

NEW FOCUS

THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND

SEPTEMBER 2014 VOL. 18 NO. 03

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Editor
Peter L. Meney

New Focus promotes the Christ-centred Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace. It presents the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation and glories in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

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— Cover —

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
2 Corinthians 4:6

First Snow On Skiddaw, Bassenthwaite.
Courtesy: GalleryWall.co.uk

“I believe in freewill.” “Me, too.”

“That’s where we differ”, said my questioner, “I believe in freewill.”

What do you mean by freewill? In one sense nothing can exist, or function, except God permits it, including man’s will. Man is not God, he is not free and self-existent. Man’s will is free only to the extent God allows. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Proverbs 21:1).

Yet, undoubtedly, God has allowed men a degree of freedom in their choices and decisions. He does not force us. Even the powerful, sovereign operations of God’s grace in conversion do not drive men to unwilling obedience. Rather, the elect of God, for whom salvation has been eternally purposed are made gladly willing to receive forgiveness. They are happy converts. None will enter heaven who does not wish to be there.

Conversion is the work of God as the Holy Spirit acts on the souls of men; quickening, calling, convicting and converting until grace, forgiveness and salvation are the most desirable gifts upon earth to the sinner. “Thy people shall be willing” (Psalm 110:3).

We distinguish between natural and spiritual freedom of the will. Natural liberty exists in every action and situation. We can choose to eat or not; to drink, sit, stand, or walk. The human will has liberty in natural things. We may choose to love or hate, harbour grudges or forgive offence as our pleasure takes us. We may even fulfil religious activity, pray, sing, read scripture, attend public worship, hear the gospel.

Yet, our fallen nature spoils everything. A man can appear outwardly good, and do many things which have a show of moral good, even withstanding temptation, all by natural freewill. However, that is where it ends. In spiritual matters man has neither will, nor power to act in ways pleasing or acceptable to God. He cannot recover his spiritual condition or alter his eternal destination. He has no will to live spiritually, or respond spiritually, to God. Man’s whole nature is opposed to God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual enmity and antagonism reigns in our flesh, mind, will and soul towards God and prevents us doing what is right in matters of faith, repentance, regeneration, conversion. The presence and dominion of evil means man’s will is not free to choose God but instead bound and captive to sin and Satan.

The Bible speaks of man being polluted, carnal, a slave to sin, spiritually dead, impotent to do anything that is truly or spiritually good. By the fall of Adam and our union with him, it is impossible to please God, or do spiritual good. Our freewill, for what it is worth, always leads to doing evil. Our thoughts, judgment, and affections by which the will is influenced and directed are depraved, ruined, and corrupt (Jeremiah 17:9). Nothing good originates in the human heart (James 1:17). Consequently, all spiritual activity must have its origin in God and ultimately people can act spiritually only through the enabling power of God’s grace, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

Man’s freewill enables him to satisfy the lusts of the flesh but it does not, cannot, forge a relationship with God. Man has no spiritual desire or power to please God. The will slavishly serves the old man of sin.

Only when man’s will is altered in the new creation and the effect of the fall removed by grace and conversion can man know peace with God. This is the message of the gospel. The dead must be made alive, captives freed, the blind made to see, hearts opened. Until and unless this happens at the behest of Almighty God, man’s will is free only to take him down to hell.

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New Focus Conference 2015

Datchworth Village Hall
Hertfordshire

Friday 22nd - Sunday 24th May

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“Comfort ye my people”

It is the preachers’ calling and purpose to comfort and encourage the Lord’s people. Spiritual comfort can be enjoyed only when the Saviour of sinners is lifted up before them in all the fulness of His glorious accomplishments.

Courage to stand for truth in this dark and sinful world flows from the settled knowledge of peace and reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Those who preach duty, obligation and self-examination must of necessity draw their hearers’ eyes from the Lord Jesus in order to focus upon themselves. Such practices can never bring comfort to the downcast pilgrim, or strength to Christ’s feeble folk.

Brethren, if we are able, in our worship together, to approach the Great Triune God and there catch a glimpse of the loveliness of the Saviour Jesus Christ who has done all things well, I know our souls will be blessed and our hearts inspired to better serve Him and adore His wonderful name.

Going Home

Where Have They Gone? What Are They Doing?

Last issue we looked at Grace and Glory in the context of the Lord's people's heavenly hope. Now Don Fortner asks: Where have the saints gone and what are they doing?

"So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive." Ecclesiastes 4:1, 2

The wise man, Solomon, after considering "all the oppressions that are done under the sun," the tears of the oppressed in this world, the power of those who oppress, and the fact that there is no comfort for God's saints in this world, said, "I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive." In the Book of Revelation, we read a similar statement – "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (14:13). Yet, when you and I go to the funeral home and graveside to bid our loved ones good-bye, we are filled with sorrow and weeping.

Why is that so? If the one God has taken is an unbeliever, the sorrow is understandable.

Those who die in unbelief and sin die under the wrath of God. If our sorrow is the sorrow of parting friends, it is reasonable. None of us likes to part with cherished friends and loved ones, even temporarily. However, if the sorrow is the sorrow of those who have no hope, uncontrollable anguish, or even anger at God for having taken someone we love, I cannot understand that. Such sorrow reveals both ignorance and unbelief, ignorance of the blessed state of God's saints in heaven and unbelief regarding the Word of God, the promises of the gospel, and the finished work of Christ.

In this article, I want to show from the Scriptures that God's saints in heaven, our departed friends, are alive and well. Though their bodies have died and lie in the earth, they are more alive than ever and full of happiness.

Immediate Glory

First, let me show you from the Word of God that the souls of redeemed sinners, immediately after death, enter into heaven and into a state of eternal happiness. It is not my intention to answer the foolish questions of infidels, and

heretics. Neither will we be sidetracked by the foolish speculations of ignorant men and women about life after death. As we think about the wonders of immortality, our only source of information is the Word of God. Only the eternal God can unveil the mysteries of eternity.

We are creatures of God made with immortal, undying souls. Though these bodies must die and rot in the earth like the brute beasts, our souls will exist forever. As soon as you die your soul will enter into a state of endless happiness or misery. Man does not die like a dog. When your dog dies, that is all there is to it. It ceases to be. But when you die, that is not all there is to it. Your soul lives on, not in a state of sleep, insensitivity, and inactivity, but in the fulness of life and consciousness.

The souls of believers, redeemed sinners, men and women who have been made righteous before God by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, the souls of God's saints return to God at death. Our departed brothers and sisters, as soon as they closed their eyes in death, opened them again in glory. There they shall remain until the second coming of Christ. Then, when Christ comes again in His glory, He will bring them all with Him, raise their bodies from the dust, and reunite their bodies and souls in resurrection glory. Believers yet living when Christ comes shall then be changed, glorified, caught up into glory. Thereafter, we shall forever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Though hell is as real as heaven and damnation as real as salvation, lest I turn your thoughts to matters of great sorrow and grief, I will say little about the horrible state of the wicked and unbelieving after death. They shall immediately, as soon as they close their eyes in death, wake up in the torments of hell. If the reader is yet without life, without faith, without Christ, and thus without hope, let him be warned. The wrath of God is upon you. If you die without Christ, you must be forever damned! To die without Christ is to die without hope. But for the believer things are different. The believer, as soon as he dies, is alive forever. His soul goes immediately home to God in heaven.

The Word of God, when speaking of the believer's death, always represents it as an immediate entrance into heavenly blessedness and glory. Actually, for the believer, death is not death at all, but the beginning of life. Our Lord said, *'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die'* (John 11:26). God's elect never die. The death of the body is the liberty of the soul. And as soon as our souls are freed

from this body of sin and death, we shall enter heaven.

When the righteous perish from the earth, they live in uprightness forever (Isaiah 57:1, 2). When the righteous die, they are taken away from evil, enter into a world of peace, and rest in their beds. Their bodies rest in hope in the grave, in hope of the resurrection. Their souls rest in the arms of Christ, their Redeemer. Our departed friends have entered into everlasting rest (Hebrews 4:9-11). There they walk in their uprightness. God reckons the righteousness of Christ imputed to us to be our righteousness. And He makes it ours perfectly and experimentally in heaven. There our departed brethren walk in their uprightness, in spotless purity and holiness, in shining robes of bliss and glory.

As soon as a believer dies, he is carried by God's angels into heaven, Abraham's bosom, the place of endless comfort (Luke 16:22-25)¹.

Every believing sinner, as soon as he dies, is taken to be with Christ in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Paradise is heaven, the garden of God (Revelation 2:7). It is the third heaven to which Paul was raptured for a brief visit (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) during his pilgrimage here. Paradise is the place of the divine Majesty, the place of happiness, pleasure, and endless delight. It was to Paradise that Christ went as soon as He died, having obtained eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 9:12). Paradise is a place of assured blessedness, promised to sinners who seek the mercy of God in Christ. The dying Saviour said to the dying thief, who had just been converted by His omnipotent grace, *"Today (immediately, as soon as this ordeal of death is over) shalt thou (most assuredly) be with me (in my full presence and company forever) in paradise (Heaven)."*

Immeasurable Gain

Death for the believer is gain, infinite, immeasurable gain (Philippians 1:21, 23). Paul was confident that as soon as he departed from this world he would immediately be with Christ in blessed communion. Believing the Word and promise of God, he looked upon death as a desirable thing.

What is the state of the saints' life between death and the resurrection? I will not say more than the Bible says. But this much I know, the

¹ "Abraham's bosom" was a Jewish expression referring to the place of heavenly happiness prepared for God's saints between death and the resurrection.

souls of God's saints are not floating around in the sky. They have gone to a specific place where Christ is. They are assembled as a glorified church (Hebrews 12:22, 23). Their souls exist in a recognisable form. Moses and Elijah stood upon the mount of transfiguration in a recognisable form (Matthew 17:3). When the rich man saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, he recognised him as the very same man who laid by his gate upon the earth (Luke 16:23).

Do God's saints in heaven have a body between death and the resurrection? Most definitely. Is it a physical body? No. It is a spiritual body, a heavenly form, a house for their souls (2 Corinthians 5:1). Every believer, as soon as he leaves this body, enters into heavenly glory with a heavenly body with Christ. It is this assurance of heavenly glory and bliss that makes death a desirable thing for believers.

Welcome Relief

Second, we should always remember that for the believer the death of his body and the freeing of his soul is a welcome relief (Philippians 1:21-23; Revelation 14:13). While living in this world, we seek to be content with God's wise and good providence. We want to glorify our great God by living before Him in faith, resigning all things to His will. We would not change our lot in life, even if we could. Our heavenly Father knows and always does what is best.

Yet, life in this world, at best, is a burden to the heaven born soul. In this tabernacle we groan (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). We groan for life! Our hearts cry, "*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death!*" In this body we struggle with sin. In heaven we shall be free from sin. In this body we are tempted and often fall. In heaven we shall never be tempted and shall never fall. In this body we weep much. In heaven we shall weep no more. In this body we long to be like Christ. In heaven we shall be like Christ. In this body we long for Christ's presence. In heaven we shall forever be with Christ.

We have many friends in heaven whom we dearly love. We miss them. But we do not sorrow for them. We envy them! The believer, as long as he is in this world, is like an eagle I once saw while visiting a zoo in a foreign country. He sat on an iron perch, with a chain holding him to the earth, gazing into heaven. It appeared that he longed to soar away into the distant clouds; but the chain held him fast to the earth.

When an eagle is happy in an iron cage or chained to an iron perch, and not until then, will

the renewed soul be happy in this body of flesh. Death for God's saints will be a welcome relief (Psalm 17:15).

Where?

We have seen in the Scriptures that God's saints, as soon as they die, enter into heaven, and that death for the believer is a welcome relief. Now let me answer this question. Where have our departed friends gone? I have shown you that they have gone to heaven. They have not gone to purgatory, they are not in limbo, they are not floating around in the air. Their souls are not asleep. Our friends who have left us are in heaven. But where is heaven? That I cannot answer. God has not told us. Heaven is a place somewhere outside this world, somewhere outside time. But it is a place, a real place. Heaven is the place where Christ is. Heaven is the place to which He has promised to bring us (John 14:1-3). Heaven is the place where our departed friends are right now (Hebrews 12:22, 23). Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-8.

For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

In these eight verses Paul tells us several things about the believer's death and entrance into heaven. Death is the dissolving of this earthly body. This body is of the earth. It is only suitable for the earth. It must return to the earth. And the dissolution of this body is no cause for sorrow. Richard Baxter wrote, "It will be like taking off a shoe that hurts my foot, a welcome relief! It will be like laying aside a tool that is no

GOING HOME

longer needed because its work is done." It will be like tearing down a tent to move into a house.

In heaven we shall have another house for our souls. "*In my Father's house are many mansions,*" houses, dwelling places. Whatever our house in heaven shall be, it shall be a house not made with hands, a house prepared by Christ, and a house suitable to our life in glory.

As soon as this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, we shall enter the house Christ has prepared for our souls in heaven. There will be no lapse of time, no delay between the death of this body and our entrance into our house in glory. This is not a matter of conjecture, but of certainty. "*We know,*" Paul says. We who are taught of God know these things by the revelation of God in His Word, by the earnest of the Spirit (v. 5), and by virtue of our faith in Christ (v. 7). What happens to the believer after death? "Where have our departed friends gone?" They have gone to heaven. They have gone home. They have gone to be with Christ!

Heavenly Activity

One more question remains. What are God's saints doing in heaven? The Scriptures speak sparingly with regard to the saints' employment in heaven. But some things are revealed.

God's saints in heaven are celebrating and adoring the perfections of God in Christ (Revelation 5:11, 12; 7:11, 12). There they who behold His face speak with unceasing astonishment of His holiness, power, wisdom, goodness, grace, faithfulness, and love.

God's saints in heaven are delightfully employed in beholding the glory of God in the face of Christ (John 17:24). Oh, my soul, what will it be to behold the glory of our Redeemer? We shall forever behold Him as He is, with a constantly increasing knowledge of Him. Heaven is the Garden of God where the Rose of Sharon is in full bloom; and the fragrance of it perfumes the whole place. Heaven is to behold Christ forever, never taking our eyes off Him, and never wanting to.

God's saints in heaven are employed in the constant exercise of every spiritual grace: Faith, the saints in heaven believe God; Hope, our brethren patiently wait in hope of the resurrection; Love, they truly love one another.

God's saints in heaven are employed in the unending service of God (Revelation 7:14, 15). They are engaged in prayer (Revelation 6:10). They sing the songs of grace to the praise of God. Electing, redeeming, regenerating, justifying, sanctifying, preserving grace is the

constant theme of their song around the throne of God. God's saints in heaven are engaged in constant fellowship with one another and with the holy angels. A casual reading of the book of Revelation suggests that God's saints will discuss with one another and with the heavenly angels the wonders of covenant mercy, the ministry of the angelic hosts, redeeming love, saving grace, and divine providence.

Make certain that you are in Christ. Let every child of God take comfort with regard to those who have gone to heaven. "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!*" And be assured, weary pilgrim, that your weary, troublesome life will end soon and that it will end well (2 Corinthians 4:17-5:2).

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

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The Kingship Of Christ

Now these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel; Bela the son of Beor: and the name of his city was Dinhabah. And when Bela was dead, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead. And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead. And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad, which smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead. And when Shaul was dead, Baalhanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. And when Baalhanan was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Pai; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. Hadad died also. (1 Chronicles 1:43-51)

In the days of Samuel the children of Israel said to Samuel "now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." (1 Samuel 8:5) The kings listed in our passage from Chronicles were the kind of king the children of Israel wanted to judge them. Notice the reoccurring commonality in all these kings: "And when Bela was dead, Jobab ... reigned in his stead, And when Jobab was dead, Husham ... reigned in his stead, And when Husham was dead, Hadad ... reigned in his stead." On and on it goes to the last king, of whom we read, "Hadad died also."

When the children of Israel rejected Samuel God spoke to Samuel, saying, "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). When God spoke to Samuel, indeed, anytime God speaks to a sinner, it is the pre-incarnate Christ speaking because there is "one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Therefore, Christ said to Samuel "they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

Christ is "the only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). Christ's reign is not like that of earthly kings. We will never read "And he died also." Of Christ's reign we read, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:7).

Our King “ordered” His kingdom from eternity when He entered into everlasting covenant with the Father, making His covenant “ordered in all things and sure” (2 Samuel 23:5). Throughout the ages, especially on the cross, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psalm 2:2, 3). But every enemy was used by our King as mere pawns as Christ established His kingdom “with judgment and justice” by laying down His life for His elect subjects, purging us of all sin, establishing us in righteousness “from henceforth forever”.

God was declared just and the Justifier of His people. He was pleased with the redemption accomplished by His Son by His one offering, and raised our King from the dead to His right hand, giving Him all power over heaven and earth as the Godman, declaring before the whole world, “I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:6).

Therefore, the government of our King only increases as our faithful Potentate spreads His gospel, “the gospel of the kingdom of God”, throughout all the earth (Mark 1:14). What kingdom is like His kingdom? All counsel and sound wisdom is our King’s. He is understanding. He has strength. He makes all His subjects kings and princes crowned with the gospel so that by Him “kings reign and princes decree justice”, by Him, “princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth”, for He loves “them that love him” (Revelation 1:6; Proverbs 8:14-17). As He uses His kings and princes to spread His gospel, our King adds to His kingdom, adding to the peace thereof, with each redeemed sinner that He quickens to life through the Holy Spirit, giving us an understanding to know “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:11).

Concerning all earthly kings, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Proverbs 21:1). His reign is so sovereign that He protects His kingdom in the earth, making certain the laws of all earthly kings and queens give His subjects our religious privileges, making certain “kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers” (Isaiah 49:23). Therefore, the Prince of peace shall lose none. He preserves every member in His righteous realm, “reproving kings for their sakes” (Psalm 105:14).

The trumpet now blows announcing the presence of our King! All sinners listen up! “Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven” (Psalm 148:11). “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 2:10-12). “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:6).

Crowned With The King!

Joined to Christ in mystic union
We Thy members, Thou our Head,
Sealed by deep and true communion,
Risen with Thee, who once were dead.
Saviour, we would humbly claim,
All the power of this Thy name.

Instant sympathy to brighten,
All their weakness and their woe,
Guiding grace their way to lighten,
Shall Thy loving members know.
All their sorrows Thou doest bear,
All Thy gladness they shall share.

Everlasting life Thou givest,
Everlasting love to see;
They shall live because Thou livest,
And their life is hid with Thee.
Safe Thy members shall be found,
When their glorious Head is crowned.

Frances Ridley Havergal

In every state secure

Isaiah 3:10 Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him:*

'Tis well when joys arise;
'Tis well when sorrows flow;
'Tis well when darkness veils the skies,
And strong temptations blow.

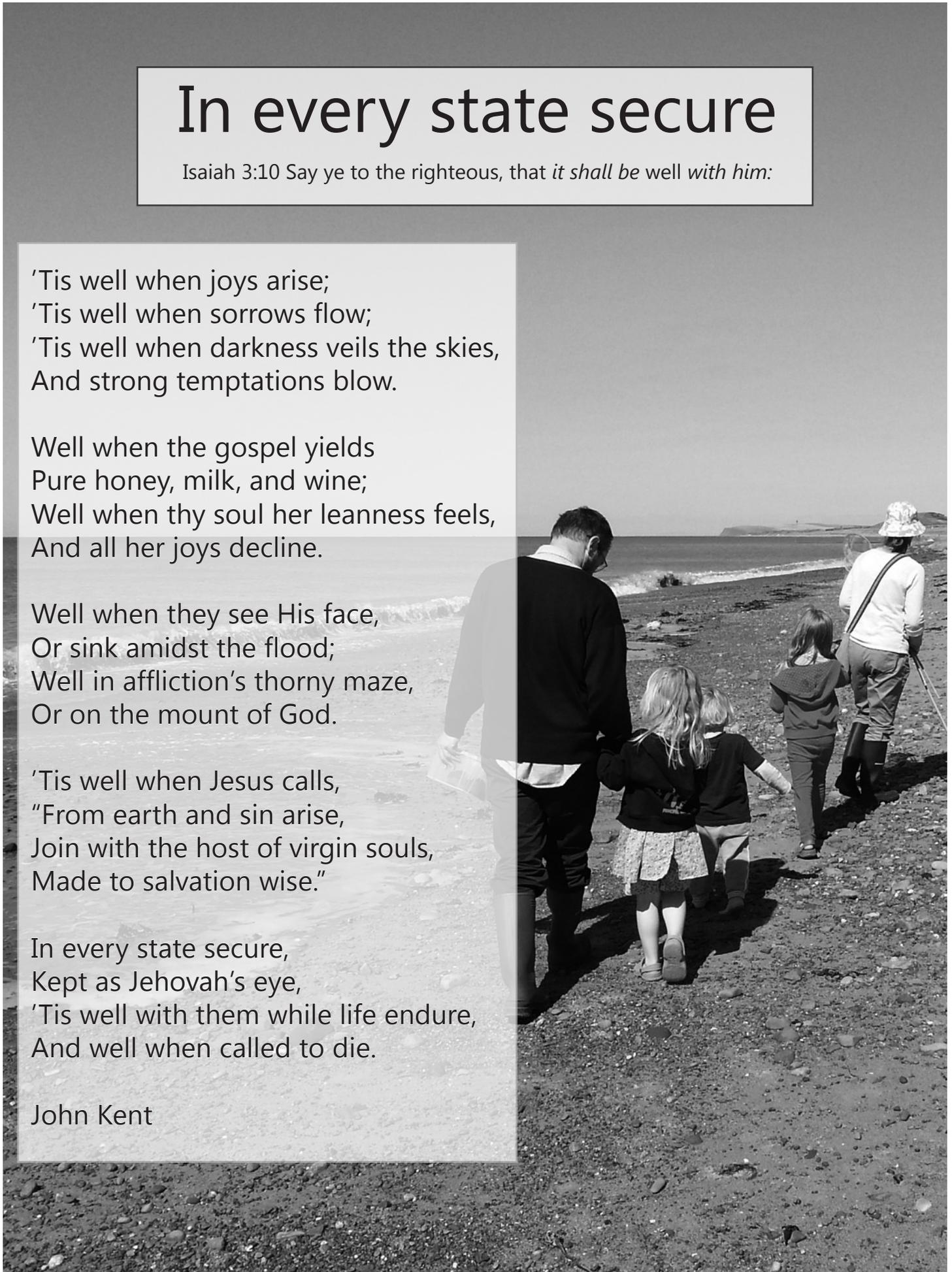
Well when the gospel yields
Pure honey, milk, and wine;
Well when thy soul her leanness feels,
And all her joys decline.

Well when they see His face,
Or sink amidst the flood;
Well in affliction's thorny maze,
Or on the mount of God.

'Tis well when Jesus calls,
"From earth and sin arise,
Join with the host of virgin souls,
Made to salvation wise."

In every state secure,
Kept as Jehovah's eye,
'Tis well with them while life endure,
And well when called to die.

John Kent



I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin (Romans 11:1).

What About Israel?

How To Understand Romans 11

The doctrine of election has been, and must be, to every carnal mind, of all others the most offensive. And as the Apostle, when entering upon the Epistle to the Romans, engaged in it, with a special view to establish the Church in the grand truth, of justification before God in Christ, without the deeds of the law; this involved in it the doctrine of election. And the Apostle, in the ninth Chapter, devoted the whole of it to this one purpose. And, in that very interesting part of the Epistle, he most fully proved the certainty of the doctrine, in the rejection of the Jews, and the call of the Gentiles. Foreseeing, however, that what he had there advanced, would rouse the resentment of the carnal and ungodly, and that some would misconstrue the doctrine, as though the whole body of the Jews had been rejected of God; he enters upon this Chapter with showing the mistake of such men, and in his own instance proves, that there were among the Jews, as well as among the Gentiles, the Lord's chosen ones.

He begins the Chapter with a question, which was Paul's usual method, when he had some grand, and momentous point of doctrine, more particularly to establish, in order that he might the better confirm it. Hath God (saith he) cast away his people? And, he answers it with a kind of abhorrence; God forbid! Yea, the whole of God's purposes, is with an eye to the preservation of his people. The whole, and every individual of that mystical body the Lord gave to His Son before the world, is to be gathered out of the present time-state of the Church. It was for this Church, the Lord went forth in acts of creation. everything in nature, and in providence, is made to minister to this one purpose. And when the grand object, in the recovery of the Church is accomplished, from the present time-state in which she is now involved; the earth itself, with all that is in it, will be done away, like the scaffolding for a building, which is taken down when the building itself is finished; and Christ will bring home His Church to the eternal state of glory all along intended.



WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL?

The Apostle intimates, that this hath been the design of Jehovah, from the beginning. And in proof, he adverts to a well-known part of the scripture history, in the days of Elijah (1 Kings 19:10-14), where, in the worst of times, there were in Israel seven thousand, whom the Lord, by electing grace, had preserved from the general apostasy. And hence Paul, in a most decided and unanswerable manner shows, that as it is electing grace in God, and not the smallest merit of man, which makes this difference there must be, for the carrying on the Lord's designs in relation to Christ's Church, in the present time, and in all times, until the whole purposes of the Lord in his Church are accomplished; a remnant according to the election of grace. For, such is the everlasting and unalterable nature of things in their distinct properties, that grace in God, and merit in man, (if he had any,) must be always opposite to each other. It ceaseth to be grace, if man obtains anything by merit. And thus the Apostle, in a single verse, proves beyond all possible dispute, that all the Church of God, in every single instance receives, from beginning to end, in electing, regenerating, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying love, is wholly of grace. Through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory, there

is, there can be, not an atom in either, but what springs from this source, This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise, (Isaiah 43:21).

But, while the Apostle thus clearly and unanswerably sets the doctrine of election upon its own just basis, he again foresaw an objection, which the unbelieving part of mankind would bring still against it. Israel, that is, Israel as a nation in the flesh, had not obtained what they sought after. But the election (saith he) hath. So that here seemed some difficulty. Nay, the objector would add, it is said, that God gave to them that were blinded a spirit of slumber, that they should not see. And the Apostle makes quotations, both from the Prophets David, and Isaiah, in confirmation, (Isaiah 6:9; Psalm 69:22, 23). But these points, so far from becoming arguments, to call in question the reality of the doctrine itself, only tend the more to establish it. Everything in the word of God, connected with the history of the Church, proves God's original and eternal choice in the appointment. And, it is impossible to trace that history, through any of the several parts of it, without being led to see, the Lord's distinguishing grace, and mercy, ordering and directing the whole.

In following up the Apostle's statement, as here given, between the Church and the world, between the remnant, as he calls them, according to the election of grace, and the rest which he describes as blinded, it may not be improper to call in to our aid, what the word of God hath said, in relation to both; by which, under divine teaching, we shall discover, that while the one received all from grace, and therefore had nothing to boast, but everything to be thankful for; the other had no right to complain, having no pretensions to divine favour, and therefore no injustice done him. This view of the subject may be made evident, under both branches of it In relation to the Church. When it pleased God, in his threefold character of Persons, to raise up a Church, at the head of which the Son of God in our nature was placed, to be for Jehovah's glory and the Church's happiness; the Lord was pleased to love this Church with an everlasting love, and in proof of it, chose this Church, in all the individual members of it, in Christ: gave them being in Christ, and a well-being of endless life and blessedness in Christ; predestinating them to the adoption of sons, and appointing them to an everlasting state of holiness, and glory, in Christ; or, to speak in Scripture language, that



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we should be holy and without blame before him in love, (Ephesians 1:4-6).

Thus ordaining, and appointing things, in the infinite mind and will of Jehovah, before all worlds; the events, which were to take place during the time-state of the Church, could not be supposed as counteracting what had been before arranged in eternity; but rather promoting, and bringing about, the Lord's original designs and purposes. When, therefore, the Lord went forth in acts of creation, and the Church, which had existed in the divine mind from all eternity, was now to be brought forth into being in the Adam-nature so ordained; the fall which followed, and in which the whole Church, as well as the whole world in the Adam-race were involved, could not do away God's purposes, neither destroy that grace-union with Christ, which arose out of an everlasting love, incapable of being lessened or changed. It might, as it did indeed, lay the foundation for bringing greater glory to the Lord, in affording occasion, as had been before determined, for the Son of God, in the nature of His Church, to redeem her from the ruins of the fall, and for raising her up a spotless Church, to be the partaker with Him, of all His communicable glory, in His kingdom forever. Here we discover somewhat of the electing love of God, to the Church. To this source, as to a fountain, must be ascribed all the blessings manifested in such a distinguishing way, as is discovered, in the several streams, of redeeming, calling, justifying, sanctifying grace, which maketh glad the city of God.

In relation to the world, by which I mean the Christless world, the doctrine is equally plain and evident. The whole as well as the Church, had their being in Adam, the one common head. And, had they continued in the perfection of being in which they were created, this creature-perfection, with all its happiness, would have continued with them. But when in Adam all fell, and none but those who from grace-union in Christ, were to be recovered by Christ; of consequence, those who never had any other relation to Christ, than as His creatures, and not the members of His mystical body, could not be interested in His salvation. The one could not lose their blessings in Christ, because, as members of His body, they were part of Christ. The other could not receive benefit from Christ, having no union with Christ. And indeed, had the fall never taken place, the consequence of election would have still made a striking

difference, between the Church of Christ, and the world. For while the world, in the Adam-nature derived from the first man, could have arrived to no higher source, than the nature from whence it originated; the Church from her union with Christ, and interest in Christ as her Head, must have had communion in all that belonged to Christ, and enjoyed the peculiar and personal blessings founded in that union, in time, and to all eternity.

Here then we may safely rest. Christ and his Church are One, And by electing love, with all its blissful properties, every child of God, who is conscious, that by regenerating grace he is brought out of the Adam-nature of the fall, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; may well contemplate, for it is his privilege, and must be his happiness so to do, the wonderful subject, with the most profound reverence, adoration, humbleness of soul, and praise to God, in his daily walk through life. Oh! How often, and how earnest, will that cry of the soul arise before God, when, with the astonishment of the Apostle, he will feel himself constrained to say, Lord! how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me, and not unto the world? (John 14:22).

And, in respect to the Christless world, the fall of man cannot, in its nature and consequences, be a source of disquietude to the Church, more than the fall of Angels. Secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children forever, (Deuteronomy 29:29). The Lord's sovereignty is an everlasting answer to all the cavils of the ungodly. Neither can the justice of God be impeached, if sin brings forth death; for this is but the natural consequences of cause and effect. And the words of our Lord are sweetly formed, for the uninterrupted repose of all His children, when at any time (tempted by the world, by Satan, or the ill-judged and mistaken feelings of nature, untaught by grace), unbecoming thoughts may arise in the mind. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight, (Matthew 11:25, 26).

The Apostle all along must be considered, as speaking of a distinction, between Israel after the flesh, and the Israel of God by promise. The Israel after the flesh, had no privileges, but in the outward ministry of the word. The Israel of promise, though they stumbled in the

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Adam-fall, in common with the rest, and for a while (as in the instance of those who crucified Christ, but afterwards were pricked to the heart and saved: (Acts 2:23-37)). were living without God and without Christ; yet being in the Covenant, were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and saved with an everlasting salvation. If the Reader, in going over those and the like passages of Scripture, had these things always in remembrance, it would serve, under God, to throw a great light upon the subject throughout.

The figure Paul uses, of the olive tree wild by nature, and grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, is beautifully chosen, to represent not only the Gentile Church incorporated into Christ in distinction to the Jewish Church; but also hath an allusion to both Jew and Gentile, yea the whole Church, in being taken from the old Adam-nature of the fall, and by sovereign grace, made a right noble plant in Christ Jesus. The Apostle's expression in allusion to Christ, is not only very blessed, in that it refers to the perfection of Christ, for His people, and to His people; but it runs it up to the first, original, and eternal cause, in the holiness of Christ's nature, as the first fruit, and root of all. For Christ is the root, as well as the offspring of David. And, Christ was first chosen in the infinite mind of Jehovah, and then the Church in Him, before the foundation of the world, (Ephesians 1:4).

It would be well, if this grand and fundamental truth of our most holy faith, was fully formed, and established in the mind, in order to help us to right apprehensions of what Christ is in Himself, and what He is to His people. Everything is in Christ *of* holiness. Everything is of Christ *for* holiness. And he is made of God everything *to* us in holiness, in being our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that all our glorying may be in the Lord, (1 Corinthians 1:30, 31). One or two words, on those great points, of Christ as he is in Himself, and as He is to His people, will serve, under grace, to put this matter in a clear light; and, if the Lord be our teacher, we shall enter into a right apprehension of the Apostle's expression: For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

Now first, in relation to that holy, spotless, portion of our nature, taken by the Son of God into union with himself, nothing can be more evident, than that it was wholly a right seed; for it was underived from the fallen stock,

and not formed after the ordinary method of generation. So that Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, (Hebrews 7:26). And, what is highly proper to be understood, but hath not been as generally considered as it ought, that when to the infinite mind, and foreknowledge of Jehovah, this holy portion of our nature came up before Him and before all worlds; all His seed were in Him, beheld in Him, and considered as part of Himself: chosen in him, as Scripture expresses it, to be holy and without blame before him in love, (Ephesians 1:4). In this sense, the Apostle's words appear most blessed. The first fruit holy, the lump also holy. The root holy, and consequently the branches. In Christ His whole Church was contained. Just as the first root of any tree, planted in the earth, contained in it, all the after trees, and branches to come from it. And, as Levi is said to have been in the loins of his father Abraham, when Melchisedec met him and blessed him (Hebrews 7:10). So the Church, in all her Individual members, was in Christ the seed of Christ; and blessed in Christ, from, and to all eternity. Hence all these sweet promises of Jehovah to His Son: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, (Isaiah 44:3). Hence the same repeated: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth, and forever, (Isaiah 59:21). Pause over the lovely view, for it is most lovely! Oh! what a thought for a child of God to cherish in his bosom, that not only He that sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, (Hebrews 2:11), but everyone of Christ's seed, was in Christ, chosen in Christ, included in Christ, and (as the branch in the root) holy in Christ's holiness, before God forever!

And secondly, from this holiness in Christ and from Christ, the holiness of the Church must be wholly formed and derive all her holiness. For, as all original sin is from Adam; so all original holiness is from Christ. So Paul speaks, when saying that, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, (Romans 5:19). And the sanctification of the Church is wholly ascribed, to the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by one offering he hath perfected forever, them that are sanctified,

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(Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14). So that the sanctification of the Church is not in them, but for them. Not in any act of theirs, but in the act of Christ. Not in any holiness wrought within them, but without them. The happy partakers of Christ's holiness do no more towards their sanctification, than towards their justification. So saith the Scriptures: and so their souls, when taught of God, bear testimony. For Paul, speaking to the Church at Corinth, when declaring the grace of God shown them in their recovery from the Adam-nature of sin, saith: And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, (1 Corinthians 6:11). And all the sweet and gracious effects, which flow from the in-dwelling residence of God the Holy Ghost in their bodies, which are his temple, and which manifest themselves in their life and conversation; are not their sanctification, but the result of their being sanctified. These are the fruits, not the root: the effects, not the cause. The one complete source of the sanctification of the Church, as it appears before God, is the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And it is the testimony of God the Holy Ghost concerning it, that Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate, (Hebrews 13:12). And, it is as expressly said to be the will of God in this offering, and for this purpose: By the which will we are sanctified, (Hebrews 10:10). And when God the Holy Ghost, by the sweet constraining influences of his grace, worketh in us both to will, and to do, of His good pleasure; opens to our view, the Lord Christ, in all His offices, characters, and relations; gives us to see Christ as made of God unto us all these, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and both teaches, and enables us, how to live upon Christ, in the enjoyment of all these: then, do we enter into the blessed apprehension of our union with Christ, and communion with Christ; and learn, by heart-felt experience, that as the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy: and as the root is holy, so are the branches.

I stay not to make observations upon what is so abundantly plain as to need no observation, that, what the Apostle hath said, respecting the rejection of the Jew, and the calling of the Gentile, refers to the several ministrations in the Church, in the different ages, and under the different dispensations of it. Christ's Church is but one. And that Church hath been

set up, with her glorious Head, and Husband, from everlasting. Their names all given, and numbered. And hence, all Israel that is, all the true Israel of God, given by the Father to the Son, and redeemed from the Adam nature of the fall by the Son, shall be saved; and in the effectual call of God the Spirit, shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth. And these blessed events are included in what is said, and as the Prophet foretold, of the Deliverer coming out of Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, (Isaiah 59:20).

I pray you to pause over the wonderful account, of what is related in this Chapter. And, if in the contemplation of the vast subject, the Apostle Paul, who had been caught up to the third heaven, and drank so deep into the mysteries of the Gospel, was constrained to cry out, as he hath here done: Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! Think, with what veneration and awe, men of less knowledge in the divine science, ought to receive the sublime truths of God; referring all of the works and counsel of God into God's own wise, and unerring will, and pleasure. everything in God, and from God, must necessarily be imperfectly understood by creatures, of the limited, and scanty apprehension of man. God in Christ, the Son of God tabernacling in our nature, His Church one in Him, falling into apostasy by sin, recovered by sovereign grace, the Church branching out into the double family of Jew and Gentile, the Lord's ways in the call of the Gentile and the rejection of the Jew, together with all the wonderful events accomplished in bringing home the Church, through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory: all these, and numberless other points connected with the vast subject, direct the mind into such a depth of mystery, that we are unavoidably led to the same view as the Apostle; convinced, that the ways and works of God, toward His Church and people, never could have been conceived, much less understood, had they not been graciously revealed by Him. Oh! wonderful Counsellor! Oh! gracious design of love and favour to the Church! What will be the wonders of eternity, when the whole shall come to be unfolded to the wondering world, of angels, and of men; and all will be found directed, to give glory, and honour, and power, to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, forever, and ever, Amen.

John Gill

Preserver of the Faith



Part Two: Called To The Ministry

Initial Preparation

Influential Particular Baptists in London arranged for Gill to extend his theological education under the guidance of John Davis who had recently founded a new work at Higham-Ferrers some six miles from Kettering. The Higham-Ferrers area, however, was quite unevangelised and barren of spiritual life. As a result, Gill found little time for study but many opportunities for practical service. In 1718, after a year of working under Davis' guidance, Gill met a young gentlewoman a year or so older than he was, who was reputed to be rather odd and was constantly being jeered and scoffed at by her family and neighbours. On closer inspection, Gill found that the young lady had been soundly converted for several years and maintained an earnest witness to Gospel truths both in word and deed; a thing her fashionable friends could not understand. Gill gently led her into the doctrines of grace, which she found a great comfort. Within no time, Gill realised that the young lady, whose name was Elizabeth Negus, was the Lord's chosen one for him and, after a very short courtship, the two were married, young as they were.

In 1717 the Particular Baptist Fund was founded to provide money for books and educational facilities for men intended for the ministry but who were denied the universities because of their Dissent. A London minister, John Noble, nominated Gill for a grant in 1717-18 and a further grant followed a year later in recognition of the good work Gill was doing

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at Kettering and district. With the aid of the money supplied by the grant Gill was able to purchase a fine collection of lexicons, grammars and Hebrew works and eventually procure a scholarly library left by a deceased Baptist minister and friend¹.

The Particular Baptist brethren in London were reluctant to leave such a talented young protégé at the call of a small church in the provinces. Gill was thus often invited to preach in London, particularly at Goat Yard Baptist Church, Horselydown, Southwark, whose pastor, Benjamin Stinton died early in 1719. Stinton was the son-in-law and successor of the famous Benjamin Keach and it was Stinton's writings on the Baptists which formed the basis of Thomas Crosby's history of the movement. Crosby was a local school teacher, a mathematics expert and also a member of the Horselydown church. After Stinton's death, a number of the poorer members, backed by the more influential ladies, regarded the gifted young man from the Provinces as a possible successor. Letters were thus sent to Gill, inviting him to preach at Goat Yard, as they say, 'with a view'. The young pastor's assistant did not hesitate to go and preach under circumstances which would have awed older and more experienced men and in April and May of 1719 he expounded the Scriptures to the pastorless London church.

Goat Yard Controversies

A number of the better off members, however, saw no immediate need for a pastor and, indeed, had given up hope of the church having a future. A Mr Abraham Atkins campaigned for the church to merge with Mr Edward Wallin's people at Maze Pond, thus reuniting the church with the group that had split off during the ministry of Benjamin Keach. A tiny faction of the church made overtures to Mr Wallin in secret, wishing to present the majority of members with a *fait accompli*, but the other members received



Benjamin Keach

notification of the proposed merger and there was an enormous row in the church.

Differences of opinions were so strong that there was even talk of meeting in two different localities under a plurality of pastors, yet remaining one church. By June of the same year, however, there were two proposals for the empty pastorate, a Mr Scarney, recommended by a member named Mr Morgan, and John Gill, officially put forward by Thomas Crosby. Morgan argued his case badly and Crosby gained considerable attention for his proposal. Again it seemed as if the church would be split and Mr Morgan resigned his post as chairman of the meeting. A Mr Cobb took the chair and it was decided that Scarney should preach throughout July, followed by Gill in August. Scarney failed to turn up on the first Sunday in July though he put in an appearance on the 19th. Crosby records in his Journal that Scarney's preaching "was acceptable to very few, his voice was so low that great attention was needed to hear him." Scarney had never preached before and was not even a Baptist and after this disastrous attempt to become the pastor of one of the most important Particular Baptist churches in the kingdom, Scarney, Crosby says, 'went into the country and returned no more to us.'

When Gill preached on August 4th Crosby wrote, "His preaching was very acceptable and so numerous was the Auditory that the place though a large one could hardly contain them."² As soon as Gill started preaching, the church was particularly impressed by his evangelistic fervour and held a meeting at which more

¹ Grants were divided into three classes. On May 13th, 1718, Gill was ordered a 'first class' grant of £9.8s.7d. As the total amount of money available was divided between the 19 candidates, this would explain the odd amount. Another undated entry says that Gill received the largest grant amongst 99 candidates from England and Wales. This may be a reference to the May 13th entry. On August 19th, 1719 Gill was given a further grant of £5. This is again entered in the full 1719 list of recipients. The entry for August 4th, 1724 shows Gill at the head of the list of members of the Fund Committee. In that year Gill's church contributed £28 to the fund. Evidence from Crosby's Journal suggests that Gill received further personal grants after becoming a pastor.

² These remarks are to be found in Crosby's Journal p. 144 ff. which is a direct continuation of Stinton's Journal in the same volume.

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members were present than there had been for many years. It was decided to write to Kettering asking for a report on Gill's character and Horselydown invited him to continue preaching until the end of September. The matter continued to be debated in the church until a meeting was called on September 10 where, after heated discussion, votes were cast concerning whether Gill should be invited to the pastorate or not. The vast majority of the members voted for Gill with only six votes against him. A further vote was then taken concerning whether Gill should be officially asked to become pastor on the following Sunday. This was rushing things too much for a number of members and though the Gill faction won, 12 voted against the motion. Expressing his strong objection to the results of the vote, Mr Atkins, the deacon in charge of the chapel's purse, resigned his office. Crosby blamed Atkins for inviting Scarney to preach and Atkins' disappointment at Scarney's performance may have deepened his prejudice against the better man.

Meetings were now held in secret by the affluent minority who went to the extremes of saying that they would not help finance Gill if he became pastor and they even prepared a forged list of voters against Gill, an evil deed which soon came to light. Atkins, forgetting that he had resigned his post, devised one argument after another to nullify the overwhelming vote that Gill had received. As the merge with Maze Pond had proved abortive, he now planned a merger with Mr Parks' church at White Street which proved a rope of sand. At last he hit on a device which brought him a major success. The majority of voters for Gill had been women who represented a natural majority in the church. Though women had had the right to

vote since the days of Keach, Atkins and his followers now argued that such female voting was invalid in a church state. Crosby, rather unwisely, appealed to a group of elders who had set themselves up as a church supervisory body under the name of the Hanover Coffee House fraternal. This self-appointed group claimed haughtily for themselves the sole power to elect deacons and pastors in churches. For those who believe in the sovereignty of the local church, it was a disastrous recognition of a para-church governing body, particularly when one bears in mind that one object of the Coffee House fraternal was to seek unity with the General Baptists. It was also a disastrous move in support of Crosby's cause as the Coffee House fraternal came down fully on the side of the revolting minority, claiming that the sisters had no voting rights. Crosby complained that the Coffee House elders always came down on the side of the affluent few. One can only conclude that, if this were true, he had only himself to blame for approaching them. All this worldly conduct, only a fraction of which has been recorded here, reflects sadly on the low spiritual state prevailing in Goat Yard church. An unenviable position indeed for a prospective pastor.

In October 1719, those supporting Gill, including the surviving families of Keach and Stinton, thought it wiser not to be 'caught up in the snare' of controversy, and, under cries of 'Scismatics, Fools, Beggars and the like,'³ began to meet in Thomas Crosby's school, leaving Goat Yard to the minority. Several pro-Gill members had not the heart to leave their former brethren, nor their church building, and so did not make the move with the Keach-Stinton party. Once settled down in new premises the now somewhat depleted majority, under the leadership of Crosby until Gill should be installed, recorded in their church book that they were the true church as formerly pastored by Keach and Stinton and that they were in fellowship within the terms of the Solemn Covenant which was drawn up by Keach in 1697, interestingly enough, the year of Gill's birth. Twenty-six brethren signed the document and sixty-eight sisters. It was not long before the new church had rented an abandoned meeting house for £10 a year after having 'conveniently fitted it up for publick worship'. Obviously in order to justify their men only policy, the Hanover Coffee House refused to

"Next to the ordinance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, is the Public Ministration of the Word; which is an ordinance of Christ, under the gospel dispensation, to be continued in the church until the end of the world."

John Gill

³ Crosby's Journal, p. 161.

acknowledge the new church and forbade their member-elders from officiating at their services.

Kettering Parts With Their Beloved Member

Gill was still in fellowship with his Kettering church, and a request for a transfer was sent off. It was an important step, because if Kettering refused to comply on the grounds that the voting majority at Horselydown did not represent a true church, Gill could not possibly become their pastor. The Kettering church, however, replied with a beautiful display of brotherly love and a deep understanding of the situation. They also made it quite plain how much Gill meant to them personally, yet were willing to part with Gill for the gospel's sake and the edification of the churches. Their letter is too important as a key-link in the development of Gill's call not to quote it in full.

Dearly beloved in the Lord we received your Letter sent to us dated ye 15th of October, 1719, Wherein you desire and request of us to give up our Dear Brother in Christ Mr. Jno. Gill to you. We have also his desire to be dismissed to you made known to us. This may certify you that we having taken the Matter into Consideration do think it our Duty to grant his and your request as judging that a Church ought not to be made a prison to any of its members so as to detain them against their wills though we are deeply sensible of the great Loss we sustain thereby, and cannot but acknowledge the Frowns of Divine Providence upon us in this regard. But seeing it must be so in order to your and his contentment and spiritual advantage we do dismiss him unto you discharging him from his near relation and obligation unto us and commit him to your particular Watch and Care as a person whom we doubt not partakes of the Grace of God in Christ and hath walked in all good Conscience and Holy Conversation amongst us Desiring you to receive him in the Lord and that you will be every way helpfull to him to the promoting to his Edification and Comfort and that he in the hand of Christ may be a blessing to you for which spiritual ends we commend you and him with you to the Lord and the Word of his Grace who is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified Declaring withal that

upon his actual joining with you we shall look upon his particular relation as actual member with us to cease. We salute you in the Lord and rest your Loving Brethren in Gospel Bonds.

Initial Problems Attached To Gill's Pastorate

Gill was officially received into full membership on 15 November, 1719 and his ordination was planned for 28th December. Rather than losing members to White Street, a number of requests for transfer to Gill's church were made by White Street members but their church would not release them. Two meetings were held in November to pray for guidance and Thomas Stone, John Jones, John Smith and schoolmaster Thomas Crosby were appointed deacons subject to a later ordination⁴. The Coffee House elders, however, refused to answer invitations and free ministers for the task of ordaining Gill and his deacons. It seemed now that the group of believers who looked upon Gill as their pastor would never be allowed to worship in peace and in harmony with their brethren in other churches.

Meanwhile, the Goat Yard lease had run out and the owner refused to allow the minority to re-lease the premises but gave Gill's church permission. The Goat Yard minority had to move out and formed a church in Unicorn Yard. Gill's church accepted a new lease of 40 3/4 years, promising to keep the Goat Yard chapel in good repair and to take out a fire insurance costing £300. Gradually individual ministers such as Mark Key and John Curtis took sides with Gill's church and Crosby's insistence that 'two churches were better than none⁵' seems to have influenced the Coffee House elders in dropping their opposition. Gill's delayed induction was arranged for the coming March and no less than 10 Baptist ministers were delegated for the ordination service.

Gill Inducted As Goat Yard's Pastor

At the induction⁶, John Skepp (c. 1670-1721), pastor of the Cripplegate church⁷, presided and called upon Crosby as acting church secretary

4 Ernest Paine published the relevant passages dealing with the ordination of deacons from the Goat Yard and Carter Lane church book in an article entitled *The Appointment of Deacons*, BQ, NSV XVII, 1957-58, p. 87-91.

5 Crosby's Journal p. 175.

6 For a full account see Crosby's Journal p. 180 ff.

7 Always called Skepp by Crosby in his Journal and the Church Book.

JOHN GILL

to give an account of the churches' dealings including how Gill came to be called as a minister and became a member of the church. This was all known by everyone present but belonged to the formal protocol of such an occasion. The solemnities were rather disturbed when John Noble now required the church members to stand around the communion table to confirm their choice of Gill as pastor. The small chapel was filled to bursting point and the members, spread around the hall, could not force their way to the table. Noble had to tell them to stay where they were but stand up whilst the rest of the congregation remained seated. He then asked them to confirm their interest in Gill as their pastor by raising their hands. On taking note of the great display of hands, Noble asked Gill formally if he were prepared to accept the recommendation of the church. Gill affirmed his calling and promised the church to abide by four principles in his new office. He would take the Word of God for his rule, the Spirit of God for his guide, the promises of God for his support and Christ's fulness for the supply of all his wants.

After this solemn declaration, Gill was ordained by Curtis and Key through the laying on of hands. Then it was the Deacons turn to have their calling confirmed by the church members after which Gill joined the pastors who had ordained him in laying his hands on the Deacons and officially ordaining them to their office. Noble then went on to address the new pastor and his deacons from Acts 20:28, pointing out to them what their various duties were. Next John Skepp addressed the church from Hebrews 13:17 and told them of their responsibilities as members to their church officers, to one another and to their common work as ambassadors for Christ. To conclude the induction meeting, Gill led the church in prayer, the 133rd Psalm was sung and then the new pastor dismissed the assembly with a benediction. Charles Haddon Spurgeon in recording briefly the facts of Gill's ordination adds, 'Little did the friends dream what sort of man they had thus chosen to be their teacher; but had they known it they would have rejoiced that a man of such vast erudition, such indefatigable industry, such sound judgment, and such sterling honesty, had come among them⁸.'

Gill's Measures To Promote His Ministry

Gill had kept a very low profile until his ordination,

leaving Crosby, as the elected church secretary, to take care of the organisation of the church until his official appointment. Now that Gill was firmly installed as pastor, he took vigorous measures to promote spiritual growth which neither gained Crosby's approval, nor that of the Keach-Stinton family, into which Crosby had married. They had obviously believed that they could maintain their authority in the church with young Gill acting under their management. Gill, however, brought in many changes which caused initial criticism. Church meetings were organised once a month so that the work of the church could be discussed and planned. It was ruled that a minimum attendance of the pastor and 12 members would be required otherwise a meeting had no powers to vote on a motion. The Coffee House fraternals were denied their sole power of electing deacons which was now placed in the churches hands. The two major Coffee Houses Blackwell's and Hanover ceased, and with them plans to merge the General Baptists with the Particular Baptists, though Gill played a prominent part in the later Particular Baptist Board which developed from the Coffee House fraternities. Crosby, of all people, refused to acknowledge the ordination of deacons as a church-internal matter. Seeing his own powers cut, he caused a great disturbance and, together with a number of the Keach-Stinton family, threatened to leave the church. Mrs Keach, widow of the former pastor, was extremely critical, if not downright jealous of Mrs Gill, complaining that Gill looked after his wife better than he did the church.

There were two points of contention here which Mrs Keach did not understand. Gill was very much a family man and, instead of spending all his time in his study, he did much of his evening sermon preparation sitting near the living-room fire, with his family around him. He also kept up close ties with his mother who often came to stay. Elizabeth had a long series of miscarriages which weakened her constitution greatly and she often needed kind and sympathetic attention which her loving husband gave her freely. Mrs Keach maintained that the best thing for a woman to do after a miscarriage was to forget it and lose herself in the household chores. She claimed that Elizabeth's weakness and her holy manner of life, were faked. Crosby and his wider family now became guilty of many irregularities and scandalous conduct and were formally excommunicated by a majority vote. They then joined Unicorn Yard but soon

⁸ The Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work, p. 40.

Crosby was convicted of fraudulent activities there, too, and, along with a number of relations, excommunicated from Unicorn Yard.

By the autumn of 1721, Gill was working hard to reform the spiritual life of the church and make sure that responsibilities were spread amongst the membership. Keach, though entirely evangelical in his doctrine, had defended views of the pastoral office which differed little from those held by Papists. Raymond Brown says of him, "Neither Keach nor his son, Elias, had time for interfering lay busy-bodies, comparing them with those in the Old Testament times who 'meddled with the priest's work and office'.⁹" The Baptist historian Whitley says that Keach was 'intolerant of meeting others as equals'¹⁰ and he was very impatient with 'lay-men' such as the Amsterdam trader and jeweller Isaac Marlow, one of his members who believed in 'the priesthood of all believers'. Gill made sure that every member and hearer was taken care of and instructed in the faith, urging members to take on some of the pastoral duties such as duties as church messengers and visit those who wished to join the church or those who were negligent in their witness. Poor members were given paid tasks as caretakers or pew-minders to help out their income so that they would keep their self-respect and not feel they were a burden to charity. Methods of aiding and visiting the sick and poor were drawn up and members put in charge of the bursaries. In order to reach the members who were not living under distress of any kind, Gill divided the area covered by the Goat Yard witness into four parts with two brethren responsible for each section, making sure that all the members in that area were regularly visited. Coupled with this, Gill encouraged most members to be active and usually had jobs for them such as visiting the sick, calling on absentees or distributing charity from organised bursaries. Though there were very few well-to-do people in Gill's congregation, the church records show that their giving to the poor was extremely generous.

Church discipline under Stinton had become slack and over 25% of the recorded membership rarely made an appearance. The records show the loving care Gill and his deacons exercised to prevent such lapses. Cases of acute scandal were rare, though one member was tried and convicted for highway robbery! These were the days of the terrible 'gin craze' and drinking was

a problem. The church minutes, however, record many heart-warming examples of gracious visitations of the Spirit with testimonies given by the recently saved and baptised. A quarterly Day of Humiliation and Prayer was set up and inter church visits of various forms were arranged, particularly when baptisms occurred. Means of sharing full fellowship for temporary guests and those new to the neighbourhood were arranged and the status of 'occasional members' devised for them.

Contemporary accounts say that the Goat Yard chapel was a spacious building with a large court-yard in front with an alley of lime trees leading up to the main entrance. Ivimey says that though the chapel was only built of wood it could house almost a thousand people. John Rippon (1750-1836), Gill's immediate successor, obviously quoting from eye-witness accounts, says, "Mr Gill's 'preaching had been very acceptable from the beginning,' and his 'auditory became so numerous, that the place of worship, though a large one, could hardly contain them.' And now being settled, 'his people were very zealous in manifesting their affections towards him, and, to the utmost of their abilities, raised him a suitable maintenance.'"¹¹

¹¹ Rippon's *Life and Writings of the Rev. John Gill, D.D.*, p. 20.

⁹ The English Baptists of the 18th century, pp. 47-48.
¹⁰ A History of British Baptists, p. 178.

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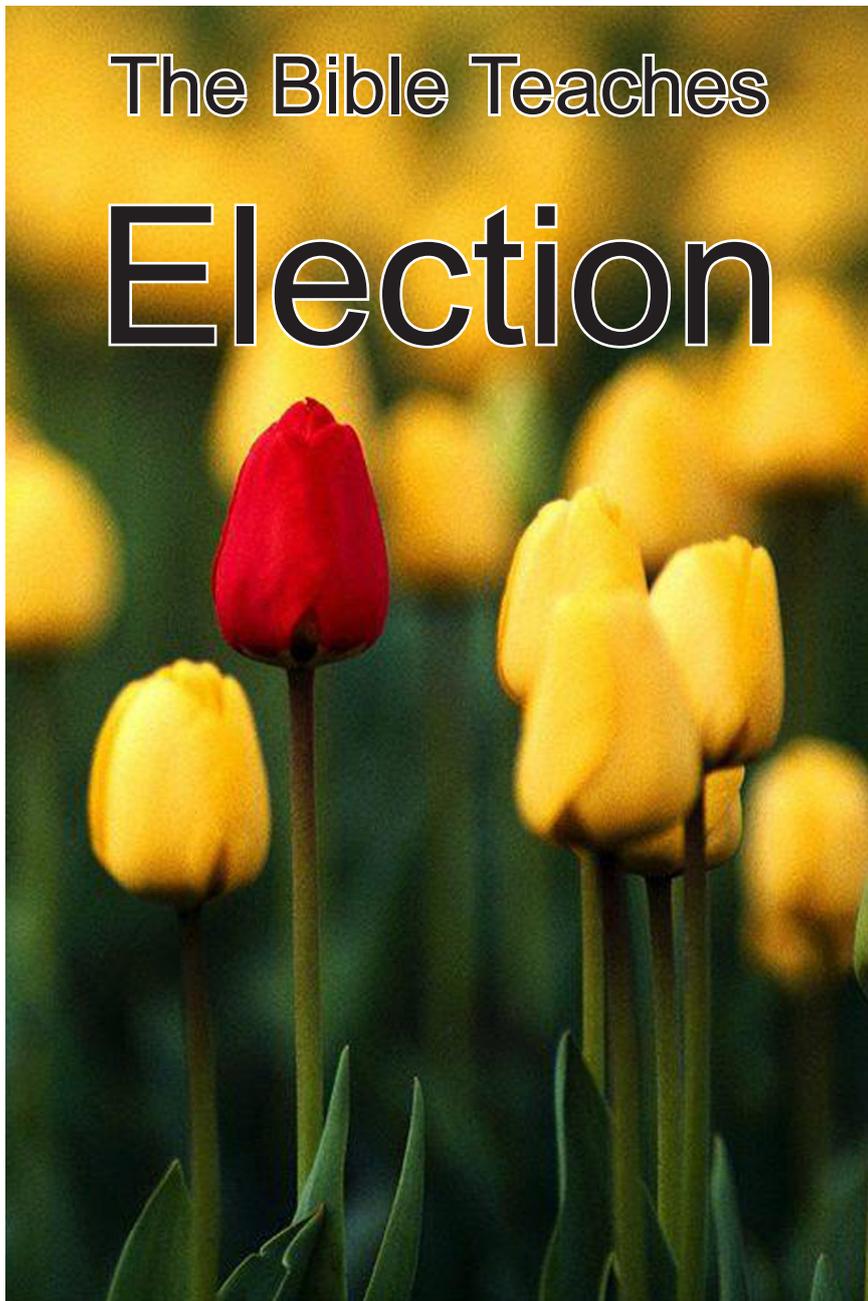
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The Bible Teaches

Election



The subject of God's sovereignty is a matter concerning which we should be humble. It is a profound, deep and awe-inspiring truth. No doctrine exalts or magnifies God and the finished work of Christ as that of God's sovereignty. And why, may we ask, should it not be reasonable to believe that God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11) and not after the will of His creatures?

The only reason anyone believes in the absolute universal sovereignty of God is because it is revealed in the Bible. The Bible is the word and work of God whose purpose is to reveal in it His glorious plan of redemption by the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the ability to believe in the sovereignty of God, as revealed in the Bible, is itself a divinely given gift. That is, the

Sovereign God enables and makes His people willing to believe it (John 3:27).

That this doctrine, most distinctly and certainly set forth throughout the Bible, is opposed by men, religious or otherwise, is one of the best testimonies to the truth of this revelation. It proves that God has not as yet condescended to give them the grace which is needed to humble their pride and make them willing and able to believe "that which is written". For the Scriptures declare, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psalm 110:3).

We invite you to read carefully the following Scriptures and consider their meaning. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see the purpose of our sovereign Lord as the moving power in the glorious gospel of God's free grace in Christ.

God Has A Chosen People

Webster's dictionary defines chosen as selected from a number, picked out, elect, choice. This word is often used in scripture to describe certain individuals.

Matthew 20:15 "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" "Many be called but few chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

Mark 13:20 "... but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he has shortened the days" (vv. 22, 27).

John 15:16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (see also v. 19).

Acts 9:15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me."

Acts 22:14 "And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee."

Acts 10:41 "Not to all people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us."

1 Corinthians 1:27 "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world" (compare vv. 26, 28; this is speaking of the elect, Matthew 11:25).

2 Thessalonians 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." (One of the greatest reasons a true Christian has for praising God).

Ephesians 1:4 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

James 2:5 "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?" (see also 1 Kings 3:8, Psalm 89:3, 105:6, 106:5, etc.).

THE BIBLE TEACHES ELECTION

1 Peter 2:9 “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [or purchased] people.”

Revelation 17:14 “And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (compare v. 8 and 19:9).

Psalms 33:12 “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”

John 13:18 “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen” (see Romans 16:13).

Deuteronomy 7:6 “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God; the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (see Isaiah 43:20).

God’s Choice Is Election

Election means, Divine choice, the predetermination of God, by which persons are distinguished as objects of mercy, become subjects of grace, are sanctified and prepared for heaven, the elect (Webster).

Romans 9:11 “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth” (God is speaking of His choice of Jacob and His rejection of Esau even before they were born v. 13).

Romans 11:5 “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (see also Romans 9:27).

Romans 11:7 “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (see v. 28).

1 Thessalonians 1:4 “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

2 Peter 1:10 “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

Romans 11:28 “... but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (see v. 29 and Ephesians 1:9).

His People Are The Elect

Elect means, to determine in favour of, to designate, choose or select as an object of mercy or favour, predestinated in the divine councils, one chosen or set apart, one chosen or designated by God for salvation, collectively, the saved (Webster). “This election is an act of distinguishing love, of divine sovereignty, eternal, absolute and irrevocable, personal” (Cruden).

Matthew 24:22 “... but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (v. 24).

Matthew 24:31 “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds.”

Luke 18:7 “Shall not God avenge his own elect?”

Romans 8:33 “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” (see Colossians 3:12).

2 Timothy 2:10 “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (Speaking of the elect that have not yet believed).

Titus 1:1 “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect.”

1 Peter 1:2 “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”

Isaiah 45:4 “For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.”

Isaiah 65:9 “And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there” (v. 22).

2 John 13 “The elder unto the elect lady and her children.”



September 1

“They shall dwell safely all of them”

Ezekiel 38:8



O God of all grace, what a great promise you have given us in this portion of your Word. In the midst of great judgment upon Gog and Magog, with all the assaults of the heathen “against the mountains of Israel”, against your church, against your chosen, you have promised that your people, your chosen, your elect, your redeemed, your Israel “shall dwell safely all of them”. He makes the same promise again in Ezekiel 38:14.

Gog And Magog

The Holy Spirit does not leave us to guess who Gog and Magog represent in these two chapters (Ezekiel 38, 39). In chapter 20 of Revelation, he tells us plainly that Gog and Magog represent all the nations of the world (under the delusion of Satan) set in opposition to Christ, His Gospel, and His church. But let us never imagine, not even for a moment, that this is something beyond God’s control, or something not included in His sovereign purpose of grace in predestination. That is not the case. God says to these wicked ones, “I will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:2).

Satan’s Little Season

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross, defeated Satan and bound him with a great chain. The purpose of his binding was “that he should deceive the nations no more”. As the result of Satan’s binding, the glorious Gospel of Christ has been carried into the four corners of the earth. Our Lord has been gathering His elect out of the four corners of the earth for more than two thousand years.

Yet, He told us that when the time appointed (symbolized by the thousand years) is fulfilled, Satan must be loosed for a little season. In Revelation 20:7-10 the Holy Spirit teaches us four things about this “little season”. (1.) At the end of this present Gospel age, just before the coming of Christ, Satan will once again be turned loose upon the nations of the world (Revelation 20:7). (2.) He will be allowed to deceive the nations of the world with false religion once more (Revelation 20:8). Gog and Magog, representing all the nations of the world, are set in opposition to Christ, His church, and the Gospel of His grace. God the Holy Spirit does not use “Gog and Magog” to represent Russia, China, or any other literal nation! He tells us plainly that Gog and Magog represent the

nations of the world under the influence of satanic deception. (3.) Under the satanic delusion of false religion, all the nations of the world will rise up in opposition to Christ, His Gospel, and His church in the great battle of Armageddon (Revelation 20:9). This is the same battle described in Revelation 16:12-16 and 19:19-21. It is the final assault of Satan against the Lord Jesus Christ. The meaning of John’s vision in Revelation 20 is clear. Toward the close of this Gospel age, before Christ comes in glory, Satan will deceive the world with a false gospel, a false Christ, a false god, a false spirit, and a false faith; and the world, in the name of Christ, will turn in violent persecution against Christ’s kingdom. (4.) Satan’s last assault, like all that have preceded it, will be foiled in the end (Revelation 20:10). The purpose of God will not be frustrated. The truth of God shall not be overturned. The saints of God shall not be deceived. The church of God shall not be harmed. The Christ of God shall thoroughly defeat His enemies. The punishment of the beast and the false prophet is described in Revelation 19:20. God the Holy Ghost assures us that Satan, the beast, and the false prophet will all be cast into the lake of fire in Revelation 20:10. In that horrible place of damnation they will be unceasingly tormented forever. This battle will end in swift and decisive victory for us when Christ comes in power and great glory (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

No Harm Done

Understand this, child of God, and rejoice. No harm shall be done to God’s Israel; no harm shall be done to our souls by all Satan’s devices. None of God’s elect shall be lost to the devices of the wicked one. “They shall dwell safely all of them”. And in the end, “they shall spoil those that spoiled them” (Ezekiel 39:10). “Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God” (Ezekiel 39:28).

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