

Elisha purified a stream (2 Kings 2:19-22). God instructed Judah (through Jeremiah) to use soda and soap for thorough hand-washing. David, beloved King of Israel, said *“Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow”*.

Underground water tunnels in Hazor were a marvel of engineering. Women in pursuit of water descended five flights of stairs, hewn from solid rock, sixty metres below ground. Women carried water in goatskin bottles. These were carried on the hip or shoulder.

Priests who served in the temple, and lay people who ventured into the women’s court and beyond, had to be ritually pure. Ritual cleansing applied to sacred foods as seen in Leviticus 7:20-21 and Numbers 9:1-12. Laws applied more generally than just to the priests and those who visited the temple (Leviticus 11:24-40 and 14:33-53).

In the New Testament, hand-washing is specifically mandated in Mark 7:1-5

With the simple twist of a tap handle we have abundant water in our homes. We do not have to walk to a well and wait our turn to fill a pitcher. We are not dependent on the weather for a constant water supply. Even when Australia is in drought, we may have to economise a little, but still use our washing machines, dishwashers and showers with relative abandon.

An archaeological survey in 2011 found that in Jerusalem, Judaea and Galilee (from AD 1-135), there were stepped pools: places where people could go to wash or bathe. These pools were mostly in domestic spaces but some have been excavated near synagogues, wine and olive presses and tombs. Excavations of Herod’s fortress at Cyprus have unearthed personal baths similar in shape to today’s baths. Vessels to hold water were made of stone. Perhaps such jars were used in Christ’s miracle of turning water into wine.

As Christians we are wise to be physically clean. Doctors and scientists have given us sound reasons for such hygiene. God instituted laws long before science explained the reasons for such rituals.

More profound and far-reaching, however, is the cleansing of our hearts and minds.

Are our first thoughts of the day to thank God for a night's rest, a safe place to sleep, or do we find fault with our pillow or doona or our neighbours who had a party?

Over breakfast do we thank God for the ample food we have, the fresh cool milk to drink, or do we complain that the toast was over- or under-done, or the muesli too chewy?

In the privacy of our homes do we criticise others and say things which we would not say if they were with us?

We have all been guilty of such offences, but we need to ask God to help us wash our hearts and minds clean. We need to discipline our thoughts to positive, encouraging comments. We need to have negative, destructive, critical thoughts washed away and be replaced by positive, encouraging, uplifting thoughts which are cleansed by God's grace. The more we practise, the better we become.

Each day is a fresh start. Use the 'soap' of Romans 12:2; *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* so that our thoughts are towards our Maker.

Exercise throughout the day keeps our hearts beating, but cleanse them with the 'antiseptic' of Hebrews 10:22 so that our thoughts through the day are positive, encouraging and uplifting to others, especially the family of believers, *"... having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water"*.

Use the 'mouth-wash' of Ephesians 4:29-32 so that our tongues more readily speak kindness, compassion and gratitude to our God who Has given us faith, hope and eternal love. *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

James 4:8 reads, *"Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners and purify your hearts"*

May we all strive, with passion, to stand before our Lord with clean hands, minds and hearts.



Notes from a Group Study of the Epistle to the HEBREWS

(Continued from NCN No. 151)

Hebrews 2:9-13

- 9 ***But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man***
- 10 ***For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.***
- 11 ***For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,***
- 12 ***Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.***
- 13 ***And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.***

In verse 10 it is God who made all things for himself, and who will restore fallen men to the position of son-ship. He has done this through Jesus, the pioneer or chief agent of their salvation, by making him complete through the experiences of suffering, in the same way that human beings suffer (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus felt the anguish of humankind as shown when he wept at Lazarus' death (John 11). His suffering, and his temptation by Satan (Matthew 4), were to test his obedience. Such experiences were needed for both Adam and Jesus to test their obedience. Whereas Adam was tested and failed, Jesus did not fail, and his voluntary obedience proved that he was qualified to be the redemptive price as required by divine justice.

Our suffering, brought about through our efforts to follow Jesus' example, enables us to realise what Jesus went through to rescue us. His example strengthens us to remain obedient to the limit of our ability, as shown by the martyrs who have died for their Christian faith (Hebrews 2:18). In the same way that Jesus' suffering made him complete, the believer is completed through him because he took away the condemnation which is the consequence of disobedience. Therefore, Jesus and the believers are all sons of God, and belong to the same family, so that the Lord Jesus can call those who have accepted him his brethren (verse 11). He has borne witness of the heavenly Father to them (verse 12 and Psalm 22:22). He put his trust in God (verse 13) and so must we in order to be called his brethren. The word "trust" could be better rendered as "faith" (Hebrews 11:1) to show its significance.

By the end of the Gospel Age there will have been 144,000 who have been sanctified for son-ship, but Jesus died for all men. Those who believe and are chosen for son-ship now become members of the Church and will be joined by the rest of mankind when they are raised and choose to accept salvation through faith in the sacrifice made on the cross. He will deliver all of them (Hebrews 2:15) in due time.

Hebrews 2:14-18

- 14** *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*
- 15** *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*
- 16** *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*
- 17** *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*
- 18** *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

From verse 14 came the question, 'How can Christ destroy the devil by his death?'. The verse states that Jesus will destroy him that hath the power of death, which is Satan. God has the absolute power of life and death, and that power has been delegated to Christ so that he has become the "*Lord both of the dead and living*" (Romans 14:9). Satan has the power of the fear of death (verse 15) and can also cause men to disobey through temptation. By his ransom sacrifice, Jesus destroyed, or made powerless, Satan, because then God could proceed with his plan of salvation. Christ's resurrection demonstrated that death had been overcome, thus the fear of death is removed for believers. The resurrection of Jesus showed that God "*abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light*" (2 Timothy 1:10). Belief into Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant will lead eventually to the end of sinfulness. Thus, the way is clear for the dead to be raised and for the binding of Satan. At the appointed time Jesus will destroy Satan (Revelation 20:1-3).

It was asked 'Are we under bondage?' as mentioned in verse 15. It was pointed out that all men are under the bondage of sinfulness, and that the Israelites were also under the bondage of the Law Covenant. But the New Covenant has brought freedom firstly from the consequence of disobedience and secondly from the bondage of the Law, to believers of the Gospel age, through Christ.

In verse 16 it was suggested that the seed of Abraham is spiritual Israel, that is, the sons of glory of verse 10, and those who are the sanctified ones of verse 11.

The seed of Abraham meant here is not his natural descendants, but those who have faith like him, as shown in Romans 4:11-16. This is confirmed by Galatians 3:26,29. In the Gospel age the seed refers to Spiritual Israel, but, in the Kingdom age will include the rest of mankind who accept the gift of life offered through the New Covenant.

Verse 17 continues the underlying theme of the ransom, in that Jesus did not come to earth as an angel but as a man so that he could be the saviour of all men, and call them brethren. He then became a high priest of the new dispensation, and was therefore able to be the intercessor between men and God, and thus bring into effect reconciliation between them.

Verse 18 prompted the question, 'How does Jesus help those who are being tempted?'. It could be said that he helps believers by his example. Firstly, knowing that he was tempted and answered his tempter with scripture. Secondly, his suffering made him aware of our suffering and temptations, and we must accept his position as our mediator with God. Thirdly, by his showing us the need for prayer; even giving a model prayer for our guidance. Fourthly, through discipline, especially from the lessons in scripture, pointed out in Hebrews 12:9-11. Fifthly, through messages from study and from other believers.

Also, there is the assurance of Matthew 28:20 that Jesus promised to be with his disciples always, in that he would ask God to send the Holy Spirit as a Comforter (John 14:16) and intercessor (Romans 8:26-28). Paul also pointed out to the Corinthians that the believer would not be tested beyond what he would be able to bear, and that a way of avoiding the temptation would be available. It was inferred from this that the testing of believers might be controlled in some way, and that Christ may have some influence in the matter; although it was generally considered that divine intervention as recorded in the Old Testament is not practised in the Gospel age.

Hebrews 3:1-6

- 1 *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;***
- 2 *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.***
- 3 *For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.***
- 4 *For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.***
- 5 *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;***

6 *But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

In verses 1 and 14 brethren are described as partakers in Christ, if they remain faithful unto death. Other translations give “*sharers*”, “*associates*”, or “*partners*” for the word “*partakers*”. It was thought that “*sharers*” meant sharers in the high calling, and in an obligation to pass on the gospel message, but not sharing in Christ’s sacrifice. Thus, the idea of “*partners*” seemed to be more appropriate because of the promise of joint heirship to the faithful believer. The use of the word “*partakers*” is supported by Matthew 20:23 where Jesus told the mother of James and John that they would partake of his cup and his baptism; and 1 Corinthians 10:17 where Paul pointed out that at the memorial we are all partakers of the bread which symbolises spiritual sustenance through Christ. Believers are also partakers of the holy spirit according to Jesus’ promise in John 14:26, which is supported by Hebrews 6:4. Fellowship with Christ includes partaking of, or sharing spiritual food from God, and suffering hardship and persecution for the sake of service to God. Ephesians 2:5,6 and Colossians 3:1,2,5 show that the partnership is future, so that to the believer it is now in prospect, but on condition that faith is maintained and the heart is not allowed to become hardened or unreceptive to the gift of life, as is set out later in the chapter.

In verse 1 Christ is called an apostle, which he was because he was sent by God to be his representative on earth, and is now our representative in heaven as the high priest of the New Covenant. Christ regarded those who believed into him as his brethren, but it would seem to be presumptuous for them to assume the status of apostles, and thereby take on the authority of those whom Christ chose personally, particularly the twelve. Believers are all disciples, but with different abilities and different responsibilities, as shown by 1 Corinthians 12:28,29. However, all the brethren should acknowledge Christ as their high priest.

Christ is compared to Moses who was the leader of the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt, and who was also their high priest until Aaron was appointed to that office. Thus, Moses was leader and high priest to fleshly Israel, and Christ is leader and high priest to spiritual Israel.

The “*house*” of verses 2 to 6 was identified as God’s house, but more particularly God’s household, which was at first his chosen people, the nation of Israel. Moses was a servant in that household, so it was not his, and he had more honour as a servant in it under the Law Covenant than the nation itself. In a similar manner, the believers under the New Covenant are now God’s household, and Christ is God’s son who has been given authority over that household. By redeeming God’s household out of death Christ now has more honour than Moses.

God's household is the household of faith. Justification has always been through faith. Thus, it is the same house that has been under two Covenants, and therefore Christ has been over the household through both the Jewish and Gospel ages. This is supported by 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, and also by Isaiah 63:9, where Christ is described as the angel of God's presence to the Israelites. While the whole nation was initially God's household, it was only the men and women of faith who remained members of it; and the situation is the same under the New Covenant. There are rewards promised to the faithful and punishment consequent upon disbelief or falling away from the grace of God.

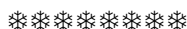
Hebrews 3:7-12

- 7** *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,*
8 *Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of*
temptation in the wilderness:
9 *When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty*
years.
10 *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do*
always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.
11 *So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)*
12 *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of*
unbelief, in departing from the living God.

The importance of “*departing from the living God*” (verse 12) is dealt with twice in this chapter. Firstly, from verses 7 to 12 and again in verses 15 to 19. The issue of belief is fundamental to Christian salvation, and the opposite, unbelief, has serious consequences. That was true for the Israelites at the time of the exodus. Because of their lack of faith, those who left Egypt died in the wilderness and did not occupy the promised land, which would have been God's rest for them. The consequence of lack of faith is also true for believers under the New Covenant, who also will forfeit their rest by succumbing to the deceitfulness of sin (verse 13). Psalm 95 (verses 8 to 11) shows that David exhorted his people, who were under the Law Covenant, not to harden their hearts, as had their forefathers in the wilderness, and so call God's wrath upon them.

God's rest at the time of the exodus was to have been safety and prosperity in Canaan, although it may initially have been their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. In David's day it should have been peace and security with God as the king of the nation. The prosperity of the nation under the human kings was neither complete nor long-lasting. During the Gospel age the believer can enter God's rest for the first part through his spiritual strength and comfort, and in the assurance of his blessings in the age to come, while a second part will be perfect peace in the kingdom to come and forever after. At all these times God's rest was lost through unbelief, which leads to disobedience, which, in turn, is shown by lack of faith.

(To be continued.)



NEWS AND NOTES

Autumn Conference

In February of this year we received notification that there was a double booking at our advertised venue (the Comfort Inn Main Lead in Ballarat), but fortunately we were able to obtain an alternative booking at the Foothills Conference Centre in Mooroolbark, which is significantly closer to Melbourne. However, due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic and the introduction by the Australian Government of lockdown restrictions, we had to make the difficult but necessary decision to postpone our annual autumn conference until Friday 9 to Sunday 11 April 2021. We plan to carry over this year's theme of "What is the World Coming To?", in which we will examine the state of the world (probably much changed again) and what the Bible tells us about the future. We are very much looking forward to a time of blessing with talks, Bible studies, devotions and fellowship. For further information contact info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au.

Memorial Supper

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic we were unable to hold our memorial of the Lord's Supper as planned. Instead, several brethren shared a small service over the Internet and the rest commemorated the occasion individually in their own homes.

Sunday Meetings

Due to Australia's lockdown restrictions we are unable to meet in person at present, so we are conducting our Sunday meetings via Zoom. We are just beginning a study of the book of Philippians and also plan to present a talk every few weeks. If you would like to join us, please contact info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au for the meeting link.



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 the members of the group, and readers are requested to heed the words: ***"Prove all things"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



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