



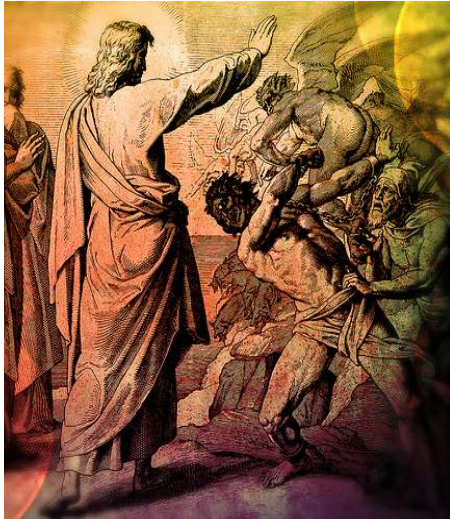
Open Face

One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all others. Christ our Righteousness

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The Gospel of The Kingdom



Over the years that I have been involved in this ministry, I have progressed from one emphasis to another. Several themes have been impressed on my mind and first among them was the truth about the Godhead; the truth that God is not a Trinity, but but is one Person who has a son, and that the Holy Spirit is the very life of God the father, and of his son Jesus Christ. This is something that made a really great change in my life and in my understanding of the Bible. For many years that was the main thing I focused on.

About 14 years ago, I came to a better understanding of righteousness by faith and I started focusing on that. Since that time until today this has been at the center of my biblical studies and of my presentations. About nine years ago as a result of understanding righteousness by faith, I began to have a better understanding of spiritual gifts and began to look more closely at the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

As I was thinking about all of this recently, I asked myself the question, “what should be the emphasis?” Because I realize that if we do not have a clearly defined purpose, then after awhile the things that we teach tend to become watered-down and muted. It is necessary that there should be a clear understanding of what really is the central thing that God wants to be presented to the world. This is what has led me to refocus on the issue of the gospel of the kingdom. I realize that this is the single topic under which everything else falls, the Godhead, righteousness by faith, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and whatever else is important in the Christian experience. It all comes under the heading of the gospel of the kingdom. Of course this is what the Bible teaches.

THE CENTRAL THEME

In Matthew 24 when Jesus was speaking to his disciples about the signs of the end, he said in verse 14,

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matt 24:14)

Here we see that Jesus declares that the final message to be preached in the world is, the gospel of the kingdom. In fact when we look at other statements which Jesus makes about this gospel of the kingdom, we see that it is not just the main message that is to be preached, but that it is the only message to be preached. Jesus says the end will come when “this gospel of the kingdom,” is preached to all nations as a witness. It is interesting that every

Christian group in the world today claims to be preaching the gospel, however not many of them emphasize the preaching of the gospel *of the kingdom*. Part of the reason is that many of them don’t understand what the kingdom is and what the relationship is between the kingdom, and the gospel of the kingdom.

When we go to Revelation 14, the chapter in which we find the three Angels’ messages, we find a message concerning the preaching of the gospel, in verse 6.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, (Rev 14:6)

In this prophecy that was given to John in the book of Revelation, we find the same truth expressed; the final message to be preached to the world is the everlasting gospel, which Jesus declared to be the gospel of the kingdom. It is not something which emerges at the end of time, but it is something that is everlasting, it is what Jesus preached when he was here, and it is what should be preached, and should continue to be preached right through to the end of time. It is evident that when we understand the gospel of the kingdom prop-

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion and the restoration of apostolic Christianity. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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erly, then many of the false teachings that are floating around automatically fall into their proper place. They are easily seen for the deceptions, and the distractions that they really are.

The first person who proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom was John the Baptist. In Matthew 3:1,2 we read,

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt 3:1-2)

John began preaching six months before Jesus was baptized and began his ministry. The focus of his message was, the gospel of the kingdom. Notice that John's emphasis was that this kingdom was "at hand." In other words the kingdom was imminent, it was something about to be set up. This is the reason why his message had such great power, this is the reason why people came out in droves to listen to what he had to say and to be baptized by him in the Jordan.

The people had the understanding that the kingdom of God was to be set up on earth and so the message of John electrified them, they were filled with great excitement and anticipation of what was about to happen!

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt 4:17)

Jesus himself preached the same message as John the Baptist. While he did many mighty miracles and taught a great deal about righteousness and holy living, the great emphasis of his ministry was, the gospel of the kingdom. When we look at Matthew 5:7-10, we see that this is also the message which the disciples carried. Jesus sent them out to preach the same message as he and John the Baptist were preaching.

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. (Matt 10:5-8)

This was also the message of the apostles:

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12)

This emphasis is all over the New Testament. The underlying theme to everything that they taught and did, was, the gospel of the kingdom, and Jesus says that this is the message which is to be preached in all the world until the end of time.

THE MEANING OF THE MESSAGE

The full significance and importance of this cannot be appreciated until we dig a little deeper and find out what is this gospel of the kingdom of God. The word "gospel," as we know, means, "good news." When Jesus began to preach that the kingdom of heaven was

at hand, (meaning in close proximity), the people understood him to mean that Israel was about to be restored to prominence. They thought that God was about to exalt their nation to be the greatest nation on earth and that all the promises of the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many other prophets were about to be fulfilled. For them this was good news, the fulfillment of all the dreams and expectations of Israel. This is why the message of John the Baptist, the disciples, and Jesus himself stirred up the nation of Israel so much, it awakened the hopes and dreams of an entire nation.

What exactly was this message of the kingdom? Jesus' teachings were full of this theme. Most of his parables began with, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto ...", But there is no single place where he clearly outlines in a simple way the exact meaning of the gospel of the kingdom. Of course when we talk about the kingdom, the prophecy of Daniel chapter 2 comes readily to mind. There we find that God tells us of a kingdom which is to destroy all the kingdoms of this world and which will itself become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. (Dan 2:44)

This is the physical setting up of the kingdom which we don't expect to see until Jesus returns. Revelation 11:15 also points to the same event when it says,

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Rev 11:15)

So we know there is going to be a physical setting up of the physical kingdom. But Jesus and his apostles taught, from that time two thousand years ago, that

the kingdom was at hand, was about to be established, so what did they really mean? What were they referring to? In Luke chapter 17 we find the Pharisees coming to Jesus with the very same question, they wanted to know when the kingdom of God would be set up:

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21)

Since they were expecting a physical kingdom, the Pharisees did not recognize the kingdom of Jesus. But Jesus said, “the kingdom which I have been preaching about, the one which is “at hand, about to be set up, does not come with observation, you can’t see it with your eyes, it’s not something that is visible but it is something that is established in the hearts of men.”

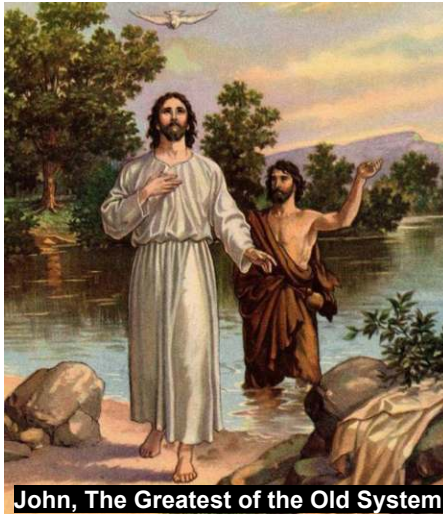
What exactly was Jesus talking about? It was something that was not yet here because he, as well as John and also the disciples preached saying, “it is at hand, meaning it was near, but had not yet arrived.” This expectation that it was very near is what created such excitement among the people, they knew that the kingdom of God was about to be established. Let us examine a few other verses which make this absolutely clear:

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. (Luke 16:16)

Here Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God was not something which existed before the time of John. John was the first person who preached the kingdom was about to be set up. But what was there before the kingdom of God was set up? Jesus said, it was “the law and the prophets.” So the law and the prophets was one system through which God worked with his people, it was one system by which God related to those who were called his people. Every Israelite was under the system of the law and

the prophets, meaning that this system was what governed and controlled their lives. This is perfectly in harmony with the truth of the two covenants, there is the old covenant and there is the new covenant; there was the age of the law and the prophets and now Jesus had come to replace that system with the kingdom of God. Let’s look at another even more striking verse in Matthew chapter 11.

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is



John, The Greatest of the Old System

least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matt 11:11)

This is one of those verses that I did not understand for a long time, because it did not make sense from the perspective of how I used to understand the kingdom. Jesus said that the greatest of the prophets up until that time was John the Baptist. He was greater than all who ever lived before him including all the heroes of the Old Testament. But then he said that the least in the kingdom was greater than John and of course, greater than all who had ever lived on the earth up to that point in time! This includes people such as Moses, Elijah, Enoch and all the other outstanding Bible characters from the Old Testament. How could this be? If we say that John was greater than all of them then this is understandable because John actually baptized Jesus. But who are these people of whom Jesus is speaking when he refers to, “the least in the

kingdom of heaven?” Who are these people who are greater than John and greater than all who lived before John?

When the kingdom of glory is finally set up in the new earth, John will be there, Moses will be there, Elijah will be there and so will all the other faith-heroes of the Old Testament, but is Jesus saying that the least in that physical kingdom will be greater than they? Who are these to whom he refers as that, “least in the kingdom?”

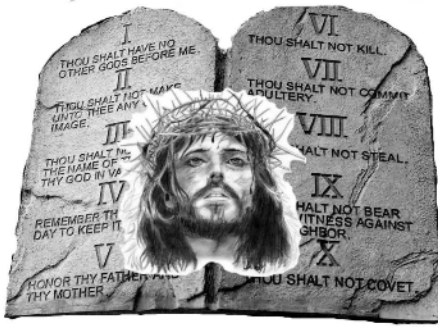
This verse did not make sense to me until I came to understand that the kingdom of heaven was not something that was set up before the time of John, but was something established by Jesus. So none of God’s people before the time of John experienced this kingdom, and in fact, even John himself did not experience it! But all of God’s people since the time of Jesus have experienced this kingdom, and the least of these people who have experienced this kingdom are greater than the greatest of those who never did! The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of the old covenant people of God and what makes the difference is experiencing of the kingdom. Those who experience it are greater in privilege and experience than those who never did. This is what the verse is saying.

A NEW EXPERIENCE

Now Jesus came and established this kingdom. He explained the nature of this kingdom when he said, “the kingdom of God is within you.” Jesus had come to bring a different experience to his people, which had never been available before. Many people do not realize this, but it is very clear when we examine the teachings of the New Testament; Jesus Christ brought a change in the history of humanity, a change in the way God was dealing with his people, he brought something that had never been available before and this something was called, “the kingdom of God.” When we look at a few other verses, it becomes clear what Jesus was referring

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Did Christ Die For The Law?



This is a strange question, yet I ask it because I have discovered that this is what the theology of some people requires them to believe. There is indeed a prevailing idea that the main reason why Christ had to come and die, was in order to uphold the validity of the law, was in order to fulfill the penalty required by the law. In other words, that Christ's sacrifice was law-oriented.

But as I have said repeatedly, Christ did not die for the law. Jesus came to defend God's righteousness and God's name and God's government, not to make a statement about a set of basic rules, this is a distortion of the truth and it results in a defacing of the gospel. This is why the truth has to be repeated in spite of the furious opposition which always arises when we emphasize that it is all about Christ and not about the law. The law is not, and was never the issue. This idea which places the law at the center, stems from the misconception that from the beginning, the issue was a broken law. The idea is that the law is the central reality in the universe and so, when it was broken, all the efforts in the universe had to be exercised to exalt it and to repair the damage done to the law.

This is a wrong paradigm, but it is the prevailing framework which lies at the foundation of the faith of many, and it forms the basis of serious false ideas.

The issue from the beginning was not a broken law, but a broken relationship, this is what needed to be fixed. God's children had turned against him, rejected him and he needed to find a way to

fix the separation that existed. The law was only a means of showing that there was an issue, it was only a way of revealing that something was wrong with the relationship. The broken law was not the cause of the broken relationship and that broken relationship could not be repaired by any plan which focused the law. This is easily understood when we realize that before Adam or Eve took the fruit, they first of all stopped trusting God. The relationship of love and trust was broken in their minds and spirits. The broken law was ONLY a demonstration of what had already happened.

If a broken law was the issue then it was easy to fix. All God had to do was replace the fruit and warn Adam and Eve never to touch it again - as simply as that - Problem solved!! But we know it was not so simple because the law was NOT the issue, it was the broken relationship that was the problem.

If Adam and Eve had decided to take the fruit, but just as they were about to take it, God appeared and they changed their minds, would there have been a problem? Would the issue of sin not have been an issue at that point when in their minds and hearts they had stopped trusting God? The answer is obvious; long before one person betrays another, the evil attitude which leads to the betrayal already began in the person's heart. Actions are only the fruit of what has already taken place in the heart of a person. It was the same with Adam and Eve, the act of taking the fruit, thus breaking the rule, was a minor issue, the really harmful thing was the distrust of God which had arisen in their hearts.

Yet our religion has turned things upside down and placed the law at the center of everything so that even Jesus came to uphold the law in our thinking. So we think that the issue centers around man, and man's abilities to keep the law, rather than on God's great love

and sacrifice in working out a way for the broken relationship to be repaired. That way was to reunite God and man in the person of God's son, and to adopt us into his family by giving us his own life. There can never be any way of reconciliation more complete and perfect than this. Becoming a part of a family is the greatest form of reconciliation that can ever exist.

It was never about the law. It is true that under the typical system of the Old Covenant, conformity to ten rules represented righteousness, but we should understand that it was only *a representation*. In the new covenant, the observance of ten rules is not righteousness at all, it is only a demonstration of basic morality which most church people practice. The righteousness of the new covenant is the reality of God living inside his people and manifesting his own glorious life in them, in a demonstration far higher than anything demanded by the ten commandments.

Now we do walk in harmony with the law, but this is only one incidental fruit of the new identity that we now possess. What we were given is a divine identity so that we now operate as God operates, as sons of the living God. If we keep the law, it is because God keeps the law. Yet it is absurd to say God keeps the law, because this suggests that God is accountable to the law and must conform to it. We know that God is author and Lord of the law and that the law is simply a limited expression of what God is. The law conforms to God, God does not conform to the law. God is the reality while the law is a limited expression of the reality. The original does not keep the expression, it is the other way around. It is the same with those who share the life of God in Christ.

This is the new covenant between God and his people.



Do Works Justify?

Recently I criticized the use of a certain word by James, in his epistle addressed to the 12 tribes. In chapter 2 of this epistle James writes:

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. (Jas 2:24)

I stated that when James used the word, "justified," he chose a wrong word and stated that this faulty word has resulted in false conclusions about justification. Works have nothing to do with how we are justified before God and this directly contradicts what Paul says in Romans 3:20:

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Rom 3:20)

The fact that I dared to criticize the use of this word by James, caused a storm of protest on Facebook, and among other things it was said that "my hero" Paul, said exactly the same thing as James did in Romans 2:13, when he wrote,

"(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom 2:13)

I completely disagree with this assertion. Paul does not agree with James on this issue of justification and this verse in Romans 2 is certainly not an indication that he believed in being justified by doing the law. This is another example of the way people read the Bible without understanding, looking at verses in isolation, but failing to understand the broader context of what is being discussed. People fall into this trap especially when reading the writings of Paul.

Romans chapters 1-3 are part of one extended argument where Paul is trying to prove that every single person in the world is in need of salvation. If you miss this overall picture you will mess up what Paul is saying pretty badly as most people are doing.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul demonstrates what everybody already knows, that is, that the Gentiles are great sinners. He mentions their rejection of God, even though they are able to see evidence of his existence in the things that are created, and he says that as a consequence, they embrace homosexual practices along with other depraved behaviors. He concludes by saying that the judgment of God is that those who practice such things are worthy of death.

Then in chapters 2 and 3 Paul sets out to prove something else which is more difficult to establish, and that is, that the Jews are also EQUALLY guilty, and equally in need of salvation. This part of Paul's letter is addressed to Jews and his arguments are based on the beliefs of the Jews in relation to their attitude to the law and their understanding of it. It takes careful reading to follow Paul's line of reasoning and as I said, most people only read verses, they don't see the connection between thoughts, ideas and the illustrations used. This limited approach contributes to massive misunderstanding of Paul's writings.

1. First of all, Paul says that having the law means nothing if those who have it do not keep it. (Rom 2:25)

2. Then he shows that the Jews do not keep the law and that therefore they are condemned by the law itself (Rom 2:17-23; Rom 3:9-20).

3. He reminds them that it is not those who hear the law who will be justified, but those who do the law

"(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom 2:13)

Is Paul here teaching justification by law-keeping? No, Paul does not contradict himself. What he is doing is using the **Jews' understanding** of justification, he is actually making reference to something said in the law, which formed the basis of the Jews' understanding of salvation.

"Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD." (Lev 18:5)

This is what the law teaches, that if a man DOES what the law says, he will live. The law teaches acceptance, or justification on the basis of what we **do**. Paul comments on the same verse in Galatians chapter 3 where he says,

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." (Gal 3:11-12)

The law does not teach faith, it teaches DOING, so Paul says, it is NOT OF FAITH. But how do the just (those who are justified) live? "The just shall live by faith," not by doing. This is Paul's argument and he is not saying anything different in Romans 2:13.

In essence, Paul is saying, "the law which you base your entire religion on, says that those who do it, will live, will be justified, will be accepted by God, but NONE of you actually keep the law, you only possess it in writing. Therefore, you are in the SAME boat as the gentiles, because having the law is not what matters, it is DOING it that counts."

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, (Rom 2:17)

Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? (Rom 2:22)

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? (Rom 2:3)

Careful examination demonstrates that Paul does NOT teach justification by works.



The Gospel of The Kingdom

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to when he spoke about the kingdom of God. Let us look at his words in John chapter 7:

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39)

This is another of those passages in the Bible which on the surface is not easy to understand. We are told here the Holy Spirit had not yet been given; Jesus was promising an experience to his disciples which they did not yet possess and this was the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. Now let us remember that at the time when Jesus made this statement, he had already given his disciples the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out devils. The Holy Spirit was already working mightily through the disciples and yet we are told that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given! In other words, although the power of the Holy Spirit was working mightily through these disciples, it was not the same as the experience they would have when the Holy Spirit was given! At that time they would have rivers of living water flowing from their bellies, but they did not yet have this experience in spite of the fact that the Holy Spirit was already working mightily through them.

So it is clear that when Jesus spoke about the coming of the Holy Spirit, he was not speaking only of the power of the spirit working in people, the power which was working in his disciples and which had been working in the great prophets of former times. No, when he

spoke of this river of living water flowing from the belly of his people, he was talking about something, much greater. Something that would make the least of those who experienced it, greater than all who had ever lived before!

LIFE ITSELF

Of course, the question will be asked, “what can be greater than the power of the Holy Spirit?” To answer this question, let us look at something that Jesus said in John chapter 10:

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Why would Jesus come to give his people life if they already had life before he came? Jesus came to give life by introducing an experience with the Holy Spirit which was brand-new, something which had never existed before in the history of the earth, something which had not been experienced by the great men of former ages. During the time of the law and the prophets the presence of the Holy Spirit among God’s people was not the same as it was after Jesus came. In John 14:19, in speaking of the coming of the comforter, Jesus said,

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John 14:19,20)

Let us take careful note of what Jesus said here: at the time when he was speaking these words, according to Jesus, the disciples did not yet have life! As far as the life which he had come to give was concerned, they did not yet possess it! There is a sense in which they were not alive, there is a sense in which none of God’s people had yet obtained life and this included all who ever lived before Jesus came! When Jesus said, “I am come that they may have life,” he is speaking of bringing life to the human race, something that the human race did not yet possess. Now he referred to the time when he would return as a comforter and he said

of that time, “because I live you shall live also.” He explained what he was speaking about in verse 17.

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:17)

NEVER BEFORE AVAILABLE

Earlier we saw that Jesus said that the kingdom of God is “within you.” (Luke 17:21). Now he talks about the coming of the holy spirit (Comforter) which was not yet given, and he says, “at that day, this comforter who is now with you, shall be **in you**.” In other words, the coming of the Comforter was the coming of kingdom of God **inside** of his people. At the moment the kingdom was with them, or among them in the person of Jesus, but at that day when he came to live within, that is where the kingdom would be.

During Old Testament time there were people who received and experienced the inspiration and power of the holy spirit, but it is very important to understand that the power of the holy spirit is not the same as the saving life of Jesus Christ, it is not the same as the Comforter which came at Pentecost. Remember the statement, “the holy ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” In fact, this comforter did not even exist before Jesus came as a man! What I mean is, it was necessary that a divine person should become a human being, to pass through the human experience, to conquer sin as a human being, to conquer Satan and to even conquer death! Until this happened no human being could have salvation, because the salvation of humanity was not a reality until Jesus had passed through all these things.

In Hebrews 5:7-9, we read:

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by

the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (Heb 5:7-9)

Can we see what is being said in these verses? Jesus was made perfect by the things which he suffered and yet, Jesus was morally perfect from the day he was born. This word “perfect” in this context, does not refer to moral perfection, but to being perfect as our Saviour – being perfectly qualified to give us salvation. “Being made perfect,” he became the author of our salvation. Before passing through that perfecting experience, Jesus was not qualified to save anyone, he was not perfect, or qualified to be our Savior. So in terms of actually possessing salvation, nobody had it before Jesus was perfected through the things which he suffered. This is why we see the word, “NOW,” used in Revelation 12:10 when the coming of salvation is described. After his resurrection Jesus was taken up to heaven, to the throne of God, and according to the book of Revelation (and other places), at that time, Satan was permanently thrown out of heaven.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (Rev 12:10)

Upon his return to heaven he was glorified with the power and glory of the Father (John 17:5) as the Father gave him the holy spirit in unlimited measure. The spirit of the Father was united with the spirit of Christ in such a way that both the Father and the Son come to us as one spirit, or through the conduit of the same one spirit (Eph 2:18). Jesus explained it in this way:

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:22-23)

So the presence of the holy spirit is the presence of BOTH the Father and the Son. Truly, it is the Father and the Son dwelling within those who receive the holy spirit. This is what constitutes the practical experience of salvation, it is the almighty power of God, plus the victorious life of Jesus Christ, imparted to the believer to make him into a new creation, inheriting Jesus’ life of victory over sin and Satan. In order to understand the full implications of what Jesus did, we must realize that the spirit of God by itself, cannot save humanity. The life of God alone cannot accomplish man’s salvation, there is an essential component that must be added and this is a life which has faced and defeated, the great elements of sin which dominate humanity. These are, sin’s power (fallen human nature), sin’s consequence (death) and sin’s author (Satan). God did not experience these things and therefore, the spirit of God cannot save by itself. It must be accompanied by the life (the spirit) of Christ who himself did experience these things and now possesses these qualities to impart to us, thereby delivering us from the dominion of sin. God’s spirit can give us power, but not life. It is the life of Christ, shared with us which gives us life, therefore, both these things are combined together, and come to us as the Comforter.

But somebody will say that God can do anything he chooses in any way he chooses and that it is wrong to say that God could not save man without Jesus Christ. Some will object by saying that we are limiting God. It is true that none of us can say what God can, or cannot do, but what we do know is that God works in the best possible way and by the best possible method. In light of the issues involved in the conflict with Satan, in light of his wisdom and justice, in light of the dilemma of the human race, God designed a perfect plan to save humanity, and this plan involved the life, death and resurrection of his Son. It was not an arbitrary or optional plan, it was the perfect plan to fulfill all the necessary requirements to accomplish that salvation. There are laws

and principles which God works by, laws of fairplay and justice and God works within the framework of those laws in accomplishing the salvation of mankind. From this perspective, no other method could have worked and therefore, from this perspective, only the life of Christ can save men. This is what the plan involved and there is no alternative method. Without the saving life of Christ, there was no salvation provided and so, nobody could have experienced salvation, could have received life, before Jesus passed through the incarnation and provided this life of victory for us. Therefore the apostle Paul tells us,

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. (1Cor 15:17)

MOSES, ENOCH AND ELIJAH

Now this life of Jesus Christ is not just the kingdom of God in terms of our salvation, but it is also the kingdom of God in terms of strength and power. Revelation 12:10 says that salvation and strength came “NOW,” that is, at the point when Jesus went back to heaven and cast Satan out. There was no salvation before that. Still, we have the record that people like Enoch and Elijah were taken out of the world and not permitted to come under the power of death, how could this be if they had not received salvation? We have two things clearly taught by the Bible, one is that salvation only came with the arrival of Jesus Christ; the other is the reality that the Bible says there were some people before Christ who were taken away without seeing death. How do we reconcile these two facts?

What we have to conclude is that people such as Enoch and Elijah were given long life, not eternal life. They were given an extended existence, not permitted to die, but we should understand that long life is not the same as eternal life. Eternal life is a quality of existence, not an extension of existence. If Christ had failed in accomplishing our salvation, these men would have had to die

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Liberated From Legalism

To those still in Laodicea

One of the passages which is widely misunderstood and misused, is Romans 7:14-20.

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For 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 which 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 7:14-20)

What exactly is the apostle Paul saying in Romans chapter 7? There can be no question that the person Paul describes in this passage is in a most miserable condition. He declares that he is carnal (having a strong internal inclination to sin), that he is in fact, a slave to sin and that he is incapable of doing the right things. Those who have accepted the idea that the Christian life is a constant struggle with sin, with frequent defeats, love to quote this passage. In their understanding Paul is here speaking of his own experience as a Christian and is describing the normal Christian life in this passage - a life where sin constantly dominates and defeats the Christian.

Is this interpretation correct? Is Paul saying, "I am a wretched man, a slave to sin, living under continual defeat" - in a condition where whenever he tries to do good, he constantly finds himself doing evil? This unquestionably is the condition of the man described here, in Romans chapter 7. It is incredible to me that anybody who understands the victory which is in Jesus Christ could believe that this refers to the condition

of a surrendered Christian! This has nothing to do with whether or not a person is still living in physical flesh, or whether or not a person is still capable of committing acts of transgression. Paul is describing a person whose habitual lifestyle is to transgress the law!

Each time I look at this passage I am mystified and disturbed that any Christian should confess that this is his condition. I will never have such a defeated lifestyle imposed on me and I utterly reject that false suggestion! Why do they so completely ignore what Paul says in Romans chapter 8? Why do they divorce it from the statements made in chapter 7? I encourage all wretched, miserable, defeated Christians who are reading this article to carefully consider the following statements by the apostle Paul and know that you can be delivered here and now from that wretched state.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (Rom 8:5-10)

I have been told that the reason why I take a different view of Paul's statement in Romans 7, is because I am an extremist, and that I need to take the "middle ground." In other words, to accept that the Christian life is not a life of victory over sin, but to embrace the teaching that constant defeat by sin, is normal to our experience. This supposed "middle ground" which makes salvation

so ambiguous and uncertain that people can feel no assurance of victory is plainly of the devil. This is why many can never rise above the label and the mindset of "Laodicea." It is a people who are constantly doomed to identify themselves as being, "wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked," constantly repenting, endlessly bemoaning their miserable state and yet, by their very tragic theology, never seeing the possibility of rising above it! By their very definition they are doomed to be forever wretched and miserable, poor blind and naked. By the very condition that they embrace they confess that it is impossible for them to see or to be clothed!

A person is naked because he does not possess Christ's righteousness. Let me challenge you with a question: do you possess the righteousness of Christ? This is the solution to the nakedness of Laodicea! It is a solution to the wretched condition in which many love to confess themselves as being. Do you possess this righteousness? I cannot any longer refer to myself as being that "O wretched man!" Described by Paul in Romans 7. Why should I deny the grace of God? Why should I allow insipid false modesty to make me deny the truth that the salvation in Jesus Christ has delivered me from the law of sin and death? When a man has been delivered and he confesses that he still a slave he is a liar and he is dishonoring the one who has delivered him!

Some have tried to suggest that I am taking glory to myself because I no longer confess to being a wretched sinner. For some strange reason they have chosen to interpret this to mean that I am suggesting that by my own works I have become victorious over sin. This is a strange conclusion because there has not been even the slightest hint in anything I have suggested which should have led to that conclusion. This conclusion is the consequence of a bias and

a mindset which predisposes them to object to everything which does not fit into their paradigm.

I confess that I am free to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and my father God! Where have I stated that this is due to my effort, to my law keeping or to my ability? I have endeavored to glorify and to give thanks to Jesus for what I am! In truth and in fact, it is those who are objecting who are bringing dishonor to the Lord because they are measuring people by their performance rather than viewing them through the lens of what God has done in Jesus Christ! But this is natural because legalism can never accept victory! When measured by the law who can say I am righteous? None of us, not a single one! But with their law-oriented view of salvation there never is a single day that they can ever say, "I have been victorious"! This is not possible when a person measures himself by his deeds because with the law-focused view of righteousness, it is a sin to forget, It is a sin to lick one's fingers between meals, it is a sin to raise your voice, it is a sin if your mind drifts to an inappropriate thought! You can never fulfil all the specifications and so until the Lord returns, you are doomed to the, "O wretched man that I am" religion.

How can you ever escape Laodicea if you perpetually confess that you are Laodicea? When will the repenting end and the victory be claimed? The answer is, never! This twisted way of thinking is so self-destructive that if those who embrace it ever profess to have been delivered from their blindness, their nakedness, their wretched state, then they will naturally begin to condemn themselves for daring to think that they can be victorious!

We view the world through two different eyes and not only do we not agree, we cannot agree. I don't read the Bible through the eyes and the theology of any particular denomination - not any more. For me the greatest question is no longer what Jones and Waggoner said, or even what statements Ellen White made on any particular issue. I

am reading the Bible and taking what I see there as the truth. This is what is defining my thinking and liberating me from legalism, this is what is filling me with the joy of salvation, and blowing my mind with an appreciation of the amazing grace of God! Praise God, I can no longer be bound to dismal, dis-

couraging, defeated religion. I'm truly sorry that so many of us walk around with the burden of sin strapped to our backs when Christ and liberation are so close at hand.



The Gospel of The Kingdom

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because they were living, as it were, on borrowed time, in a temporary existence. Paul refers to the experience of Moses, Enoch and Elijah in Hebrews 11, and says,

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Heb 11:39-40)

Moses, Enoch and Elijah had to wait on the perfecting experience. They were not made perfect before the rest of us. It was the offering of Jesus Christ which made that perfecting experience become a reality for them.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Heb 10:14)

THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM

Jesus brought us salvation, but he brought us more. Along with salvation he brought us the power of the kingdom. Jesus promised that his people would receive power, he said that certain miraculous signs would follow those who believe. They would heal the sick, cast out devils, cleanse lepers and raise the dead. These miraculous abilities are the legitimate gifts given to those who are a part of his kingdom. It is Christ himself who lives in his people and the power of Jesus is not limited. He is just as mighty and just as present to do these mighty works as when he walked here in the flesh two thousand years ago. We have lived in darkness, we have struggled because we have had a prob-

lem in experiencing and exercising faith, but the more we understand these truths and feed on them, the more our faith will continue to grow.

In the very near future everything that the apostles did in terms of mighty, miracles will be repeated by those who are truly God's people, but this will not be because God chooses to do something new. When the kingdom of God came two thousand years ago, salvation came to God's people, but not salvation only, strength and power also came. This is the truth, but today we struggle against the darkness and impotence of two thousand years and it is difficult for us to step into that kind of faith. Yet I believe God is taking us there and it is just a matter of time, as we continue to walk in the light that he shines on our pathway. He is educating us, opening up our understanding, and this is a prelude to what is about to happen.

This truth about the kingdom is intrinsically tied in with some of the great truths which we have come to understand: the truth about God, the truth about the baptism of the holy spirit, the truth of righteousness by faith. All these things are inextricably linked to each other and Jesus gave it to us in one package when he said, "this gospel of the kingdom." This is what is to be preached in all the world and really, there is no other message, everything else is just a distraction. Let us be sure that we are involved in the message that will triumph.



Cataracts

Lenworth Frankson



A cataract is a clouding of the normally clear lens of your eye. The lens is one of the body's most solid tissues, being approximately 36% solid. It is composed of mostly proteins and some carbohydrate and polyunsaturated fatty acids. The eye is connected to the brain and the cardiovascular and digestive systems and its proper functioning is dependent on good nutrition, liver function, circulation, and breathing.

Cataracts are the world's leading cause of blindness, accounting for about 42% of all cases of blindness. In the United States, most cataracts are age-related and affect more than half of all Americans older than 65 to some degree. Knowing what we can do and applying this knowledge to reduce the risk of cataract formation is critical for good vision as we age.

For people who have cataracts, seeing through cloudy lenses is a bit like looking through a frosty or fogged-up window. Clouded vision caused by cataracts can make it more difficult to read, drive a car (especially at night) or see the expression on a friend's face. Most cataracts develop slowly hardly disturbing your eyesight during the early stages. However, with time, cataracts will eventually interfere with your vision.

At first, stronger lighting and eyeglasses can help you deal with cataracts. But if impaired vision interferes with your usual activities, you might need cataract surgery. Fortunately, cataract surgery is generally a safe, effective procedure.

SYMPTOMS OF CATARACTS

Cataracts range in terms of severity,

and the correct treatment depends on the degree of progression and type of cataracts you have. Early cataract detection signs include the following:

Cloudy Vision – One of the most obvious signs of early-stage cataracts is the appearance of noticeable fuzzy spots in your field of vision. These spots typically start out as fairly small abnormalities, but over time they will worsen, making daily activities harder than they were before. If you experience sudden and persistent cloudy vision, see an eye doctor as soon as possible before your vision gets any worse.

Difficulty Seeing at Night – Patients with early-stage cataracts also report gradual worsening of nighttime vision. Cataracts often cause the vision to darken or dim, and may also lead to slight tinges of brown or yellow. These early changes may not be noticeable during the day when there's enough light to compensate for dimming vision, but they can be immediately noticeable at night.

Increased Light Sensitivity – For people with emerging cataracts issues, discomfort with bright lights will become increasingly noticeable and problematic. Consult your eye doctor if bright lights cause you to squint or close your eyes, or if you develop sudden headaches from flashes of bright light.

Appearance of Halos and Glare – As the eye lens hardens and becomes cloudy, cataract sufferers may notice the appearance of halos and glare in their field of vision. Light passing through cataracts is diffracted, causing glare and ringlets around bright sources of light. These may be difficult to notice during the day, but can be immediately noticeable at night.

Eye Examination Results – In the earliest stages of cataracts, a person may have difficulty noticing changes to their vision. That's why regular eye exami-

nations are strongly recommended for older adults. Ophthalmologists can detect the presence of cataracts before sufferers report any noticeable vision problems.

HOW A CATARACT FORMS

The lens, where cataracts form, is positioned behind the colored part of your eye (iris). The lens focuses light that passes into your eye, producing clear, sharp images on the retina (the light-sensitive membrane in the eye that function like the film in a camera)

As you age, the lenses in your eyes become less flexible, less transparent and thicker. Age-related and other medical conditions cause tissues within the lens to break down and clump together, clouding small areas within the lens. As the cataract continues to develop, the clouding becomes denser and involves a bigger part of the lens. Cataracts generally develop in both eyes, but not evenly. The cataract in one eye may be more advanced than the other, causing a difference in vision between eyes.

CATARACT TYPES

Nuclear Cataracts - cataracts affecting the center of the lens

A nuclear cataract may at first cause more nearsightedness or even a temporary improvement in your reading vision. But with time, the lens gradually turns more densely yellow and further clouds your vision. As the cataract slowly progresses, the lens may even turn brown. Advanced yellowing or browning of the lens can lead to difficulty distinguishing between shades of color.

Cortical cataracts - cataracts that affect the edges of the lens

A cortical cataract begins as whitish, wedge-shaped opacities or streaks on the outer edge of the lens cortex. As it slowly progresses, the streaks extend to the center and interfere with light

passing through the center of the lens.

Posterior subcapsular cataracts- Cataracts that affect the back of the lens

A posterior cataract starts as a small, opaque area that usually forms near the back of the lens, right in the path of light. A posterior subcapsular cataract often interferes with your reading vision, reduces your vision in bright light, and causes glare or halos around lights at night. It is called “subcapsular” because it forms beneath the lens capsule, which is a small sac or membrane, that encloses the lens and holds it in place. These types of cataracts tend to progress faster than other types do.

Congenital cataracts- Cataracts you're born with

Some people are born with cataracts or develop them during childhood. These cataracts may be genetic, or associated with an infection inside the womb or trauma.

REDUCING THE RISK

UV Sunglasses:

Increased solar exposure and high altitudes have long been known to increase the frequency of cataracts. UV light, especially in the presence of oxygen, contributes strongly to the damage of the lens protein, which results in cataract formation. Beachgoers and sunlamp users should always wear adequate eye protection. Parents should encourage children, including infants to wear sunglasses and other forms of eye protection.

UVA and UVB light make up harmful radiation and the long-term effects create toxic radiation. The UVA is generally absorbed by the lens. However, overexposure to it has been linked to the development of certain types of cataracts. UVA rays may also play a role in development of macular degeneration. UVB is more damaging but is usually absorbed by the cornea, although not entirely.

Smoking:

Smoking has a direct toxic effect on the lens of the eyes. Health studies have

shown that smoking significantly increases the formation of cataracts, with twice the incidence in one study and two-thirds more cataracts operation in the women who smoked.

Alcohol:

Alcohol consumption slightly increases the risk of cataract, and the more you drink, the greater the risk. Swedish researchers found that women who had one or more alcoholic drinks per day were about 11% more likely than non-drinkers to need cataract surgery, and they needed surgery about two years earlier

Lack of Exercise:

Cardiovascular exercises such as aerobics will lower the pressure in your eyes and helps to keep the retinal cells protected. Cardio exercise also increases the flow of blood to the optic nerve and the retina. Research also found that regular exercise four times a week improved aqueous flow, which is important to the health of the lens of the eyes as well.

Overweight:

Obesity has been associated with increased incidence of cataract formation. People over age 65 who were treated for hypertension had a higher incidence of posterior cataract than patients with normal blood pressure. Also, a higher incidence of cataract surgery was found in patients with a history of angina and heart-related problems.

Vitamin C:

Citrus fruits and many other fruits and vegetables contain high levels of ascorbic acid, which is a major antioxidant. The lens and aqueous humor concentrate ascorbic acid in amounts more than 10 times that found in human plasma. Ascorbate is richer in the cortical fibers than in the older, nuclear fibers. Higher blood levels of vitamin C appears to give some protection against cataract. Persons with higher than average vitamin C intake appear to have a decreased risk of nuclear cataract and those younger than 60 have a decreased risk of cortical cataract.

Lack of sleep:

Getting adequate sleep every night is vital to our overall health. Our eyes are no exception to this fact because darkness is the time when the eyes, get a chance to rest and replenish. The lens and the structures within the eyeball are bombarded by light, with the formation of free radicals, all day. Sleep provides an opportunity for the liver and circulation to replenish the necessary antioxidants and minerals to the lens and other tissues relating to the eyes.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A plays a crucial role by maintaining a clear cornea, the outside covering of your eye. This vitamin is also a component of a protein in your eyes that allows you to see in low light conditions. Vitamin A deficiency is rare in developed countries, but if unaddressed can lead to a serious condition called xerophthalmia. Xerophthalmia is a progressive eye disease, which begins with night blindness. If vitamin A deficiency continues, your tear ducts and eyes can dry out. Eventually, your cornea softens, resulting in irreversible blindness.

Some studies suggest that diets high in vitamin A may be associated with a reduced risk of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration (Macular Degeneration is caused by the deterioration of the central portion of the retina, the inside back layer of the eye that records the images we see and sends them via the optic nerve from the eye to the brain). Vitamin-A-rich foods are recommended over supplements. Sweet potatoes are an excellent source, as are leafy green vegetables, pumpkins and bell peppers.

Sulfur-Containing Foods:

Glutathione is a major antioxidant in the lens and is found in such foods as onions, garlic, avocados, cruciferous vegetables, asparagus, and watermelon. Glutathione along with other booster compounds scavenge free radicals. In studies from the late 1960s, extracted mature cataracts were demonstrated to contain very low levels of glutathione

and ascorbic acid. This finding was considered to represent a secondary aspect of cataract formation.

Lutein-Containing Foods:

Spinach, kale, collard greens, guava and even corn and eggs contain lutein, which has been found to be protective against cataract formation. Persons who consume high levels of dark green leafy vegetables and whose serum lutein levels are high, have a lower risk of cataract formation. In two prominent health studies, cataract was associated with lower intake of foods such as spinach, which is rich in Lutein and Zeaxanthin rather than beta-carotene.

Ageing:

As we age the occurrence of cataract rises every decade past the age of 45. For this and other reasons it is important to get your eyes screened and examined at least once a year. Several studies have indicated that visual disability is one of the risk factors for hip fracture.

The loss of depth perception makes people vulnerable to falls because they assume that they can see well with one eye yet they may miscalculate steps and distances.

Sugar:

Foods high in carbohydrates, when eaten, breaks down into sugar in the bloodstream. However, when carbohydrates are eaten in the right amounts and come from unprocessed foods (fruits, veggies and beans), just the right amount of insulin is released into the blood. If too much carbohydrate or sugar is consumed, the body releases too much insulin. Excess sugar and insulin cause inflammation and are very damaging to blood vessels, including the tiny blood vessels in our eyes. The lens in the eye continually breaks down and regenerates but over time its ability to do so diminishes. High blood sugars can lead to swelling within the lens, creating bubble-like pockets known as

vacuoles. Surgery is often the common solution for people with advanced cataracts. However, according to Dr. Richard Bernstein, author of "Dr. Bernstein's Diabetes Solution," many of his diabetic clients with cataracts have improved their eyesight simply by eating a low-carbohydrate diet that results in normal blood sugar levels.

Maybe the words of Jesus could be applied to this physical affliction, even though he had a spiritual lesson in mind when he spoke them:

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23 22)



Open Face

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