

*A Scriptural View of
the Nature and Sacrifice of
Jesus Christ*

- The Atonement

PREFACE

Of all the doctrines taught in the Scriptures, none it seems have been more productive of controversy than the subject of the Sacrifice of Christ, and the Atonement. Since the days of Edward Turney and his “free life” theory through to the teaching of J Handley and AD Strickler with what became known as the “clean flesh” theory, together with a number of differences in between, so the writings of men have influenced the minds of brethren and sisters to the present day.

The effect is seen in the differences of belief in this vital subject in the brotherhood, resulting in ecclesias being separated, having no fellowship with each other. Even when this extreme action has not been taken, nevertheless there exists divergence of belief of the subject among the members of the same ecclesia – discussion of which is frowned upon to avoid friction and ill-feeling. Whilst for the present, this may affect only a minority it is nevertheless a very serious matter.

The doctrine of the Atonement and its correct understanding is the most vital in the Scriptures. It is so, because the whole purpose of God in the salvation of men is bound up in the great Sacrifice of Christ and all that was accomplished by it. Why then this discord?

We all profess to believe in one body, one spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all. Surely then there can only be one true understanding of the Atonement.

This review of this fundamental vital doctrine is issued in an endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Eric W Phipps

A Scriptural Review of the Nature and Sacrifice of Christ – the Atonement

The Apostle Paul in writing his first Epistle to the Ecclesia at Corinth, laid emphasis upon the great sacrifice of our Lord, making plain that it was the central theme of his preaching and the focal point of the Gospel message. The whole purpose of God in the salvation of men revolved around that signal event. The Apostle wrote:

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18)

Furthermore, he went on:

“We preach Christ crucified: unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the power of God, and the Wisdom of God (1Cor.1:23-24).

Or again:

“I brethren, when I came to you came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified ... we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2: 1-2, 7-8)

With these compelling words, the Apostle Paul directs our minds to what is the very essence and crux of the Truth as it is in Jesus

It is quite evident from the message these words convey, that it is vital to our salvation that we should possess a correct Scriptural understanding of the doctrine concerning the Sacrifice of Christ. It is not sufficient to believe that Jesus died for our sins, that he is our Saviour. Such simplistic statements may be on the lips of those who never get below the surface of things, however sincere their belief. But the true disciple will want to know why and how this great work of salvation from sin and death was accomplished.

Why was the crucifixion of the Son of God so necessary, and what was the hidden wisdom in it all, which was evidently made manifest by God from the beginning, in order that fallen humanity might have a hope of achieving glory, honour and immortality.

Such questions and their answer, are among the most momentous considera-

tions that can engage the mind. This is so, because we are dying creatures. The earth on which we live is a huge cemetery, a fact, which the world, for the most part, attempts by subtle false assumptions to dismiss – that death is not really the extinction of life – that is an illusion. The reality is a transition to a better and more permanent existence in Heaven. The fact that such belief is without any positive evidence, and yet is universally accepted is itself an enigma, which requires an answer. Especially when we see that men everywhere go to their “long home” (the Grave), and the mourners go about the streets.

The subject we are considering involves the issues of Life and Death. It is of such importance that we just cannot afford to be mistaken both as to the reality of the situation, in which we find ourselves and the reason for it all.

With that necessary preamble, we now turn to the facts revealed in God’s word appertaining to our salvation from death. By this, we mean *all the facts* because the omission of even one detail or a wrong interpretation can lead to false conclusions. We must never lose sight of the fact that the plan of salvation was designed and put into operation by God, is a reflection of His Character, is perfect in its conception, and flawless in action. There is no conflict, no contradiction, nothing omitted. All the facets of the subject unite together to reveal a complete and absolute solution to the most fundamental of human problems, and that in a manner which is Divine, and seen to be beyond the wit of man, or indeed of Angels to conceive.

Now in all matters involving First Principles of which this subject is the Chief, we go to the opening chapters of the book of Genesis where the foundations of our Faith are laid bare. In the first chapter, we find a general account of the marvellous creative work of God in the beginning, and the order in which it all came into being. We take note of the fact that at the end of six days God saw everything that he had made – including Adam and Eve – and pronounced it all to be “very good”.

In the second chapter, we have a more particular account of the creation of our first parents. We are informed that God made man from the dust of the ground, breathed into him the breath of life, and Adam became a living animate being. Having then created a garden, a paradise specially for him to live in, God proceeded to create Eve using part of Adam’s body – a rib – as the substratum of her being, so forming an empathy between them that was unique.

In their pristine state, both Adam and Eve must have been fine specimens of the human race – robust, vigorous and beautiful of form. Fearfully and wonderfully made, sin and its effects had not marred their visage, or made inroads into either their physical or moral constitutions. Their immediate environment was that of a beautiful arboretum, and they were at one, and ‘in rapport’ with the Elohim, for they walked and talked with them in their idyllic sur-

roundings.

But yet they were not perfect. They were “made a little lower than the angels”, in whose image they were created. It was intended to elevate them to an equality with those superior Divine beings, an honour which, as subsequent events would reveal, was predicated upon them developing by their own volition qualities which would both confirm, and reflect the purpose of their existence. That purpose was to give praise, honour and obedience to their Creator for which they were made potentially capable and was to be made manifest by their acknowledgement of His Supremacy in obedience to His Will.

The Scriptures make plain that God finds His highest pleasure in the ready and voluntary obedience to His commands, in a spirit of dutiful humble submission and worship. Although he enacts the part as of a loving Father, God is altogether too great a Being to be treated other than with the utmost courtesy and reverence. The prophet Malachi records: “a son honoureth his father, and a servant his master, if then I be a father, where is mine honour, and if I be a master, where is my fear? Saith the Lord of Hosts (Mal. 1:6)

The Scriptures reveal that God is an absolute and perfect Being. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. Moreover, He is Righteous and Just in all His Ways. He is a God of Mercy and full of Compassion. Love and Purity form the very essence of His Being, in whom Goodness and Truth meet together. It is well to remember that in all His Ways these attributes are exhibited, and are so in the absolute sense. There are no compromises or half-measures with God. He cannot act contrary to His Will or Character. He cannot deny Himself, and neither is there with Him any shadow of turning. It is in the appreciation of these facts, that we are able to weigh in the balance they provide the correctness of all our thoughts in relation to matters which are the product of the outworking and reflection of the Divine Mind. It is with those things ever before us that we proceed.

We have made mention of the fact that Adam and Eve in their original pristine state were not perfect, a fact which calls for consideration. There is the underlying feeling in the reading of the record that although pronounced “very good,” there was something which was lacking, something which needed to be acquired for them to attain perfection. Moreover, there is the tacit implication that the attainment to that state was an objective to which they were to aspire and reach by their own effort.

At this point, we feel it necessary to make clear two facts as follows:

1. In their original pristine state, they were not immortal, for then they could not have died or ceased to exist as subsequently was the case.
2. Neither however, were they at that time dying creatures. Although cre-

ated corruptible, they were not then in the process of corrupting, for death was, as later events reveal, the consequence of disobedience to their Creator.

The fact that they were in this intermediate state (if we may so describe it), should occasion no difficulty to understand when all the facts relating to their position at that time are taken into account.

In order that their future state of being could be decided: whether to be made immortal, or be subject to death, they were to be subjected to a simple test. As created beings of intelligence, would they be obedient to their Creator when called upon to show their loyalty to Him? That was to constitute their trial.

Over and above all other of the animate creation, they were endowed with the faculty of free-will – a great privilege with a great responsibility. They were able of their own volition to make choices as to their action in any given situation, so that their future well-being or otherwise lay in their own hands.

Now in this initial period of their existence – their “novitiate” as Bro John Thomas describes it in *Elpis Israel*, they were without character, for that is produced by reaction to experience, of which they had none, or very little. In the garden which God had made for their abode, the Angels (i.e. the Elohim), those superior Beings who carry our God’s Will, walked and talked with Adam and Eve. They were familiar with them. No doubt they educated our first parents in many of the fundamentals relating to life in its practical aspects, as well as to their relationship and obedience to God, of which they themselves were prime examples. During this period which could have extended for some years, there is no evidence whatever that Adam or Eve had any thoughts of disobedience to their Creator. In the Paradise, all was in beautiful accord and harmony.

But it is evident that when some time had elapsed for them to have developed a sufficient maturity of mind, it was the purpose of God in His Wisdom to put their ability to choose – their freewill – to the proof in such a way which would be crucial in deciding their future. To do this, it was necessary to introduce into their domain a subtle influence which would create a situation demanding the exercise of their freedom of choice. Moreover, it would be something which was novel, quite new to them and would cause them to exercise their minds in channels which beforetime they had no experience. The intention was to test their undivided loyalty to their Creator in voluntary obedience in acknowledgement of His Supremacy, and their own dependence upon him.

In the third chapter of Genesis, we have the record of the manner in which God, in his prerogative, chose to carry out this vital test. In the garden of Eden, God had caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and

good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He then proceeded to give Adam a command, saying:

“of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die”.

Having made clear this prohibition to Adam, God then provided a partner, an help-meet for him, in the wonderful and unique way described in the record. We take note also that “they were both naked, the man and his wife and were not ashamed”. In the special relationship which was therefore created, there can be no doubt that Adam passed on to Eve the command of their Creator regarding the proscription relating to the tree of the knowledge of the knowledge of good and evil.

With the scene before us, produced by these descriptive words, there was then introduced a serpent. The Divine record tells us that “the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman Yea, hath God said Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” And the woman said unto the serpent We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat”

We pause at this point and reflect. Words have power. They form the vehicle by which mind communicates with mind, and by means of which control of another can be obtained, depending upon the impression the words have made. The more subtle, the more astute, the more deceitful they are, the deeper the impression, and the greater the chance of control. The evidence for this is seen almost every day in the world around us; never more so than where the gaining of power is concerned as in the politics of men.

In the record before us in Genesis, we note that it was Eve who, because of the uniqueness of the prohibition was, it seems, the more interested to see what this tree of the knowledge of good and evil was like. The fact of a thing being forbidden intensifies the desire for it. Her curiosity was evidently more than she could resist, and it was in that state of mind so created that she went to the tree, and came face to face with the serpent.

Here we may well ask, Why of all the creatures God had made, should he have chosen such a creature which would be the agent by which the vital test of obedience to God and the recognitions of His supremacy upon which so

much depended, be employed. That this serpent was unique (but very real) there can be no doubt. That it had been present and had heard the command of God in respect of the forbidden tree is evident from what ensued. That it had the power of speech, and possessed a subtle sagacity are witnessed in the dialogue with Eve. But it is also clear that it was entirely lacking in moral capacity or integrity, nor was it at all concerned with these particulars, for it was under no constraint and therefore responsibility in regard to the tree.

And that is why for the purpose, God, in His Wisdom created and used this special creature. Naturally speaking, serpents have the capacity to inject lethal poison into their victims, which in its effects causes first slow paralysis, and then death. But here we are in the realm of things moral and spiritual, and not physical, in the realm of thought and ethics.

We discern that it was into the receptive mind of Eve that the words of the Serpent were injected. Like a virus, these words began their corrupting influence in the working of her brain, which then began to produce thoughts quite foreign to her previous experience. They were of a corrupting moral order. There was first of all a questioning of the veracity of the words of her Creator, a fact which had never occurred before. Then, after Eve repeated to the Serpent the edict of God in respect of the prohibition regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and what would ensue if they disobeyed – namely death – the Serpent told her that such a consequence was untrue. The reality was that God had an ulterior motive in mind, namely, that she would have her eyes opened to perceive an altogether higher and wider knowledge, and become equal to the Angels (i.e. the *Elohim*) with whom she and Adam were in contact and familiar.

This whole episode and its consequences in the immoral thinking process of Eve and then of Adam could not be more vital to perceive and the dire result it produced. The plausible words of the Serpent were devious, false – but powerful to an innocent mind. They were firstly an appeal to the vanity of Eve – a form of flattery very telling in its effect. Then, it's words aroused in her brain a mode of thinking which was altogether contrary to anything she had before experienced. Moreover, by the force of spurious words, there was excited her latent and legitimate propensities, and turned them into unlawful lusts by a process of immoral thought.

They also created a situation which demanded the exercise of her ability to choose. In simple terms: Was it to be the Word of God, or was it to be the Word of the Serpent. That was the issue, and it was one in which life and death were involved. The future not only of Adam and Eve was at stake, but that of the whole of mankind.

In the event, Eve accepted the false reading of the Serpent, by making it's mind her mind – a fatal decision. The pure thinking which was previously hers by nature was perverted by the introduction of an alien element into her

thinking processes. Without wishing to sound facetious, the reality is that it turned her brain, and contaminated her thoughts. It was an addition to her very being, and reduced her “very good” condition to one which was obnoxious to God *and was sin in itself* – a fact which is so easily overlooked.

Whilst it is true that sin is the transgression of the Law of God (as the Scriptures declare), that sin is an act – something that we do. It is an effect that has a cause. Eve, of her own volition acquired that cause from the Serpent. In so doing, she failed to render to God His Due, which is the recognition of His Supremacy and Honour, made manifest by submission to His Will. Instead, she in effect obeyed the Serpent by reason of the acceptance of it’s words, which sin caused her to transgress.

The effect upon her was immediate in that she “saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise” so that she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked”.

It is quite evident from this narrative that both Adam and Eve became, by the decisions they made of their own choice, different from their original condition. We may well ask in what respect did this difference consist? A question which it is important to consider and answer together with what ensued as a result.

We may itemise the differences as follows:

1. The introduction into the brain of a powerful alien influence which in its operation produced a process of thought which was that of the Serpent, and alien to God.
2. It altered their previous pure and chaste minds by the creation of an aversion to that of the Divine Mind.
3. It produced in them the cause of their disobedience to God, their Creator.
4. It supplanted the supremacy of God by replacing it with that of the Serpent.
5. It caused their original rightful use of their propensities into improper and immoral misuse or lusts. It caused the illicit awakening of the conscience by their moral defilement.

In all this, we observe that in measure the words of the Serpent dominated their thinking, so the Word of God diminished in power to the point where it lost all authority. The voluntary acceptance and imbibing of the venom of the Serpent was morally defiling, and in itself, became the cause of transgression. So God adjudged them unworthy of immortality and sentenced them to death - a sen-

tence which was physically defiling. Moreover, this defilement – both moral and physical – became a law of their being, and was transmitted to all their posterity – a fact which, as their descendants we are only too well aware.

Further consideration of this matter leads us to conclude that sin in the Scriptures, by definition has two aspects, both very real. We find that not only is it transgression of the Law of God, but it is also that which gives rise to that transgression. The one is the cause, the other the effect, both aspects being taught in Scripture, as we will proceed to show.

In the book of the Apocalypse, chapter 12, verse 9, speaking of the great Catholic Apostasy, it is recorded that “the great dragon was cast out, that old Serpent called The Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. There can be no doubt that the Serpent spoken of refers to the Serpent which was the cause of the transgression of Eve by deception in the beginning, and whose poison has been diffused by inheritance over the population of the world ever since.

But here we are informed that this Serpent and the Devil are in fact, synonymous terms, the prime characteristic of which is deception. We, as members of the Human race possess this “devil”. It is, as Bro John Thomas states in his book, *Elpis Israel*, our “misfortune, not our crime”. Nevertheless, we are not to allow it’s powerful evil influence to deceive us, and to supplant (as did Eve) the Truth as revealed in God’s Word. As the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians states that we are not to “give place to the devil”, but by putting on the whole armour of God, to stand against its wiles.

Now this word “*devil*” is in the original Greek, the word “*diabolos*” and it is very informative to know its meaning. Bro Thomas writing in volume 1 of *Eureka* supplies us with this in a section of the subject, commencing at page 241, concluding on page 249, with the definition of the word as follows:

“*Diabolos* is derived from *Diaballo*, which is compounded from “*dia*” a preposition which in composition signifies “across”, and answers to the Latin “*trans*”. “*Ballo*” means “to throw” or “to cast”, and intransitively “to fall” or “to tumble.”

He then goes on to state that the noun *diabolos* is the name of that which crosses or causes to cross over.

From this definition, it can be seen quite readily that the word has the same meaning as *transgression*: *trans* = across and *gress* = a fixed point. That is what our first parents did. They crossed the point fixed by God, namely the eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree. But it is important to note that the word *diabolos* not only means transgression, but it also *includes that which causes the transgression or crossing over*. Brother Thomas, on the same page states that the man (Adam) was enticed of his own lust (by the words of the Serpent) to cross over the line or to disobey the Law, so that his own lust becomes the *diabolos*.

Now, from this exposition, we are able to arrive at certain conclusions. To eradicate the harmful effects of any evil, it is first necessary to identify, and then remove the cause. A man may suffer from a disease, which can leave him disabled. It may be possible with medical care to relieve for a time, the disablement. But identify, and remove the cause, and the affliction will disappear. It can be seen therefore that to identify a cause, and then remove it, is more important than to treat its' effects.

The Scriptures then, as we have endeavoured to show, identify both cause and effect. They make up what the *diabolos* consists of and what it is that we each one possesses, and each part are described as, and are called Sin – real an actual.

We may now ask what all the foregoing has to do with the nature and sacrifice of Christ, and his atoning work. The answer is everything! We have purposely gone to considerable length to show with all the relevant facts what Sin is, how it came into the world, and it's consequence – death. It is only by such knowledge that we can understand what was essential to provide a remedy for this, the greatest evil that besets mankind, to eradicate the cause of Transgression, so that its evil effects can no longer be manifest, that the curse that is upon it can be removed, so that the prospect of the hope of life that has no ending can, by the grace of God become a reality.

At this juncture, we must emphasise that the work of Salvation must be seen from God's point of view, for He it is who is the injured party, the One whose Supremacy and Honour was impugned and whose Authority disregarded. Moreover, whatever the remedy, there can be no compromise of the character of God, no breach of any of His Perfect Attributes. The remedy must be seen to be perfect for the intended purpose, and final in its outworking. Futhermore, Justice demanded that reconciliation could only be effected by one who was the same Adamic nature that had transgressed – one who recognised the justice of God in its condemnation and who would by perfect obedience to God, overcome the *diabolos* whilst he was living, and then completely annihilate it by voluntarily taking it in himself (in the laying down of his life) in crucifixion. By such obedience in action, he would thereby restore that which was taken away by our first Parents, namely the Supremacy and Honour of God, so providing the means by which God could rightly, without compromise to any of the attributes of His Character, raise him from the dead to a life of glory, honour, and Immortality.

Now, without an understanding of the hidden wisdom of God, of which the apostle Paul speaks, we could not solve the mystery of reconciliation which God had ordained before the world (of sin and death) had come into being. When Adam and Eve transgressed the Divine command, and became subject to death, their minds infused, as with the poison of a serpent, how could the purpose of God in Creation that the earth should be filled with His Glory, as the waters cover the sea, come to fruition when their progeny also inherited the same evils. Even the Angels, though recognising the problem were unable to resolve it.

But God, who is Omniscient as well as Omnipotent, for whom nothing is too hard, designed the solution, and made it known from the beginning. It was contained in just a few but significant words found in Genesis 3:15, and addressed to the Serpent as follows:

“I will put (*enfix*) enmity between thee and the woman *Eve* and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel”.

Could the message of Salvation from Sin and Death be compressed into fewer so cogent, if enigmatic words? When coupled with the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world, of which Genesis speaks, whose blood was shed, and whose skin clothed the sin-stricken state of both Adam and Eve, we have encapsulated the Gospel of Salvation in it’s typical entirety. We can only stand back, so to speak, and marvel at the Divine Mind which devised it all.

The beginning of its outworking, we see immediately: first in the birth of Cain who came into being as a direct result of the transgression of his parents. He was born in sin. The enmity of things Divine made manifest by Adam and Eve was passed on to their offspring – and can be seen in Cain’s hatred of his spiritually minded brother Abel, because of his recognition of God’ supremacy, justice and mercy manifest in his faith, in his offerings, as distinct from those of Cain which lacked any. The enmity was of such intensity that he slew his brother.

That enmity and the reasons for it became endemic in the world at large, so that as the Apostle Paul in writing of things spiritual as distinct from things carnal stated:

“As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born of the spirit, even so it is now” (Gal. 4:29)/

This is a fact which the whole history of man bears witness to.

Bearing all these facts in mind, we see that it was not possible for a man himself to bring deliverance from Sin and Death. Even the very best of men lack that purity of mind, and strength of character to meet all the righteous requirements of God to justify the abrogation of the sentence upon men. Sin predominates and has to be removed – an attainment beyond the power of ordinary mortals to accomplish.

But God in His Mercy “saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His Arm brought salvation unto Him, His Righteousness, it sustained him (Isa. 49:16). That intervention by God in manifesting His Love and Mercy was a response to the plea of Psalm 80:

“Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand: upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for thyself”

So it was, that in fulfilment of that design, the prophet Isaiah predicted by the Spirit:

“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name
“Immanuel”

Which, in its outworking he could predict that:

“unto us, a child is born unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. 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 establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever (Isa. 9:6-7).

We have no difficulty in identifying to whom these words refer. Here, we see the seed of the woman. Although written hundreds of years before the event, the birth of Jesus recorded in Luke chapter 1 leaves us in no doubt as to the subject of the prophecy. It bears the hallmark of Divinity throughout – a unique event in human history. We take note of the fact that it was God himself who so intervened to provide, in a miraculous way, a Saviour for fallen mankind. He it is to whom we owe the glorious hope and prospect of life from the dead. He it is who raised up one of our race, who could meet all the requirements needed for reconciliation with Himself, without compromise. The enquiring mind will not be satisfied until there is laid bare the reasons for so wonderful an intervention so personal, and the facts which made it so necessary.

The Apostle Paul makes these comments:

“When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal.4:4-5).

Here we have confirmation that in God’s predetermined purpose it was at an appointed time in its outworking that God so acted. But why should His Own Son be born of a woman for the purpose of redemption? Why not create the Redeemer in the same marvellous way as was Adam at the beginning? That is an important – indeed, vital question that requires a considered answer. It must take into account what was necessary to achieve and the means by which it could be effected.

Adam endowed with the ability to exercise his own free-will had chosen of his own volition to disobey God. He with Eve failed the test of obedience, and became defiled morally by the poison of the serpent and then physically by the punishment of death as a consequence. They became mortal, dying creatures.

To remedy that situation it was necessary from God's point of view, for a man of the nature of Adam following his sin, and in possession of the cause of that transgression – namely the *diabolos* to voluntarily acknowledge the righteousness of God in its condemnation, yet who would live a life of perfect obedience, overcome that power during his life, and then voluntarily take that *diabolos* in his own body, and completely eradicate it in death.

So it was with that purpose that Jesus the Son of God came into being. We are able, in the light of the Testimony to appreciate why this man should be both of our nature, and yet be the only begotten Son of God. By having Mary – the handmaid of the Lord – as his mother, he was born under the law of sin and death. He, by inheritance partook of her nature which was sin's flesh, having the cause of transgression as an element. He was therefore by this fact exactly the same in nature as those he came to save. But he was the Son of God because it was essential to have the moral power whereby that of the *diabolos* could be overcome by the determined exercise of his own free-will. That was made possible by inheriting from his Father a moral capacity greater than that of any other man, which could nullify all attempts either internally, or externally to divert him from the obedience of God. This man therefore, divinely created was both a moral prodigy as well as a paragon – a being which it was not possible for fallen humanity to produce.

As we study his life as it is unfolded in the four Gospel records, we are able to trace out the truth of the foregoing facts. At twelve years of age, his moral intellect was so developed that he amazed the most learned of the experts of the Scriptures by his knowledge and understanding of them. Early in his life, he was quite aware of his parentage, and the purpose of his being. On the occasion when he was found sitting in the midst of the doctors in the Temple, he said to his Mother: "wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Lu. 2:46-49)

When his obedience was put to the proof immediately following his baptism, the power of God's Word which he wielded put to flight the subtle influence of the *diabolos* to disarm him. Although having a will of his own, it was at all times subjected to that of his Father, in recognition that his Father was supreme, and was greater than he. As the record in John 10 confirms, he himself stated: "as the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father", a relationship of unique attachment – a bond created for a specific purpose, which was to effect reconciliation between God and man, to abolish sin and death, to bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel which he preached.

Christ told his hearers: "I am come that men might have life and that they might have it more abundantly". To this end he stated: "I lay down my life for the sheep (his followers) because of which my Father doth love me. I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me – I lay it down of myself" i.e. quite voluntarily. "I (and only I) have the right (the privilege) to lay it down, and I have the same privilege to take it again. This commandment I have received of my Father. These words are quite amazing in their import. They concentrate the mind upon the very essence of the Gospel, and the means by

which all the promises of God – his great purpose, which He had from the foundation of the world could come to fruition.

But we ask, Why and How was this quite moving drama so evidently necessary? We have, I think, in what has gone before in this consideration, anticipated the answer to the question. It is made up of several parts as follows:

1. That which the First Adam took away, namely the supremacy of God, would need to be restored by voluntary obedience to the command of God.
2. The one who should do this would need to be in possession of that which had caused the offence in the beginning, namely the *diabolos* and therefore have the same nature as Adam after his transgression.
3. That person would therefore be under Adamic condemnation by reason of the possession of that nature.
4. In acknowledgement of the Righteousness of God in that condemnation, he would of his own volition lay down his life.
The purpose in so doing, having overcome the serpent-power that had caused the original offense during a sinless life would be to completely annihilate it in himself, by his death.

All these prerequisites come together and are met in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and in no other. The Scripture evidence for their necessity and fulfilment are confirmed as follows:

In the Messianic Psalm 69, the very moving innermost thoughts of our dear Lord are laid bare. In verse 4, we read: “they that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully are mighty – then I restored that which I took not away”. Here is seen the enmity spoken of in Genesis. Here is seen the noble spiritual mind of Christ, and the purpose of his being. Go no further until you have read the whole Psalm and shared with our dear Lord the pathos, the anguish, the sorrow in his loneliness amongst sinful men. After drying your tears, proceed.

Then, in the letter to the Hebrews (chapter 2, verse 14), referring to Jesus, it is recorded: “forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death (i.e. his own), he might destroy that having the power of death, that is, the devil”. The word “devil” is in the original Greek, the word “*diabolos*”. So that Jesus, as with ourselves had within him, as we do, the cause of Transgression, and by which he suffered, being tempted by it that is, by his own personal experience, he could succour those who suffer in the same way, as verse 18 confirms.

Moreover, it is evident from the statement in verse 16 that Jesus had the same nature as ourselves, being of the “seed of Abraham,” and not therefore as Adam

before he transgressed.

Thirdly, it is clear that as a consequence, Jesus was under Adamic condemnation, as were and are all the descendents of Abraham, whether natural or spiritual, for all by inheritance possess the *diabolos*, which in fact is confirmed by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans, where he wrote:

“I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:18-20).

Here we have a clear statement of the *diabolos*, its identity (sin), where it is located and the power of its operation in its possessors. The poison that was injected into the minds of our first parents by the Serpent in the beginning and passed on to all their progeny is commented on here by the Apostle by reason of his own experience. The arena of its working is in the Will, which is the Mind, which is the product of the Brain.

Because of this, Paul goes on to relate that he experienced two influences at work in himself, contrary to each other. His desire was to be obedient to the Law of God in which he took delight. But he found in its outworking another power innate within him – an evil influence, which oftentimes was stronger than his innermost personal desire, and caused him to become enslaved by it. He calls it the Law of Sin, with which we do battle, and to which, we must try not to yield. It operates in the mind through the brain in arousing the lusts of the flesh, inflaming them to the point that they become almost irresistible.

So it is that in his Epistle to the Colossians, in writing of these matters, the Apostle stated:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above – set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth ... mortify (kill off) therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness which is idolatry ... but now, put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication which is out of your mouth”.

We notice that all of the things here mentioned have their origin in the working of the Carnal Mind through the practical working parts – the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hands and feet, all obeying the dictates of the brain. The things produced do not have to be learned – they are natural to the carnal mind. The antidote is something that we have to acquire, for the Apostle goes on to say “put on therefore (a conscious effort on our part) as the elect of God bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering and above all these things, put on love”.

Here then, we have the carnal natural sin-stricken body of flesh, with its mechanism for evil located in the brain, and opposed to all that is Divine, when left to operate of its own free will. The effects of its working, when given free reign, is to cause its possessor (which includes every one of us) to perish for ever. Of ourselves we are in a hopeless state, without remedy.

But in the mercy of God, we can avail ourselves of a power to overcome this innate evil. By the imbibing of the Word of God, freely made available in the Scriptures, we gain access to a source of strength, found nowhere else, which will allow us to triumph. In the measure that we exercise our minds in the reading, meditation and acting upon this power of God, in that measure shall we overcome this deadly evil in our nature. It constitutes a continual warfare, but one in which, of ourselves, because of our fallen state, we never fully succeed.

The Apostle Paul himself, as one who experienced this failure, exclaimed how wretched he felt because of the fatal consequences involved. Small wonder that so sensitive a man to things Divine should so earnestly implore: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the answer was: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord".

In this regard, we recall that Jesus being lifted up in crucifixion was the antitype of the brazen serpent which God commanded Moses to make. All who had been bitten by the plague of serpents, and in faith looked upon that serpent of brass were healed. So as we reflect, we see that the sin of man – the bite of the serpent is, so to speak, traced back to its source, even the serpent in Eden. We have seen how Eve made its mind her mind and which became by its influence the cause of transgression – a cause which was by inheritance passed on to all her progeny including our Lord. Brass, being representative of human flesh, so in this very real but typical graphic incident, we see the very root of sin exposed in the Son of Man. He himself tacitly acknowledged its possession by destroying it in his own sacrifice, and so bring salvation to others in turn.

The thought leads us to Messiah's cry just prior to his expiry upon the cross "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" When that pure spiritual mind of Christ could no longer make manifest that which was Divine – when what was left was the body of sin's flesh, the Spirit with which he was endowed could not remain because it had no fellowship with that body alone. But although very conscious of its removal when in the very extremity with his suffering he felt that His Father had left him so that he was completely and entirely alone, the terror of death was mercifully short lived. He was not forsaken. His next conscious moment was with the Angels in the tomb at his resurrection, with all the joy that thereafter ensued.

So it is that we come to the fourth of our facts in respect of the necessity for the sacrifice of our Lord. In order to make manifest the righteousness God in condemning to death the nature that had brought transgression – a nature which he himself possessed, he would of his own volition lay down his life.

Jesus Himself confirmed that no man took it from him. Indeed, he had the power to annihilate those who sought to kill him. Yet, that dreadful, terrifying, painful ordeal of crucifixion, the very details of which he was fully aware beforehand, was no martyrdom. It was all in its outworking the operation of the Providence of God for a Divine Purpose – the Salvation of men, no less! A fact, that our Lord was fully aware.

So it was that we have recorded by Isaiah: “it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief” (Isa. 53:10). Such an assertion on first reading seems unbelievable. That God should take pleasure in the quite awful cruel death inflicted upon His Beloved Son, and that he himself arranged that it should so be. But God is no sadist, or lover of inflicting suffering just for the sake of it. The Attributes of His Perfect Character preclude such a thought.

The answer to the seeming paradox is seen in the words that follow the above quotation: “when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days ... (Isa. 53:10-12). As we sometimes sing: “his shall a numerous offspring be and still his honour stand.” Yes! He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied with all the thoughts that such facts arouse, in our association with him.

Yet included in that declaration of the purpose of our Lord’s sacrifice and its outcome, there is the underlying thought that what he inherited as one of the Adamic race – Sin, the *diabolos* in the flesh, although not his responsibility, and although he alone of men overcame all it’s subtle power, both from within, and from without during his mortal life, nevertheless its very possession and it’s abhorrence in the sight of God is witnessed by, and commensurate with the quite awful sufferings he endured. How much more we, who inherit the same diabolic power, but so oftentimes succumb to its influence and transgress, need reminding of the great Mercy and Forbearance of God towards us.

Fifthly, we observe that whilst overcoming that evil, that sin in the flesh during his life, his work of redemption was not effective until its power was completely eradicated. It surely goes without saying that he could not accomplish this vital work unless he himself possessed that sin – actual, and very real. As Bro John Thomas wrote in *Elpis Israel*: “sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there”. Indeed, the Scriptural confirmation of this truth is found in that same chapter 53 of Isaiah to which we have previously referred. In verse 6, we read:

“All we are like sheep that have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all”.

We may well enquire: What was the “iniquity” referred to here? The answer is given in verse 12, where we read: “because he hath poured out his soul unto death, he was numbered with the transgressors and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for their transgressions”.

The “iniquity” and the “sin” referred to are in the singular case, and in accord with the words of John: “Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jno.1:29). Not the sin of the World as is so often misquoted, for that he did not do. It was sin in the singular which we have exposed in this review, and which Jesus possessed, and for which he died to eradicate, being under Adamic Condemnation because of it.

So, in confirmation of this vital aspect of the subject, we take note of the assertion made in the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 9, speaking of our Lord:

“But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:11-12).

The words “for us” are not in the original. Indeed, it would be better if they were replaced with the words “for himself”, and for this reason: The word “obtained” in verse 12 is in the reflexive voice, and conveys the meaning of “for oneself”. This is in conformity with the message in chapter 5 and verse 3, when speaking of the High Priest, we read: “he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins”.

But the message in Chapter 9 is more specific. Making the point that Jesus, unlike the High Priest under the Mosaic Law who every year entered into the Most Holy Place with the blood of goats and calves. He, by the offering of his own blood **once for all** has entered into heaven itself. So in verse 26 we read:

“Now once, in the end of the Age hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”

With the direct implication that, on his first appearing, he came possessed of sin in order to achieve that salvation by eradicating it in himself.

This vital point is reinforced when we turn to the 1st Epistle of John, where we read:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jno. 3:2)

This glorious message refers of course, to the second coming of our Lord. The salvation from sin and death he accomplished first for himself at his first coming

will then be ours, if found faithful, because as verse 5 continues:

“And ye know that he was manifested (past tense) to take away our sins and in him is no sin (present tense)” – to which we might quite legitimately add – having come the first time with it and removed it himself.

In the light of the foregoing, we are able to understand the true meaning of the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21 where he states: “For he (God) hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” It wasn’t in an implied or artificial sense that Jesus was made sin, for that would have both impugned and compromised the perfect character of his Father. Rather, he was so made by being born of Mary and partaking of sin’s flesh with sin, the devil, or the diabolos as a constituent. Such a birth was so designed of God for that purpose. But although he possessed the *diabolos*—sin in the flesh – it never possessed him. He never transgressed. He was in that sense separate from sinners. He knew no sin – he never consorted with it as the word “knew” implies. He at all times mortified it. So the Righteousness of God was made manifest by his perfect obedience. Not only so, but by becoming by our baptism part of a multitudinous Christ, we are made the righteousness of God in him. Such is the Grace of God toward us. It is surely manifest from all the foregoing testimony that the great sacrifice of Jesus was first and foremost for himself that, by the grace, mercy and love of God, it could be for us also, in him.

Because of his great sacrifice in all it’s facets – the reasons and necessity for it, as we have endeavoured to portray, there remains the fact that the grave could not hold him. He had fulfilled quite voluntarily all the Divine requirements to bring reconciliation between God and Man in submission to his Father. He had in himself removed that which was the cause of death, even sin itself, so God raised him from the dead, made him after the power of an endless life to die no more. Through it all, we see fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah in all their deep significance. Speaking of our Lord, we read: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isa. 61:

Such is the wonder of the mind of our Heavenly Father seen in the face of Jesus as we have considered his life and death and glorious resurrection, and the reason for it all. On the one hand is seen the righteousness of God, His justice, His mercy, His supremacy, and above all his exceeding great love to us in the provision made for our eternal well-being in the raising up of His own son to be a prince and a saviour. We see on the other hand Jesus our Elder Brother, his perfect obedience to His Father, the subjugation of his own will, the manifestation of transcendent love in the laying down of his life in sacrifice, in the taking away of sin, that through it all we, fallen creatures of the dust, by patient continuance

in well-doing in emulation of him, seeking, striving for glory honour and immortality, might gain eternal life through him. What a great privilege it is to know these incomparable truths, and the joy of faith which is ours because of that knowledge. As the prophet Isaiah concludes in the 61st chapter of his prophecy: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robes of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that be sown in it to spring forth: so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” – **HALLELUJAH!!**

We humbly and prayerfully submit this exposition with confidence, as it is in conformity and harmony with every aspect of the Truth, as revealed in the Scriptures. In asserting that Truth, the following errors are repudiated:

1. The teaching of the Nazarene Fellowship (which is that of the late Edward Turney) that Jesus was not under Adamic condemnation and therefore had a “free life” which he sacrificed as a substitute for us. This is contrary to Scripture and an affront to the righteous character of God. When challenged (as we have done), they are unable to answer the Truth we have exposed.
2. The teaching that Jesus had “no sin,” inherited, innate, nor acquired (which many accepted) is demonstrably false when the Scriptural teaching concerning sin in the flesh and what it signifies as the cause of transgression, is rightly understood.
3. The teaching that Jesus could not be tempted by thoughts arising in his own mind, that he was as Adam was before he transgressed, as many assert, cannot be true when the working and power of the diabolos which Jesus along with all men possessed is, by experience acknowledged.

These facts are stated not to stress the differences that are current in the brotherhood, but rather by a consideration of the Truth as exposed in the article we have written “we may all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”. **AMEN**

Eric W Phipps