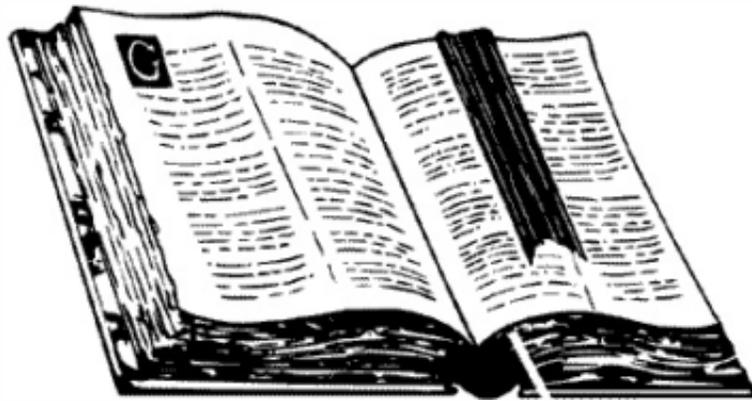


Properly Understanding the Position of the Old Testament



Earl R. Borders

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Chapter 1

The Position of the Patriarchs

Hebrews 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

In this text the sacred writer set forth a very vivid contrast, drawing a definite distinction between the Old Testament economy and the New Testament economy. In Hebrews 12:18-21 the writer referred to the events that occurred on Mount Sinai, which are recorded in Exodus, Chapter 19. In Hebrews 12:24 we are taken back even further to the account of Abel, a member of the first family shortly after the dawn of Creation, and, consequently, to the early era of time known as the patriarchal era. This period of time is contrasted in verse 24, where it speaks of the new covenant. It says, "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant . . ." Here is a contrast between the Old Testament dispensation and the new covenant and its realities related in verses 22-24.

Sadly, there is much confusion surrounding the position of the Old Testament economy. There are many questions that arise concerning that period of time and the brethren who occupied it. When we begin to give consideration to the Old Testament, many questions loom to mind, questions such as: What type of experience did the Old Testament brethren have? Did they have the same experience that we have in this New Testament dispensation? Was it available then? If not, what was available in their day? What position do they hold in relation to the kingdom, or the church? What work did Christ do for the Old Testament brethren? Was deliverance available? Were they able to live free from sin?

These are very valid questions, but unfortunately, they are questions that have given rise to much confusion. We must ever remember what the Apostle Paul penned in 1 Corinthians 14:33. He wrote, "For God is not the author of confusion . . ." God never ordained that His Word be used to foster confusion. If we will, as 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," His Spirit will reveal how that we may rightly divide the "word of truth," and this will clear away the confusion that entertains the minds of men.

The only way to clear away confusion is to do as the Prophet Isaiah clearly told us in Isaiah 28:10. He said, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Isaiah let us know that when we lay line upon line and precept upon precept, the scheme of truth that runs harmoniously through the Scriptures will drive away confusion. When we see truth in prophecy, it will be the same truth reiterated in Gospel and spoken of in the Revelation. When we lay line upon line, we will find that the Scriptures will mate up. They will not be contradictory.

In Isaiah 34:16 the Prophet enjoined us to "seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them." When we study to show ourselves approved unto God, we are studying with the desire to know the truth. When we study in this way, God will mate the Scriptures and bring line to line and precept to precept, bringing the truth together in a clear and cohesive way that will remove all confusion. For every dark saying incorporated in God's eternal Word, there is another Scripture that will bring light to that Scripture. It will enlighten it, and they will mate up. It is like pieces of a puzzle. When they are put together, you can get a more complete and clearer picture.

God is not the author of confusion. He desires for us to know and understand the truths of His Word. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." What will truth free us from? It does not free us from sin. First John 1:7 lets us know that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Truth clears away falsity, confusion, and error. ". . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." When Jesus prayed that high priestly prayer in John 17:17, He said, "Thy word is truth." Truth is God's eternal Word. When God's Word is studied with an honest heart and one has a desire to know the truth, then the Spirit will move on the scene and confusion will be dispelled.

As we begin this series of study, first of all, it is needful that we understand some common terminology. What does the term

the *Old Testament economy* mean? What does the word *economy* mean when it is used in this manner? According to *Merriam Webster's Third New International Unabridged Dictionary*, the word *economy* is defined as "God's plan or system for the government of the world, a special divine dispensation suited to the needs of a nation or a period." Therefore, when we speak of the *Old Testament economy*, we are speaking of God's system for government, or rule, during that special divine dispensation—the Old Testament era—suited to the needs of that period. When we speak of the *New Testament economy*, it is the same. We are speaking of God's system for rule suited to the needs of this particular period—the New Testament period of time.

The word *patriarchs* is a biblical term, while the word *economy* is essentially a theological term. We find the expression of *patriarchs* recorded four times in the Scriptures. The first place that it is recorded is in Acts 2:29. Peter, preaching on the Day of Pentecost, said, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David . . ." Peter referred to David as a *patriarch*.

We find the word employed again in Acts 7:8-9, which declares: "And he gave him [speaking of Abraham] the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him." The final place this word is employed is in Hebrews 7:4. Here the Hebrew writer penned, "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils."

What does the word *patriarchs* mean? In every one of these verses, it is the same Greek word **patriarches**, which comes from two Greek words: the word **patria**, which means "paternal descent"; and **archo**, which means "to be first in rank or power." This speaks predominantly of that era of time when the father, the head of the family, was not only the literal authority, but the spiritual authority as well. He was first in rank or power.

We see this vividly portrayed in the activities of the patriarch Job. We read in Job 1:4-5, speaking of Job's sons: "And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." Job assumed a patriarchal role; he became the spiritual leader of his family. He assumed that burden; he filled that role.

We read in verse 5 that Job "offered burnt offerings." We know that this setting was the patriarchal era, which predated the legal era, because under the Mosaic law only the priests could offer a burnt offering. Chronologically, the Book of Job is the oldest book of the Bible. It was written in the proximity of 2058 B.C. Historians tell us that Job was a contemporary of and lived in the same era as the patriarch Abraham. The Book of Job was the first biblical book written. It was written before Genesis, Exodus, or any other of the Pentateuch (the books of Moses).

Job 1:5 tells us that Job "rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings." If you read Leviticus, Chapter 6, you will find that under the Mosaic law, Job would have been precluded from performing this role. Only those who were of the priesthood could perform that function. Leviticus 6:8-10 says: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Command Aaron [Aaron was the high priest] and his sons [the priests], saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar." Who performed this function? Verse 10 said it was "the priest." So we see that under the Levitical law, it was a function that could only be exercised by the priesthood.

As a matter of fact, this was such a stringently held requirement that when King Saul presumed to assume this role and fulfill this office, Samuel was stirred. He pronounced judgment on Saul, and the kingdom was rent from him (1 Samuel 13:9-11).

Saul's excuse was, "Because I saw the people." The enemy will always attempt to have you put the blame somewhere else rather than assume personal responsibility. He laid the blame on the people, just as he did when he did not slay King Agag, the Amalekites, and the sheep and oxen. Yet, he came back and said, "I have performed the commandment of the LORD." To this Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (1 Samuel 15:13-14). Saul answered, "But the people . . ." Dear one, you had better get beyond people. You had better get beyond what people want and pay close attention to what God's Word says. Many times people will get you into trouble, but they will not get you out.

The first king of Israel was faulted for offering a burnt sacrifice and judgment was put on him and the kingdom was rent from him. We know that Job predated the Mosaic era, the time of the Levitical law, because he was not faulted for offering a burnt sacrifice. This was an era of time known as the patriarchal period of time, which predated the Mosaic, or Levitical, law.

Let us consider the position of the patriarchs. First we must be reminded of some basic truths. The Apostle Paul penned in Ephesians 4:4, "There is one body [it is singular and it is exclusive] . . ." In Colossians, Chapter 1, as well as Ephesians, Chapter 1, Paul clarified of what he was speaking. Early in the Ephesian epistle Paul wrote: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body . . ." (Ephesians 1:22-23). Christ's body is the

church, and both words—*body* and *church*—are used in the singular.

Colossians, Chapter 1, reiterates the same truth. The Colossian epistle is a companion to the Ephesian epistle. There are many common elements that unite these two writings. Colossians 1:18 reads, "And he is the head of the body, the church [both exclusive and singular—the body, the church]."

In our Scripture text the writer declared, "But ye are come [present tense; this epistle was penned in the proximity of A.D. 63-69, the middle of the first century] unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:22-24).

The Hebrew writer spoke in very descriptive terms. He gave several different, descriptive phrases here in this passage. If you will notice, he began a sentence in Hebrews 12:18, and that sentence was not concluded until verse 24, letting us know that we are seeing a common vein of truth throughout this text. He was speaking in continuity. Each of these verses is a part of a whole.

Verses 18-21 speak of Mount Sinai and what occurred under the old economy. Then, in verses 22-24 the writer shifted to "mount Sion" and to the new economy. He gave the following descriptive terms in verses 22-23:

- mount Sion
- the city of the living God
- the heavenly Jerusalem
- an innumerable company of angels
- the general assembly

All of these are very descriptive phrases describing various facets and attributes of the one and selfsame thing: "the church of the firstborn" (verse 23), or the church that the Firstborn (Jesus Christ) purchased. Romans 8:29, speaking of Christ, says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn" It is speaking of Christ. What church did the Firstborn purchase? Acts 20:28 reads, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he [who? Christ] hath purchased with his own blood." There is the church the Firstborn purchased: the Church of God.

When we come back to Hebrews, Chapter 12, and read the various terms employed in verses 22-23, we see that they are all just descriptive terms denoting various aspects and facets of the church that the Firstborn, Jesus Christ, purchased—the Church of God. This same manner of expression could be applied to descriptive terms about Christ. We could say Savior, Lord, and Shepherd. Other terms are found in Isaiah 9:6: "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Are all of these separate people? No, it is speaking of the one and selfsame Son, but it is describing different aspects, facts, and facets of His divinity.

The various descriptive expressions in Hebrews, Chapter 12, are different representations denoting different aspects or facets of the one and selfsame church. There is one particular phrase, or expression, in these verses that we need to give special consideration to in view of our study. Verse 23 refers to the church as the "general assembly." What does this mean? Remember, we are studying concerning the position of the patriarchs, properly understanding the position of the Old Testament and the Old Testament brethren.

The words *general assembly* are translated from the Greek word **paneguris**. It is a word that comes from two root Greek words: **pass** and **agora**. This word **paneguris** means "an assembly or a convocation of the *whole* people." This is the only place this expression is used in the entirety of the Scriptures. It is also the only place this particular Greek word appears. One writer, describing this word and this expression, said, "The festal *full assembly* such as were the Olympic Games." The allusion here was to a universal convocation or assembly of the best brought together from near and from far for a common purpose—those Olympic games.

The Olympic Games brought together the best athletes from near and from far. It joined men together who otherwise would have had no other common bond. The best and the most talented athletes were brought together in a common place for a common purpose: the Olympic contests.

Here we begin to get a portrait of the total composition of the church. This expression the *general assembly* is normally a noun, but here it is used as an adjective describing the composition of the church. This is a truth we need to understand. Just as there was a convocation, or a universal assembly, of the best brought together for those Olympic games, so the Apostle who penned the Hebrew epistle was portraying the church in just such a manner. It is a convocation and an assembly that brings mankind, who would not otherwise be together, together with a common purpose in a common place, and that place is the church.

This adjective describes the composition of the church. When we think of the *general assembly*, the first portion of this word—**pass**—means "all, any, every, the whole"; **agora**, the second portion of the word, means "to gather, as in a common place." Thus when the writer spoke of the general assembly, he was drawing a portrait in words of how that in the church God gathers together "all, any, every, the whole." He gathers them together in a common place for a common purpose. Where are *all* from

all ages—the patriarchs, the Old Testament brethren, the Apostles in the morning time, and the New Testament brethren—brought together? Look again at verse 23: "To the general assembly and *church* of the firstborn" That is where they are brought together.

In Ephesians 2:13-22 the Apostle penned: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he [who? Jesus Christ] is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

I realize that in this passage the Apostle Paul was speaking of the Gentiles and the Jewish nation, but the principle is the same. The Bible is a book of principles, and the underlying principle is the same. Verse 14 states, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one," and verse 15 says, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [or two] one new man" The church is what that "new man," or that body, is. Paul was speaking of the church, of how God abolished the middle wall of partition and made both Jew and Gentile one. He made of the twain, or of the two, one "new man"—one body, the body of Christ, the church of the Living God.

Verse 18 reads, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit" We both (Jew and Gentile) have access. Verse 20 declares, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." What is it built upon? Jesus Christ Himself. What are the Old and the New Testaments both plumbed to? They are plumbed to Jesus Christ; He is the chief cornerstone.

A contractor building a literal building will do all of his measurements, and then he will lay the cornerstone. After the cornerstone is laid, all the block is lined on both sides with that cornerstone. All of the building is plumbed right to that cornerstone. The Old Testament brethren and the New Testament brethren are all lined up and focalized on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the sure foundation (Isaiah 28:16). He is the tried stone, the chief cornerstone.

What does this composition make? This composition made "an holy temple," according to Ephesians 2:21. To understand what this temple is, go back to 2 Corinthians 6:16. It says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God." To whom was Paul writing? "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the *church of God*" (2 Corinthians 1:1). The temple of God is the Church of God. Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone. The temple is the church, but the whole building fitly framed together is plumbed right to Jesus Christ. He is the focal point, and without the work that was wrought by Jesus Christ, there would not be a glorious church of which to be a part.

Let us look a little closer at the term *general assembly* spoken of in our lesson text. Perhaps it is easier to think of it in this manner: our states have general assemblies, and they are composed of two chambers, the House and the Senate. When the House is in session, one may say the House is in session. But when the two chambers are brought together in a joint session, it is called the general assembly.

The church that verse 23 speaks of is also composed of two chambers: the Old and the New. Stephen, speaking of Moses, said in Acts 7:38, "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness." He referred to those in the wilderness as the church: "the church in the wilderness." The word *church* that Stephen used is the Greek word **ecclesia**. It is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 16:18, when He said, "I will build my church." It is also the same word used in Acts 20:28, which says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church [**ecclesia**] of God."

What was the position of the patriarchs? The Hebrew writer started with Abel, saying, "By faith Abel" (Hebrews 11:4). He started by going right back to the first family. Keep in mind that the Book of Hebrews was an epistle, or a letter. It was written in continuity; it was not written in chapters and verses. That did not occur until several centuries later when men broke it up into chapters and verses for ready reference's sake. In its original form, it was written as a letter in continuity.

Next, the Hebrew writer brought us right down through all the patriarchs (Hebrews, Chapter 11).

- Noah (verse 7)
- Abraham (verse 8)
- Isaac (verse 20)
- Jacob (verse 21)
- Joseph (verse 22)

After the patriarchs, he progressed onto the legal era in Hebrews 11:23 and spoke of Moses, that great lawgiver. Then, he wrote in Hebrews 11:39-40: "And these all [starting with the very first family in human history and coming all the way down through the annals of the Old Testament], having obtained a good report through faith, received *not* the promise: God having

provided some better thing for us [the brethren of the New Testament era], that they [the Old Testament brethren] without us [the brethren of the New Testament era] should not be made perfect." The Scripture is expressly clear. Verse 39 tells us they "received *not* the promise."

In reality, when our lesson text in Hebrews 12:23 speaks of the church, that church is the general assembly composed of the Old Testament brethren and the New Testament brethren. Look at Jesus' words in Matthew 8:11: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Where will ones sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? In the kingdom. Someone might say: "Well, that says the 'kingdom of heaven.' That is over in the eternal realm."

Let us read Luke's account: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob [the patriarchs], and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:28). Many people today want to make an artificial distinction between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God, but there is only one kingdom. How do we know there is only one kingdom? Matthew 4:23 tells us, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching *the* gospel of *the* kingdom." If there were more than one kingdom, there would have to be more than one Gospel, but it is "the gospel," singular, exclusive. There is only one Gospel and only one kingdom.

Look at the Apostle Paul's words in the Galatian letter. Galatians 1:6-7 states: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: [Someone might say, 'There it is; there is another gospel.' However, there is a colon at the end of verse 6. Read on.] Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert *the* gospel of Christ." Again, it is singular, exclusive. There is only one Gospel, and it is "*the* gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23). Galatians 1:8 says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." There is only one Gospel, because there is only one kingdom.

I realize that Matthew called it the Kingdom of Heaven, and Luke called it the Kingdom of God. It is both; it is God's kingdom, and it is Heaven on earth: "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). Some try to make an artificial distinction between the kingdom and the church, but look at Jesus' words in Matthew 16:18-19. He said: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [or that word is **petros**, which means 'a piece of rock, a small piece'], and upon this rock [this is not speaking of Peter; this is another Greek word, **petra**, which means 'a massive rock like Gibraltar'] I will build my church [the Greek word is **ecclesia**]; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom." Jesus said, "I will build my *church*," and "I will give unto thee the keys of the *kingdom*." Evidently, the kingdom and the church must be synonymous. Why would they need keys to a kingdom when Jesus was building a church? They are interchangeable terms.

All the way through verses 22-23 of our lesson text, the writer used different expressions denoting the church. In verse 28 he did not change the topic of address when he said, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom." The church and the kingdom are synonymous. The nearest you can come to making a distinction is that the kingdom speaks more to the individual reign of Christ in the heart and the church portrays the collective unit, or the collective aspect, when the saints are brought together. Yet, they are the one and selfsame thing.

Matthew 8:11 speaks of "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob [the patriarchs], *in* the kingdom of heaven." Luke 13:28 speaks of "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, *in* the kingdom of God." It is one kingdom.

Next, let us consider the economy of the Old Testament brethren. Let us view their dispensation. Hebrews 11:39-40 clearly says: "And these all [the Old Testament brethren] . . . received not the promise: . . . that they without us should not be made perfect." What does this word *perfect* mean? The word *perfect* in verse 40 is translated from the Greek word **teleioo**, and it means "to complete, accomplish, consummate, finish." This reveals that their state under the old economy was incomplete. They were not finished; they were not complete. God had not yet accomplished that which He desired; that could only be accomplished through Jesus Christ and His work on Calvary's tree.

Again, we read in Hebrews 11:40, ". . . they without us [the Old Testament brethren without the New Testament brethren] should not be made perfect [the Greek Word **teleioo**, which means 'to complete, accomplish, consummate, finish']." This reveals the state of the Old Testament brethren under the old economy. If the old economy was adequate, why did we need a new one? If the Old Testament was adequate, why did there need to be a New Testament? As Isaiah 1:18 tells us, "Let us reason together." Go back to our lesson text. Verse 23 says "the spirits of just men made perfect [the same Greek word, **teleioo**]." In other words, they are now made complete. They are now finished. The work is now accomplished.

The Old Testament brethren were incomplete until Jesus Christ came. They were *just* men: they were in a justified state. They were not regenerated as we are in our day, but they were justified. What does this word mean? *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* defines *justified* as "to judge, to declare, pronounce righteous; therefore acceptable." That is the rendering of the word *justified* that we find in Romans 4:2, which states, "For if Abraham were justified" The word *justification* is a legal declaration. It describes a condition where one may be guilty, but he is judged innocent due to the circumstances; his actions are justified and therefore acceptable.

For an example, let us say that someone breaks into your home. This man has a revolver. Your life is in peril, your home is in jeopardy, and your family's safety is at stake. The man aims the gun at you, threatening to kill you and your family, and you know that he means what he says. You begin to wrestle with him, taking the gun; and while you are wrestling with him,

the gun goes off and you shoot him and kill him. When all the facts and the circumstances are presented in a court of law, you are actually guilty. You took his life; you killed him. But the jury views the circumstances and acquit you, saying: "That was justifiable homicide. You are acquitted. You are justified. You may go free."

Those Old Testament brethren were guilty. They could not live victorious lives as you and I are privileged to live. But because of the circumstances of their age, because of what was available and not available in their era, their behavior was justified. It is a legal declaration. They were acquitted, or justified, in the eyes of God because of the circumstances or limitations of their era. Again, a legal declaration is where one is guilty, but he is judged innocent of his actions due to the circumstances. His actions were justified and therefore acceptable.

What made these Old Testament patriarchs acceptable? Hebrews 11:39 says, "And these all [the Old Testament brethren], having obtained a good report [how?] through faith, received not the promise." It was through faith that they were justified. They were guilty. Their actions warranted guilt. Many of their actions were wrong. How were they justified? Not by their actions, not by their deeds. They were actually justified, or put in a right standing, a legal declaration given, by their faith.

In Romans 4:3-5 we read: "For what saith the scripture [referring to Genesis 15:6]? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." These brethren were not righteous in the sense that we, who live in this New Testament era, are righteous. Through a real experience with Jesus Christ, a real experience of salvation, we have the indwelling Spirit of God, an abiding presence, that actually brings us the righteousness of Christ indwelling and abiding in our lives. They did not have that privilege. Christ was not an availability in that day.

Romans 4:5 tells us that Abraham's faith was "counted for righteousness." Verse 3 states, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." The Amplified Bible renders it in this manner: ". . . it was credited to his account as righteousness—right living and right standing with God." Verse 5 of the Amplified Bible says, ". . . Him Who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited to him as righteousness—the standing acceptable to God." The Amplified says, "It was credited to his account as righteousness," and the King James Version says, ". . . it was counted unto him."

It would be as if you owed a debt and you went to the proprietor and said: "I can't pay this. I have no means to absolve this debt, but I really would like to. As soon as I am able, I will take care of it. I really believe in my heart that one day there will be a provision made so that I can somehow pay this debt." The shopkeeper says: "If you believe that, that's good enough. I will just count it as though it were taken care of for now." And he adjusts the account. He will not call you or trouble you or send you past-due notices. Now the debt is still unpaid, but he accounted for it, or he deemed it as though it had been taken care of for the present time.

In Romans 4:22 we read, "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." The Diaglott says, "It was accounted to him." The interlinear lines in the Diaglott say "written but on account." In other words, this is an accounting technique. This is a credit without payment. This is just advancing the due date. It did not liquidate the debt, but it advanced the due date until Jesus Christ came. Jesus paid the debt that we could not pay. He absolved it; He liquidated it; He removed it as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12); He put it in the sea of forgetfulness, never to be remembered against us again (Micah 7:19).

Those brethren's righteousness was an *imputed* righteousness, not an *actual* righteousness. In Romans 4:3 the Apostle Paul was quoting Genesis 15:6. Let us look at it: "And he [speaking of Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." They were righteous. They were not regenerated, but they were in right standing. The word *righteous* actually means "in right standing."

Let us look at the patriarchs and see if the evidences of regeneration are apparent. Do we see a change in their natures? Some will present the argument that the Old Testament brethren had the same experience we have. Let us look at the Scripture and see if they had the evidences of regeneration. Genesis 6:9 tells us, "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations . . ." Concerning the thought that "Noah was a just man," one scholar said, "To be *just* is to be right in the point of law and thereby entitled to all of the blessings of the acquitted and justified."

The Bible tells us that Noah was a just man, or justified, and perfect in his generations. He walked acceptably in what was available in his day. What type of experience did he have? Did he have the same experience we have? First, let us look at his nature. After the Flood, Genesis 9:21 tells us that Noah "was drunken," and verse 22 says that his son "saw the nakedness."

Consider Lot after he came out of Sodom. Genesis 19:30-35 tells us that he committed incest with his two daughters. Yet, 2 Peter 2:7, referring to Lot, says "delivered *just* Lot." Here Lot is referred to as a justified man. In 2 Peter 2:8 Lot is spoken of as a "righteous man" with a "righteous soul."

What about Abraham? Genesis 16:3-4 states: "And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes."

Also, look at Genesis 12:11-13: "And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my

sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee." Here was willful deception. Abraham was reprov'd by Pharaoh in verse 18: "And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?"

Then, Abraham was willfully deceptive again. We read of it in Genesis 20:2, which says, "And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah." In these verses we read of Noah, Lot, and Abraham. Here are drunkenness, immodesty, incest, bigamy, and willful deception. It does not sound to me as if they had the experience that is available in this New Testament dispensation.

Second Peter 1:4 says, "Whereby are given unto us [the brethren of the New Testament dispensation] exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." It does not sound as if these patriarchs escaped the corruption. They got drunk; they committed incest, bigamy, and willful deception. Does this reflect being "partakers of the divine nature"? Certainly not, but notice that the words "that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" comes in conjunction with the "exceeding great and precious promises." Hebrews 11:39 tells us that "they received not the promises." So they did not receive the divine nature at that time either.

Hebrews 11:13 states, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." My friend, "being partakers of the divine nature" comes through being recipients of these "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4). If they did not receive the promise, they did not receive the divine nature. They were justified; they were righteous men by faith, because they looked forward to Him who was to come.

Again, the Old Testament brethren received not the promises. This New Testament experience of salvation was not available in their day. Hebrews 10:38 tells us that "the just shall live by faith." Faith in what? This experience was not available in their day. They walked in what was available. We read in Genesis 6:9, "He [Noah] was a just man and perfect in *his* generations." What was their faith in? Hebrews 10:37 says, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." As we look to the Second Advent, the principle is the same: they looked to the First Advent. When Paul preached to those in Ephesus who were followers of John the Baptizer, he said, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him *which should come after him*, that is, on Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4). They looked forward.

When John received a vision of the redeemed of all ages and he saw those four living creatures, he said that they were "full of eyes before and behind" (Revelation 4:6). They looked forward to Calvary, and we look back to Calvary; but the focal point of it all is Calvary and the work wrought by Jesus Christ. John wrote in Revelation 5:6, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." Where was the Lamb? He was right in the midst of those four beasts, or the Greek word is **zoon**, which means "living creature." Right in the midst of the redeemed of all ages was the "Lamb as it had been slain." Jesus Christ, in symbolic language, was in the midst. The Old Testament brethren looked before to Him; we look behind to Him. However, the focal point of all human history is the work wrought by Jesus Christ on Calvary.

Until Jesus Christ came, the patriarchs could not receive the promise. Without the New Testament brethren, they were imperfect, or incomplete. They were justified by faith. They looked forward to Him who was to come. When Christ went to Calvary, what happened to the position of the patriarchs? Go back to our text in Hebrews 12:23. It reads, ". . . the spirits of just men [or justified men were] made perfect [or complete]." Hebrews 10:14 tells us, "For by one offering he hath perfected [or completed—the same Greek word] for ever them that are sanctified [or set apart]." When the blood of Jesus was shed and the price was paid, He took those justified men and made them perfect. He completed their experience. He accomplished a work that took away their debt, took away their sin (Romans 3:25—"the remission of sins that are past"), and made them perfect and brought them right into the kingdom. He made them part of the general assembly, the church of the Living God.

Christ's atonement cleansed those justified men and made their spirits, or their spiritual work, complete. He purchased the church, Acts 20:28 tells us, "with his own blood"; and He made, as Ephesians 2:15 states, "of twain [or two] one new man." He made one body. He made it, as verse 23 of our Scripture text says, "the general assembly." It is a church composed of two chambers: the Old and the New. Yet they are one; they are one new man, one new body. Through Christ the Old Testament brethren are now, as Colossians 2:10 says, "complete in him."

Someone might say, "Are you condoning the wrongs that those patriarchs performed?" No. I am merely showing that they did not have the experience available in their day that we have. God knew that, so He justified them; He made a legal declaration. They looked forward in faith to a day when man could be free. I am not disparaging those brethren. They were perfect in their generation; they walked in the light that was available in their day. And God counted it, credited it, reckoned it, or imputed it, as righteousness.

Thank God, Hebrews 11:40 tells us, "God having provided some better thing for us." We have the reality; we have the New Testament. We can experience regeneration and be new creatures and still sit down in the same kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What a privilege to be a part of the general assembly, the church of the Living God!

The Limits of the Law

Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

As we view this passage of Scripture, it is obvious that the sacred writer was expounding upon the position of the Levitical law. Unfortunately, in the realms of religion, there has been much confusion concerning the position of the Law, the role of the Law, and the limits of the Law. In this chapter we will look at the limits of the Law.

In Chapter 1 we found that the brethren under the Old Testament economy were incomplete. They were not finished products, as it were. The work that God desired to accomplish was not accomplished under the old covenant, or under the Old Testament.

Hebrews 11:40 says, "God having provided some better thing for us [those of us in this New Testament era], that they [the Old Testament brethren] without us [the brethren in the New Testament era] should not be made perfect [or complete]. In other words, they were incomplete. The prior verse says, "And these all [again, a reference to all the Old Testament brethren alluded to in Chapter 11], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:39).

The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us [the New Testament brethren in the New Testament era] exceeding great and precious promises: that by these [by these promises] ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world . . ." Those in the Old Testament did not receive this promise. Hence they were not "partakers of the divine nature," and they were unable to escape the corruption that was in the world.

Hebrews 11:13 expressly tells us, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises . . ." The words "these all" found here and also in Hebrews 11:39 are speaking of the Old Testament brethren. Hebrews 11:4 speaks of Abel, taking us back to the very first family. This chapter brings us sequentially through the Old Testament, beginning with the patriarchs, and the last words of verse 32 are "the prophets." This brings us down to Malachi and even to John the Baptizer. In these verses, we see the entirety of the Old Testament economy. Then verse 39 says, "And these all . . . received not the promise."

If you would study the lives of those Old Testament brethren, it becomes readily apparent that they, indeed, did not escape the corruption. They engaged in activities and lived in manners that were totally incompatible with the divine nature. Why? Because they received not the promise. What then was their state? Hebrews 12:23 tells us they were "the spirits of just men [or justified men]." How were they justified? We find in Hebrews 11:39 that they "obtained a good report [how?] through faith." They were justified, or a legal declaration was made, and they were put in a justified state by their faith.

The wise man in Proverbs 4:18 gave a very good summation of the Old Testament dispensation, saying, "But the path of the just [or the justified] is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The perfect day is this New Testament dispensation. God sent forth that which was needful for the old Testament dispensation. They were justified men, and God, in His omniscient wisdom, used various things throughout the Old Testament time to make the pathway brighter, to point them toward Jesus Christ. They had a degree of light (symbolism refers to it as "the moon"; but though limited, it was a measure of light). As it pointed more toward Christ, the light of prophecy came brighter and brighter until there was a day dawn and Jesus Christ ushered in the perfect day, the complete day, a day of fullness.

Concerning this day, we read in 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn . . ." When Jesus Christ came on the scene, there was a day dawn; a new day, a new era commenced—the perfect day.

Those under the Old Testament economy were not recipients of the promise. Again, what was their state? Romans 4:3, speaking of Abraham, says: "For what saith the scripture [Genesis 15:6]? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Through faith Abraham was put in a right standing, or in a justified state, in the eyes of God. The Old Testament brethren were righteous, but they were not regenerated.

Look at Jesus' words concerning John the Baptizer in Matthew, Chapter 11. They are somewhat of a paradox unless the Spirit enlightens the eyes of our understanding. Verse 11 reads, "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 least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." How can that be? If John was the greatest born of women, how can the "least in the kingdom" be greater than he? It is because John was under an economy where the best that was offered was a literal birth, or being "born of women." Furthermore, he who is least in the kingdom, in this New Testament dispensation, is privileged to live in an era where he can be born of God, or be born again, have a spiritual birth. That is a great privilege!

What was John? Jesus answered that question in Matthew 11:9, saying, "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet?" John

was an Old Testament prophet. At that time they were still under the old economy. A testament is not in force until after the testator dies. Jesus had not died at this juncture; He was the testator, so the New Testament was not in force. The Old Testament was still in force. John was an Old Testament prophet. Jesus said in Matthew 11:14, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias [which is Greek for the Hebrew word *Elijah*], which was for to come." What was Elijah? He was an Old Testament prophet.

In Chapter 1 we studied the patriarchal era, which precedes the legal era. The patriarchal era began at the time of Adam, going down through his family, down through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, down to the time of the institution of the Law on Mount Sinai. All those patriarchs were under that patriarchal era. When Moses received the Law at Sinai, a legal era was instituted, and that legal era takes us all the way up to the First Advent of Jesus Christ.

Let us give consideration to our lesson text concerning this legal era, or the Age of the Law. Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." This verse says the Law could never make the "comers" perfect. In verse 3 we read, "But in those sacrifices [the old Levitical sacrifices under the Law] there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." Why? Verse 4 says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

What folly Dispensationalists advocate when they speak of how the temple over in Jerusalem will be rebuilt and the sacrifices will be reinstated. Even under the old economy, those sacrifices were never able to take away sin. They were ineffective and insufficient. Why would one want to go back to them? Hebrews 10:4 clearly tells us that the Levitical law did not afford deliverance from sin. Not only did it not provide man deliverance from the power of sin, but it could not afford man remittance, or take away sins.

The questions then arise, What was the role of the Law? What was its purpose? Why was it given? The Apostle Paul gave some understanding concerning this in Romans 7:1 when he penned, "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) . . ." Paul was speaking to a select audience in this particular portion of his writings. Obviously, he was speaking to "them that know the law."

What was the foremost role of the Law? What was its purpose? What did it do? Read the Apostle's testimony in Romans 7:7. It says: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid [read closely; he is going to reveal the role of the Law]. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Here we begin to gain an insight concerning the true role of the Law. Paul said, "I had not *known* sin." Where the King James Bible says *known* in English, the Greek word for *known* is **ginosko**, which means "be aware of, knowledge, understand." Therefore, by the Law is the *knowledge* of sin. The Law never afforded man deliverance from sin; it brought the knowledge of sin. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

Bear in mind that the legal era immediately succeeded the patriarchal era. In the patriarchal era they were devoid of the evidences of a divine nature. In an examination of some of those patriarchs, we found in Chapter 1 that Noah got drunk and revealed his nakedness; he was immodest. Lot got drunk and had incestuous relationships with his daughters. We found that Abraham was, on more than one occasion, willfully deceptive; and he engaged in bigamy. Yet they all did that with a clear conscience. How was that possible? It is the same way a child can engage in illicit activity with a clear conscience—he has no knowledge, no understanding.

Those in the patriarchal era had no written Word. The Law had not yet been given. It was Moses who penned the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. There was no Bible at the time the patriarchs were on the stage of action. It was an impossibility for them to possess the Holy Spirit as an indwelling, abiding reality. Their knowledge was meager, and so they could engage in behavior that we would find repulsive, reprehensible, and appalling. Nevertheless, they could engage in it freely. It is just as a little child can come out of the bedroom without any clothes on, smiling and looking at everybody with no remorse or embarrassment. Why? That child has no knowledge.

Knowledge was meager in the patriarchal era, and so God winked at it. We read of this in Acts 17:30, which says, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at." In other words, God overlooked it because there was no knowledge. If mankind was ever going to recognize their need of a Savior, God had to bring them to a level where they had knowledge and understanding concerning their conduct and their behavior. Thus, God brought them to the Law and brought the Law to them. By the Law came a knowledge.

It is not much different today. A child is born in innocency and purity, without knowledge and understanding. As that child grows, the godly parents bring him to the Word. They start teaching him, exposing him to principles. They begin teaching from the Word of God, teaching him right from wrong. Then, as that child begins to comprehend, the first thing he recognizes is that when he acts contrary, because of his knowledge, he realizes that he did wrong and he needs help.

God brought the Law to man to bring the knowledge of sin. Let us read it again. Romans 7:7 reads: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The Expanded Greek translation renders this passage in this manner: "I did not come into an experiential knowledge except through instrumentality of law." One rendering of Romans 7:7 says this: "The law code had a perfectly legitimate function. Without its clear guidelines for right and wrong, moral behavior would be mostly guesswork." That is right where our society has reverted to today. They have thrown out God's Word; thus they have no real compass to dictate moral

behavior. Their moral behavior, or knowing what is right and wrong, becomes mostly guesswork.

The function of the Law was to provide the knowledge of sin. Look at Romans 7:13. It states: "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin [one rendering says, 'But in order that sin might be recognized as sin'], working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Look at Romans 3:20, which says, "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." That was the role of the Law. However, that Law was powerless to deliver man from sin. In Romans 7:10-11 we find: "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Under the Law man could not find spiritual life. The Law did not produce life, and it did not produce deliverance. What it did produce was a knowledge and a guilt.

We read in Galatians 3:21-22: "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, [The Law could not give man spiritual life. The Law did not afford man life. It did not bring new life. It did not deliver him from the power of sin.] verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture [at this juncture he was speaking of Old Testament Scripture] hath concluded all under sin" The Law revealed sin, made sin manifest, made sin exceedingly sinful, made sin appear as sin. It brought man a knowledge of sin, but it did not bring man any deliverance from sin.

There was no deliverance, no freedom from sin under the Law. Let us look at Romans, Chapter 6. As we read the words of Paul, we must bear in mind that we are reading the words of a man who was a Pharisee of the Pharisees (Acts 23:6), a man who sat at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), a man who, according to Philippians, Chapter 3, was eminently qualified to speak concerning the Law (Philippians 3:5). We read in Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." What is the clear implication here? If you are under grace, you are free from sin; but if you were under the Law, sin had dominion over you. When the angel made the pronouncement to Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1:21, he said, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS [which means 'Jehovah Salvation; the salvation of Jehovah']: for he shall save [the Greek word is **sozo**, which means 'forgive and deliver'] his people from their sins." Who were those people? John 1:11 tells us, "He came unto his own [the Jewish nation], and his own received him not." Who were Christ's people? The Jewish race.

The angel told Joseph that Jesus was going to "save his people from their sins." Evidently before His advent and before the New Testament, people were not saved from their sins. His people (the Jewish nation) must not have been saved (or had New Testament salvation) under the Old Testament economy, or necessity would not have required someone to come and deliver them from their sins. In reality, the Law did not produce deliverance. It was designed to produce guilt, to produce a guilty conscience. Conscience alone is unreliable. No doubt you have heard of the old adage, "Let conscience be your guide." That is very faulty, because conscience is unreliable. Conscience is based on what is taught or on what one knows. If one has not been taught right and wrong, he or she can do horrible things with a clear conscience.

Cannibals in the deepest, darkest Africa who have no teaching, no knowledge, and no understanding can practice cannibalism with a clear conscience, with no compunctions. Again, conscience is not a reliable barometer. Conscience is based on what one is taught, or what one knows. That is how the patriarchs could live as they did with clear conscience. Why? They had no knowledge; there was no Law. Look at Romans 5:20. It says, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. [Why did the Law enter? The Law entered so that one might see what an offense actually is.] But where sin abounded" The Law was given so that people might be able to see their offense and understand that their offense is sin; and so that it could produce guilt.

In Galatians 3:19 Paul posed this question: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions" The Old Testament brethren were enveloped, or involved, in transgressions. But without the Word, without the knowledge, without the Law, they did not understand; they did not know. Consequently, the Law was added to bring man the knowledge of sin, to show him transgression and sin. The Law was given as a schoolmaster (Galatians 3:24). One purpose of a schoolmaster is to convey knowledge and to prepare one for the future. So it was with the Law. It was to bring man the knowledge of sin and prepare him for the future—the coming of Jesus Christ, which was a future event in the Old Testament era. Paul, who lived under the Old Testament economy, referred to the Law as "tutors and governors until the time appointed" (Galatians 4:2). The Law was a tutor, a governor, a schoolmaster to teach man the knowledge of sin, to produce a guilty conscience.

Look back at our lesson text. Hebrews 10:1 states, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." Perfect concerning what? What could the Law not make men perfect concerning? To find out, back up to Hebrews, Chapter 9. Keep in mind, this is an epistle, or a letter. It was written in continuity and in context.

Let us see how the writer employed the thought of conscience earlier in this epistle. Hebrews 9:6-9 says: "Now when these things [referring to the Old Testament sanctuary and its practices] were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in

which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience."

While Hebrews 10:1 tells us that "the law . . . can never . . . make the comers thereunto perfect," Hebrews 9:9 reads, ". . . perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." What does this mean? What had the Law produced in their conscience? Hebrews 10:2 says, "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more *conscience of sins*." Their consciences were full of sins. That was what the Law produced: a conscience of sins or a guilt concerning sin. The Amplified Bible says, "No longer have any guilt or consciousness of sin."

People in the Old Testament dispensation had a knowledge of sin, a recognition of sin, a guilt of sin, a conscience of sin, but they could not have deliverance from sin. Let us view an actual account where this truth is apparent. Paul said in Romans 7:7, ". . . I had not known lust [the Diaglott says 'strong desire'; in other words, 'I had not known strong desire'], except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Paul said in verse 9, "For I was alive without the law once: [Paul was speaking of the state of innocence that every child enjoys when he has no knowledge, or no understanding, of sin. This is exactly where the patriarchs were.] but when the commandment came, [The commandment was first given on Mount Sinai in approximately 1491 B.C. Here Paul was speaking in the first century A.D., but he was talking about when it came to him; in other words, when he came to an age of accountability, when awareness, or recognition, came to him.] sin revived [or came alive], and I died." Why did Paul say "I died"? Because there was no deliverance from sin under the Mosaic law.

Concerning Romans 7:7, which says, "Thou shalt not covet," that commandment was recorded in Exodus, Chapter 20, when Moses received the commandments on Mount Sinai. Exodus 20:17 says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Here is the commandment of the Law.

Let us look at an actual account concerning a man named Achan and what he did at the city of Jericho. First of all, Joshua told Achan in Joshua 7:19 to "give . . . glory to the LORD God of Israel"; but Achan could not do that. Why? A guilty conscience would not let him. Achan said in verse 20, "Indeed I have sinned." What was his sin? In verse 21 he said, "I coveted." How did he know that was sin? Because of the Law. By the Law came knowledge, and because Achan knew the Law, it produced a guilty conscience.

In John 8:3 we see another illustration that shows the function of a guilty conscience. John 8:3-9 reads: "And the scribes and Pharisees [those who were right at the zenith of Judaism in the first century] brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou [they were attempting to entrap Jesus]? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, [What did they hear? Jesus did not say anything; He was writing on the ground. Yet, while He was writing on the ground, the voice of conscience was speaking.] being convicted by their own conscience"

If we look at Jesus' words in verse 7, when He spoke of sin, and read in verse 8 that He "stooped down and wrote on the ground," it is evident that Jesus must have been writing about something that was sinful in their lives, something that they had a knowledge of and knew better about. When He wrote it, their consciences began to prick and speak to them; each one was convicted by his own conscience. The Law, which is what they were under at that juncture, produced a guilty conscience. In reality, the Gospel works much the same way. The difference is, the Gospel points out sin, but it also points out a solution. The Law could only point forward to He who was to come. Thank God, when the Gospel is preached, it not only makes sin exceedingly sinful, but it gives a solution: if you will confess and forsake, you can obtain mercy. There is a solution under the new economy.

What other function did the Law perform? First, it provided a knowledge of sin, a guilty conscience, but then it pointed to a promise. The schoolmaster spoke of a Savior. Again, go back to Galatians 3:24. It states, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Here the schoolmaster spoke of a Savior. There is a dual aspect to these words. The Apostle Paul said the Law would "bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified." The first aspect of truth revealed in these words is that the Law was in force until man was brought unto Christ, or up to the New Testament dispensation, and that under that old economy they were justified by faith.

The second aspect speaks more contextually to what the Apostle was conveying. A schoolmaster's predominant role is to school the student—to impart and transfer knowledge, to prepare that student for graduation day and for entering into life. The Law transferred the knowledge from God to man. It produced a guilty conscience so that it could, as the Scripture says, "bring us unto Christ." When the schoolmaster conveys the lesson, eventually there comes a graduation day when the lessons are over; the student graduates and enters into life. The schoolmaster, the old Mosaic law, pointed man to Christ, but when Jesus Christ came, there was a graduation day. Man is now able to enter into new life. We no longer need the schoolmaster, for now we have life through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:25 tells us, "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Why are we no longer under a schoolmaster? Verse 21 tells us, ". . . if there had been a law given which could have given life . . ." Paul was telling us that with the Law there was no life, but under Christ and a new economy that He ushered in, verse 26 says, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Once Jesus Christ came on the scene, we graduated from the old economy to a new economy; from having to be under the schoolmaster and merely learning about sin, to where we can become children of God and have an ability to enter into new life. Sin's career is finished. Now a new birth, a new life, is possible. It could not be under the Law, for verse 21 says that there was no life under the Law.

Now let us look at the reason for all the intricacies of the Law—the ceremonies, rites, rituals, and practices. Our text in Hebrews 10:1 reads, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come . . ." Another rendering says, "For the law being only a reflection . . ." A shadow or a reflection lets us know that there is a reality behind it. Wherever you may see a shadow, you realize that it is not the real image; it is not the reality. There is a reality, but it is not the shadow. The shadow is an image, a crude outline, that lets you know that there is also a reality behind it. The Law was a shadow, a crude outline, an image, a reflection. However, behind that reflection, there was a reality coming.

The Old Testament activities of the Law were to foreshadow, or to serve as figures, outlines, and reflections, to let us know there was a beautiful reality coming. Hebrews 9:9, speaking of these Old Testament tabernacles and functions, says, "Which was a figure for the time then present . . ." or the Diaglott says, "a figurative representation." Hebrews 9:24 says, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true." The legal ceremonies of the Old Testament economy were types and shadows of the true. Those who were under the old covenant saw the shadow. It was just a figure, a representation of the true, but just as sure as they saw the shadow, they knew that the reality was behind it. It was coming, and that reality was Jesus Christ and the New Testament economy.

We have seen that the Law had a definite role, but why was it so limited? What caused the limits of the Law? Romans 8:3 tells us, "For what the law could not do [why?], in that it was weak through the flesh . . ." That was why the Law was so limited: it was "weak through the flesh." Romans 7:18 says, "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." Desire was there, but where was the limit? Where was the weakness? Paul said in verse 18, ". . . how to perform that . . ." The Law was limited because it could not provide power. Why? Because the sacrifices were not sufficient.

Hebrews 10:4 says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats [the sacrifices; verse 3] should take away sins." A sacrifice was needed that could both remove, or remit, sin and bring deliverance, or produce power, for mankind. The Old Testament sacrifices could not remit sin nor produce power. Therefore, a sacrifice was needed that *could* both remit sin and bring deliverance. Remember, under the old economy was a knowledge of sin—it produced a guilty conscience—but there was no deliverance.

What did God in His omniscient wisdom do? We read in Hebrews 10:5, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering [speaking of those Old Testament sacrifices] thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." What kind of a body did He prepare for Jesus Christ? Hebrews 2:16-17 reads: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham [why?]. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." He did this to do what the Old Testament high priest could not do—He made real, lasting reconciliation for the people.

Back up to Hebrews 2:14, which says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Christ did not have some superhuman physical nature, but He was "made like unto his brethren" (verse 17). How? Verse 16 tells us that "he took on him the seed of Abraham." What was that? Verse 14 tells us it was "flesh and blood."

Hebrews 4:15 states, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." This is why Hebrews 4:14 says that "we have a *great* high priest." Why is He so great? Because He came in the likeness of sinful flesh and condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). He did not take on the nature of angels, but He took on the nature of the seed of Abraham. He was made "like unto his brethren." In other words, He was flesh and blood, and He faced temptation. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Consequently, He became an acceptable sacrifice.

When Christ was "made like unto his brethren" and was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin, what was He able to do? Romans 8:3 answers this question: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh [how did God remedy it?], God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Jesus became an acceptable sacrifice, a specially prepared sacrifice. We read in 1 Peter 1:19, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Look at the great prophetic utterance given by the patriarch Abraham in Genesis 22:8. He said, "God will provide himself a lamb." Those words echoed down throughout the corridors of time until John the Baptizer said in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Here was One who is qualified to remit sin and has the power to regenerate.

Here was the deliverance that for centuries man had longed for. God stepped on the stage as the first Prophet in the Genesis account and said in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Jesus Christ fulfilled that prophecy. His heel was bruised, but He bruised Satan's head. He crushed the powers of the enemy. He brought deliverance to mankind.

When John uttered those words, "Behold [in other words, 'Stop and consider, pause, stop everything; here is something notable'], the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," he was speaking of something that could not have been done before. The blood of bulls and goats did not take away sin, but here was a Lamb who could take away sin. Here was something notable. Here was the deliverance man had longed and yearned for. Here was the graduation into life, the commencement of which the schoolmaster had spoken.

Speaking of the sins of the Old Testament brethren in the Old Testament era, Hebrews 10:3 says, "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." There was no deliverance. Their sins were not taken away; they were merely advanced another year. They gained a year's reprieve, but every year they had to go through the same ceremony, the same performance. Hebrews 9:7 tells us, "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself [the high priest was a sinner too], and for the errors of the people."

Under the old Law, once per year was the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest alone went into the second room, and he satisfied what God required of His people in that era. Furthermore, the sins were reprieved and rolled ahead a year at a time. The next year the high priest came in on the Day of Atonement and did the same thing. Again, the sins were rolled ahead another year. They were rolled ahead, year after year, until finally they were rolled right up to the foot of the Cross. When Jesus came, He was the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world, and He took away all the sins of those brethren.

To see what Jesus did, look at Hebrews 9:11-15: "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. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, *for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." They received the promise when Jesus Christ offered Himself.

The first thing Jesus did was to accomplish redemption for the "first [or the old] Testament." That word *redemption* in the Greek language is **apolustosis**, which means "the act of ransom in full, riddance, deliverance." When Christ came, He gave good riddance to the transgressions that were under the first testament. Here is where "the spirits of just men [were] made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23). If the transgressions had been taken away under the old economy, He would not have had to take them away. If the Old Testament brethren had the ability to live a New Testament life, Jesus would not have had to come and bring in a New Testament experience. Christ was a sufficient sacrifice. Hebrews 9:14 tells us that He "offered himself." Hebrews 10:12 reads, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Christ offered one sacrifice, "the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

To see what Christ did in this redemptive work, look again at Hebrews 9:14. It states, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God [an acceptable sacrifice], purge [the Diaglott says 'cleanse'] your conscience . . ." What kind of conscience did they have? It was a "conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:2). Christ purged their sins; He purged their consciences. The spirits of these just men were made perfect.

We find in Hebrews 9:15 that the Old Testament brethren received the promise. What was the promise? Abraham, the father of the faithful, said, "God will provide himself a Lamb." All through the annals of time, they looked forward to Him who was to come. In the fullness of time, He came as the Lamb of God, without spot, as an acceptable sacrifice; and He took away their sins, purged their consciences, and made the spirits of just men perfect. Once we are purged, we should have no more "conscience of sins." Through real New Testament salvation, we do not have to be troubled by a guilty conscience. Paul said in Acts 24:16 that he had "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." That is what real New Testament salvation will do.

Christ's sacrifice was an effective and a sufficient sacrifice. Read Hebrews 10:11-22. Christ delivered man from "an evil conscience" (verse 22). Verse 12 tells us that "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, [He] sat down on the right hand of God." Man went from being able to be righteous (or in right standing) to being able to be regenerated. In Matthew 19:28 Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [when is it?] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory . . ." Regeneration was not available until Christ was on the throne of Glory. When He went back to the right hand of the Father and the work was complete, then regeneration became a possibility.

Again, Paul said in Romans 8:3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son [who was not weak] . . . condemned sin in the flesh." He was a sufficient sacrifice. He could both remove sin and produce power. The Law was limited, but He was not. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Once this sacrifice was sufficient, Hebrews 10:15 tells us, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." Here is how

mankind went from peril to power. Remember, the Old Testament brethren "received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:39). Prior to His ascension in Luke 24:49, Jesus said, "I send the promise." What was the promise? That "ye be endued with power." What was that power? Acts 1:8 tells us, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Power for what? To "be witnesses." What were they to witness to? Hebrews 10:20 says "a new and living way." They were to be witnesses to this power of a new life that started with a resurrected Christ but by virtue of that became a living way, an experience in Christ Jesus where one becomes a new creature. They could walk in newness of life. They were witnesses of this power of life that only comes through Jesus Christ, who said in John 14:6, "I am the . . . life."

In the legal era the Old Testament brethren were not justified by the Law. They could not merely obey the tenets of the Law and be acceptable to God. Romans 3:20 says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight . . ." It still required looking forward in faith. Romans 3:28 states, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Subscribing to the tenets of the Law did not justify a man.

The self-righteous Pharisee in Luke, Chapter 18, prayed and said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are" (verse 11). He obeyed every jot and tittle of the Law, but he was not justified. Jesus said that the other man was justified. Why? You could not be justified merely by the Law alone. It still required looking forward in faith. All ages are justified by faith, but we are blessed in this New Testament era because our faith has access to grace. Romans 5:1-2 says: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand . . ." The difference between the brethren under the new economy and those who were under the old economy is that those under the old were justified by faith, but there was no access to grace because grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 1:17 clearly states, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Those Old Testament brethren received not the promise, but we have. We have received deliverance; we have the power of new life; we are walking in a new and living way. There were limits under the Law, but there is liberty under this new covenant. James 1:25 refers to our age, that which governs our day as "the perfect law of liberty." Now man can be complete. He not only can have a knowledge of sin, but he can have a deliverance from sin. He not only can have righteousness, or be in right standing, but now he can be regenerated, be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Now he does not have to have his sin rolled and reprieved, but he can have it remitted and removed through Jesus Christ. Thank God, we are living in a dispensation where there is liberty!

Faults of the First

Hebrews 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

In this passage of Scripture, the Hebrew writer helped the Jewish converts, the audience to whom he was writing, to properly understand the position of the old covenant. In this text the divine penman was speaking of what he denoted in verse 9 as "the covenant that I made with their fathers." This particular covenant is what the King James Version translators rendered in verse 7 as "that first covenant." Verse 8 contrasts that by speaking of "a new covenant."

In this chapter we want to draw our focus primarily to the words incorporated in verse 8: "For finding fault." Thus, the title of this chapter is "Faults of the First." In Hebrews 10:3-4 we read: "But in those sacrifices [the Old Testament sacrifices] there is a remembrance again made of sins every year [referring to the Day of Atonement]. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats [the sacrifices spoken of in verse 3] should take away sins." Why could those sacrifices not take away sins? The answer is obvious: the sacrifices were inadequate and insufficient.

With that thought in mind, let us go back and look at our text. Again, verse 7 says, "For if that first covenant [or the old covenant, according to verse 3] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." This clearly tells us that the first covenant had fault; it was a faulty covenant.

Verse 8 begins, "For finding fault with them, he saith" If you read the original Greek rendering, you will find that phrased a little differently. The fault was not with them (the people), it was with the covenant. The Diaglott renders it this way: "But finding fault, he says to them" The Englishman's Greek New Testament says, "For finding fault, to them he says" The Nestle's Greek text says, "Finding fault with for them, he says" The fault was not with *them*; it was with the *covenant*.

The King James Version writers somewhat convoluted or obscured this truth by placing the comma in the wrong position. It reads totally differently in the Greek language. If you would read it in the English version and move the comma, it would say, "For finding fault, with them he saith" Consequently, it was the covenant that had the fault. The people of the Old Testament were unable to live in a manner that is acceptable under this New Testament era. Yes, there was fault in their lives, but it was a result of fault with the covenant.

In verse 7 the word *faultless* is the Greek word **amemptos** and *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* defines it as "blameless, free from fault or defect." This word is used five times in the Scriptures, and three times it is rendered as "blameless" (Luke 1:6; Philippians 2:15; Philippians 3:6). In 1 Thessalonians 3:13 it is translated as "unblameable," and in our text it is offered as "faultless." Yet, all these are the same Greek word.

The opposite of "blameless" is to have blame; the opposite of "faultless" means to have fault. The clear implication of verse 7 is that the covenant was not faultless; it was not **amemptos**; it was not blameless. It was not free from fault or defect, and neither were its adherents.

In our lesson text, the Hebrew writer referred to a prophecy penned by Jeremiah. Verse 8 reads, "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come [quoting Jeremiah 31:31], saith the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Verse 10 tells us, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Here is a prophetic utterance with which, no doubt, those of Hebrew stock were familiar.

Let us visit the actual prophetic passage the Hebrew writer made reference to. Jeremiah 31:31-34 states: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;

and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

This prophetic passage, as well as our lesson text in Hebrews, contrasts the new covenant with the old covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-32 and Hebrews 8:8-9). The old covenant was received on Mount Sinai. Exodus 34:4 and 10 tell us: "And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. . . . And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee."

Verse 4 tells us that Moses "went up unto mount Sinai," and in verse 10 God said, "I make a covenant." So this covenant was made on Mount Sinai. Where was this covenant? Where were its tenets recorded? On what were its precepts written? Moses, speaking in Deuteronomy 9:9, said, "When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant" The evidence of the covenant was the receiving of the "tables of stone." Under the old economy, man's heart was a stony heart. Thus, God wrote the tenets of His covenant on tables of stone.

In Ezekiel, Chapter 36, the Prophet Ezekiel spoke to man's condition. Verse 26 reads, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." The old covenant being written on tables of stone reflected man's condition, a heart of stone.

Look at Matthew 19:7-8: "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away [speaking of the writings of Moses, the Levitical law]? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts" Whom was Jesus speaking to? Matthew 19:3 tells us it was the "Pharisees." The Pharisees were those who were under the Law, under that old covenant that was instituted at Mount Sinai.

One of the predominant faults of the first covenant was that it could not change the hearts of men. When false religion supposedly today wants to have the Word only and yet not allow the true operation of the Spirit, they do not have life; they do not have reality. They are in a condition that mirrors exactly what the Old Testament people were under—the old Law. They have a form of godliness, but they have no power of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5). All they have is a dead form. Religion that cannot change the hearts of men today is a powerless religion.

Someone might say, "Do you think that was the condition they were in under the old economy?" Look at the Lord's lament under the Law in Deuteronomy 5:29, which reads, "O that there were such an heart in them [but there was not], that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" They did not possess that type of heart because man under the old economy could not receive a new heart. There was no power to change the hearts of men. However, under this new covenant, man can have a change in the condition of his heart. This is one of the beauties, one of the benefits, of this New Testament dispensation in which you and I live.

Romans 2:28-29 says: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." In other words, it is not a physical work; it is a spiritual work by which the condition of man's heart can be changed, forever altered. Just as when a male child was literally circumcised, his physical composition was forever altered, so it is when people experience a circumcision of heart, a work through the Spirit of God. They have a change of heart that can be an eternal alteration.

Let us look at the distinction in this new covenant. Man can now have a spiritual work—circumcision of the heart. His heart can be forever changed. Second Corinthians 3:3 says, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Under the old economy, the Law was written on tables of stone, but in this new economy, God's laws are written by the Holy Spirit on the fleshy tables of the heart.

Under the new economy, God takes out the stony heart and puts in a heart of flesh, something that is soft, pliable, and sensitive. That was not available under the old economy, or the Lord would have never cried in Deuteronomy, "O that there were such an heart in them" They did not have "such an heart," but now we can. We no longer have a heart that is hard and impenetrable, but our hearts have a new quality—"fleshy." Dear one, if your heart starts becoming less pliable and not as easily impressionable as it is ought to be, there is something working that ought not to be. You need to take a look at what is working in your experience. Our hearts are to be hearts of flesh—soft, tender, easily impressed, very sensitive.

Hence, one of the faults of the first covenant was that it could not change the condition of man's heart. Hebrews 8:6 talks of a better covenant, telling us that it "was established upon better promises." It is a better covenant, and it can do a better work in the hearts of men.

Man's problem then (just as it is today) was what was in his heart. Certainly, the Scriptures teach us many other things that are essential, or vital, but man's core problem is the condition of his heart. It is easy to get caught up on many side issues and forget the real core issue is the condition of the heart.

In Matthew 15:16-20 Jesus said: "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth

in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man" So we see man's problem is in the heart.

A lying man lies because it is in his heart; a thief steals because it is in his heart; a lustful man lusts because it is in his heart. The Law could reveal but not remove the problem. However, Hebrews 7:19 tells us that "the bringing in of a better hope did." Look at the entire verse: "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God." Man was brought back into communion with God; he was able to draw nigh to God by this better hope, this better covenant.

Let us turn back to the words of the Prophet Jeremiah. He wrote in Jeremiah 31:33, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts" Then Hebrews 10:16 states, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

This reveals that under the new economy our minds are changed. To understand how they are changed, look at 1 Corinthians 2:16 and notice the clear words of the Apostle Paul: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." Our mind is changed because we "have the mind of Christ." Philippians 1:27 tells us, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." How can people have "one mind"? Philippians 2:2 and 5 state: "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind [how can we do that?]. . . . Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Under this new covenant, we have a new mind; we have the mind of Christ. This was not possible under the old economy. Why? Well, how do we receive the mind of Christ? Ezekiel 36:27 says, "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." In other words, you have had a change of direction, a change of mind, and now you have a mind to do and follow that which God wants you to. How can we get this mind? We get His mind through the personality of His Spirit making entrance into our lives. We get a new mind when the Spirit of God moves in. This was not a reality under the old economy.

This may be contrary to what is advocated in some religious circles, but there is a truth that we need to realize: the Old Testament brethren did not have the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. He did not dwell within them. We read in 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Greek word for "moved by" is **phero**. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* defines it as "to move, of the mind, to be moved inwardly, prompted." These men were moved upon, or prompted; they did not *possess* the Holy Spirit, not in the sense we do in this New Testament dispensation. There is a vast difference in being *prompted* and *possessed*. There is a vast difference in having the Holy Spirit move on us and having Him as an abiding presence.

Let us look at some other Scriptures. Consider Balaam in Numbers, Chapter 24. Balaam would certainly not be considered a credible man. As a matter of fact, Jude referred to him in the list of the apostates and in verse 11 spoke of "the error of Balaam." Ultimately Balaam died at the hand of God for his dastardly deeds that affected the people of Israel. Yet, we read in Numbers 24:2, "And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the *spirit of God came upon him*." Again I say, there is a vast difference in the Spirit of God coming upon someone and someone having the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

Consider Gideon in Judges 6:34, which says, "But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet" Consider Samson in Judges 15:14, which reads, "And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands." The "Spirit of the LORD came" upon Samson. It was not an abiding reality. Look at King Saul, the first king of Israel. In 1 Samuel 10:10 we read, "And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them."

Look at John 7:38-39: "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 [future tense implied here]: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given [why?]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" Jesus had to die, be buried, be resurrected in a glorified state, and ascend back to the Father before the Holy Ghost could ever be given. Therefore, prior to this date, the Holy Spirit could not have been given as an abiding reality, or an abiding presence, in the lives of men. He merely "moved upon them," or "came upon them," on various occasions and in various seasons to accomplish different purposes.

Let us consider a few Scriptures where this has indeed been the case, but where casual reading would tend to indicate otherwise. In Genesis 41:38 it is recorded that when Pharaoh spoke of Joseph, he said, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" In casually reading this verse, it would appear that Joseph possessed the Holy Spirit. But let us examine this closely. Joseph admonished Pharaoh in Genesis 41:33, saying, "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt." In verse 38 Pharaoh uttered the words concerning "a man in whom the Spirit of God is." Let us read it in its context. Verse 39 continues, ". . . there is none so discreet and wise as thou art." Joseph did not

possess an abiding presence of the Holy Spirit but was moved upon with discretion and wisdom for a specific purpose in a specific time. One scholar explains this as "the spirit of supernatural insight and wisdom."

Let us consider another passage that speaks in much the same manner. In Exodus 31:3 it is recorded concerning Bezaleel, one of the superintendents of the construction of the Old Testament tabernacle (Exodus 36:1-2; 38:22), that "I have filled him with the spirit of God," but the remainder of the verse clarifies it: "in wisdom and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." Verses 4-5 then describe the workmanship. This was not an indwelling but rather a dispensation of certain abilities for a purpose in a time. The famous scholars Keil and Delitzsch explain it in this manner: "Filling with the Spirit of God signifies the communication of an extraordinary and supernatural endowment and qualification, 'in wisdom,' etc., i.e., consisting of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and every kind of workmanship, that is to say, for the performance of every kind of work."

We can clearly see this is the tenor of the text by seeing how it is spoken of in Exodus 36:1-2. Verse 1 says, ". . . in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding [for what?] to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary" Verse 2 tells us "in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom." That is what was received, not an indwelling or the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us examine another verse that is confusing to some. First Peter 1:11 speaks of "the Spirit of Christ which was in them." This would cause one to think that the prophets had the Spirit as an abiding reality. But let us consider the context of these words. Verse 10 tells us, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." What were they inquiring and diligently searching for? Verse 11 tells us: "What, or [for] what manner of time." "Manner of time" for what? When this grace "should come unto you" (verse 10) and mankind would have New Testament salvation.

Look at verse 11 closely. They were "searching" for this prophetic event. Why? "The Spirit of Christ which was *in them* did *signify*." What was "in them"? The signification of the prophecy! Verse 11 continues, saying, ". . . when it testified beforehand . . ." This was prophecy. In verse 12 Peter made it clear: "Unto whom it was revealed, that *not* unto themselves [the prophets; verse 10] but unto us [the New Testament brethren] they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven . . ." To whom was He "sent down"? It was "unto us"—the New Testament brethren. What was "in them" (verse 11) was not the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, but the prophecy given them by the Holy Ghost so that they were able to fill their role for their time.

Look once again at our text in Hebrews 8:10. How does God put His laws "into their mind"? We read in 1 Corinthians 2:16 that "we have the mind of Christ." How do we get the mind of Christ? How does He get into us? Jesus said in John 14:18, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Then, in John 14:23 Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we [the Father and the Son] will come unto him, and make our [plural] abode with him." That word *abode* is the Greek word **mone**. It is the same Greek word used in verse 2, which says, "In my Father's house are many mansions." That word *mansions* is also **mone**, which means "abodes, dwelling places." Where are the dwelling places where God dwells? He dwells in you and me; He dwells in the saints. He will dwell in our mansion, and we will become a residence for the King.

Jesus promised in John 14:18, "I will come to you." Again, verse 23 says, ". . . we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." How does He do that? John 14:16 reads, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Who is this Comforter? John 14:26 tells us that "the Comforter . . . is the Holy Ghost." We receive the mind of Christ through the Spirit of God, or through the Holy Ghost. When He makes a move into our lives through a real experience of salvation, He brings a new heart and a new mind. It is through Him that we have that mind of Christ. That is the new mind we receive.

We read in John 16:13-15: "Howbeit when he [personal pronoun], the Spirit of truth [a divine personage], is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself [we are talking about getting the mind of Christ]; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: [The Holy Spirit does not speak of His own accord, but He speaks what He hears Christ speak. This is how we get the mind of Christ. He hears, and what He hears, He speaks to us.] and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine [here is how we get the mind of Christ], and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

We get the mind of Christ through the Holy Spirit of God. This is so vital, so important, that Jesus said seven times in the Revelation, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." Why? The only way we can have the mind of Christ is to listen to the Spirit of God. If you want to know Christ's judgment, listen to the Spirit of God. If you want to know His discernment, listen to the Spirit of God. "He shall take [the things] of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

What was another fault with the first covenant? It could not provide man with a real experience and the Spirit of God. Man could not have the presence of God as an abiding reality. Consider the words in our text. Hebrews 8:11 says, "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Who is going to be the teacher under this new covenant? We read in 1 John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all

things" Who is the real teacher? It is the "the anointing" or the anointed one, the Holy Spirit. This certainly does not do away with teachers, because Ephesians 4:11 says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

The truth being conveyed in 1 John 2:27 is that the real teacher is the Spirit of God. It does not matter how good a teacher one may be, if you ever receive a revelation of truth, it is going to have to be the Spirit of God who witnesses it to your heart. It is the Holy Spirit's anointing that reveals to you that what you are hearing or reading is truth. It takes the Holy Spirit to give you a personal revelation of truth for yourself so that men or devils cannot persuade you away. You receive it from the Lord. This is what the Hebrew writer was talking about when he said that they "shall not teach every man": they will have a personal knowledge of the Lord themselves; they will have the Teacher.

Look back to Jeremiah's prophecy. Jeremiah 31:34 says, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me" Jeremiah was talking about an experimental knowledge. This knowledge comes from a personal experience that is available only through Jesus Christ and is brought to us by His Spirit. To see if this is so, look at verse 10 of our lesson text. It says, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Here he was speaking of the new covenant.

How does God become "to them a God," and how do they become "to me a people"? Second Corinthians 6:16 reads, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell *in* them, and walk *in* them; and [this is a conjunction] I will be their God, and they shall be my people." He will be their God and they will be His people when He dwells *in* them and walks *in* them. That is possible only through the Holy Spirit; it is possible only through what is available in this new covenant.

John 14:26 reads, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you [here is that teacher] all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." We read in John 16:7 that Jesus said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

After Jesus went to Calvary, was resurrected, and ascended to Heaven, Acts 2:4 clearly tells us that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The Spirit of God was sent down on the Day of Pentecost. He became an abiding presence, an indwelling reality. Once that happened, He was in them, they became His people, and He became their God. This all took place under the new covenant.

Let us look at two questions: Why was this not available under the first covenant? Why were there faults with the first covenant? Jeremiah 31:34 reads, ". . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Speaking of people under the old economy, Hebrews 10:3 says, "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." Why was there no remittance? Why does Hebrews 10:4 say that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"? Why was there "a remembrance" made every year but no remittance and no regeneration? It was because those sacrifices were insufficient.

Read on to find out why those sacrifices were insufficient. Hebrews 10:8-9 says: "Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." In verse 8, speaking of the sacrifices, he said "thou wouldst not." What sacrifices is this referring to? Verse 4 says it is "of bulls and of goats." Verse 8 tells us "which are offered by the law." Then verse 9 says, "He taketh away the first" Why? Because He found fault with the first covenant (Hebrews 8:8). What kind of fault did He find? One of the main faults with the first covenant was the animal sacrifices.

All those animals could do was give their lives, but they could not give life. Our Sacrifice not only gave His life, but He can give life. No wonder it is called a better covenant! Those animal sacrifices could not give life because they did not possess the Spirit of God, but Christ did.

We read in Hebrews 9:14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Christ not only offered blood for remission, but He also offered the eternal Spirit to bring regeneration, or new life, to mankind. Bulls and goats could not offer the eternal Spirit, but Jesus Christ came to offer the eternal Spirit. The blood brought remission, but the Spirit brings regeneration. This is why people in spiritual Babylon are in such confusion today. Every night they pray for forgiveness for their sins, saying, "Lord, forgive me for the sins I have committed today." They are trying to get remission. This is why Roman Catholics have confessional booths, which they visit weekly. In one sense of the word, false religion has never progressed past the Old Testament. All they think of is remission. But Jesus ushered in a new era, a time when man can receive not only remission of sins that are past but also regeneration. He can receive the power of new life. The power of sin can be broken; the fetters of sin can be loosed. He can be unshackled; he no longer has to be bound by sin. The child of God has the power over death, and only the Spirit can bring that power. That power is life.

People who will daily ask for their sins to be forgiven and then repeat them the next day do not have any power. They are

powerless because they have no regeneration. Religion without regeneration is ridiculous. Christ came to usher in, according to Hebrews 10:20, a "new and living way," a way where men can walk "in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

In Titus 3:5 we read, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This word *regeneration* in the Greek language literally means "a rebirth." Here it talks about "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Christ possessed the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1), and the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit, is life (Romans 8:10). The Spirit is what brings spiritual life, or regeneration, to an individual. Second Corinthians 3:6 tells us that "the spirit giveth life."

Those old Testament sacrifices were faulty for many reasons, but one reason was, they had no Spirit to give to man. They could not impart life. Only Christ can impart life. Jesus said clearly in John 10:10, "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." Jesus also said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Christ brings life through the agency of the Holy Spirit. His sacrifice was sufficient. Why? Because He not only offered the blood in Hebrews 9:14, but He offered the Spirit as well. He offered blood for the remission, and He offered that Spirit which can bring regeneration to mankind. No other sacrifice was able to accomplish those two things.

Jesus said in John 16:7, ". . . if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Then in Matthew 19:28 Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [the same Greek word, meaning 'rebirth'; when is this regeneration?] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory" When did this occur? Hebrews 9:24 says, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself" When Christ went to "heaven itself," what happened? Hebrews 10:12 states, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Christ said that the regeneration would occur when He was "in the throne of his glory," or at the right hand of God.

Look what Jesus did when He got back to the right hand of God. Revelation 8:5 says, "And the angel [this word *angel* is the Greek word **aggelos**, which means 'messenger'] took the censer [this particular reference is to Christ, the High Priest, because He took the censer, performing the high priest's role; Leviticus 16:11-13], and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth [a symbolic representation of the Day of Pentecost]."

Acts 2:2-4 tells us: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" So, we see that fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Revelation 8:5 talks about the "fire of the altar." Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar" Who is this altar? It is Jesus Christ (referring back to Hebrews 13:8). Thus, the "fire of the altar" is speaking of the Spirit of Christ.

The latter portion of Revelation 8:5 tells us that Christ "cast it into the earth." Second Corinthians 4:7 states, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels" Before Jesus went away, He said that when "I depart, I will send him [the Holy Spirit] unto you" (John 16:7). He sent the "fire of the altar," the Spirit of Christ, into those earthen vessels in the Upper Room. When the Holy Spirit moved into their hearts and lives, they had new hearts, new minds, and a new spirit. They were regenerated; they were reborn. They had the Holy Spirit, and they had power from on high. The picture in Revelation 8:5 is of Christ, "the High Priest of our profession" (Hebrews 3:1), sending the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Ghost, and making regeneration and new life available under the new covenant. It is no wonder the Hebrew writer in our text styles it as "a better covenant," a "more excellent ministry" (verse 6).

The first covenant had faults, but thanks be to God, the second is faultless. Hebrews 8:13 of our lesson text reads, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." False teachers say the old covenant is going to be reinstated in the future. They teach that the Antichrist is going to arise, make a covenant with the Jews, reinstate the animal sacrifices, and rebuild the temple. Not so! When the second covenant came, when the reality of a better hope came, the first covenant "decayeth and waxeth old"; it vanished away.

The first covenant served its purpose, but it was not faultless. The second covenant had a sufficient sacrifice and a Savior who gave us His Spirit. We do not have just imputed righteousness or right standing, but remittance and regeneration. We live in a far superior dispensation than what any of the Old Testament brethren were privileged to be in. They looked forward to a day such as this. In John 8:56 Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." How much more gladness should we have as those who are privileged to occupy this glorious dispensation!

May God help us to realize the beauties and the benefits of the day in which we live, and may God help us not to live beneath our privileges, not to allow our humanity and the traditions of men to prevent the Spirit of God from showing us the truth.

Comparing and Contrasting Covenants

Hebrews 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

In this passage of Scripture, the penman was making reference to the first and the second covenants. He introduced this thought in Hebrews 8:6-8, which reads: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second [a second covenant, 'a better covenant'; verse 6]. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

The sacred writer was describing the underlying truth that he was comparing and contrasting covenants. As we begin to give consideration to this Scripture, several questions loom to mind, such as: Why was it necessary that, as he denoted in Hebrews 10:9, "He taketh away the first"? What was the compulsion to do so? Why must He establish the second? What are the capabilities of the second covenant that were not available under the first? Throughout this epistle, the sacred writer was making his argument for the superiority of the new economy and the new covenant over the old.

Keep in mind that these Scriptures were penned in a first century environment. Many times it is difficult to relate to what the writers of the Scriptures were dealing with. Amongst the first century saints, there was an inaccurate assumption of an imminent return of our Lord. They were of the persuasion that the return of Christ was very close at hand; an erroneous assumption that had an adverse impact on many.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:15 the Apostle penned, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that *we which are alive and remain* unto the coming of the Lord . . ." Paul was persuaded that he would still be alive when the Lord returned. He referred to himself and the brethren at Thessalonica as "we which *are* [present tense] alive and remain."

You can read of our Lord's ascension in Acts 1:9-11. It states: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The disciples' natural assumption (not a biblical teaching) was that since they saw Him ascend into Heaven during their lifetime, they would see Him return during their lifetime as well.

The Apostle Paul, too, was of that persuasion. That is why he wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, ". . . we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep [or dead]." In other words, Paul was saying: "We are not going to be dead. We are going to be those who are alive and remain, but we will not prevent those who are asleep, or dead." In verse 17 of the same chapter, he said, "Then we which are [present tense] alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds . . ."

The Apostle Paul was originally of the persuasion that the return of the Lord was so close at hand, he would still be alive. But between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, he received greater understanding concerning this matter. Second Thessalonians was written to the same congregation at Thessalonica by the same author, the Apostle Paul. He had been talking in the first epistle about the coming of our Lord. Now, in the second epistle, he clarified some things, saying in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, *nor by letter as from us*, [Who had gotten shaken? Who had been troubled in mind? The Thessalonians. What was part of what shook them? Paul's letter.] as that the day of Christ is at hand [or near]."

Then, in verse 3 Paul began to give greater insight: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first . . ." The Greek word for "falling away" is **apostasia**. An apostasy would come first. Throughout much of the rest of that chapter, Paul gave understanding of some things that would occur throughout the Gospel Day prior to the Lord's second advent. Paul received greater understanding, but he and the others were originally under the inaccurate assumption that the coming of the Lord was near.

It is obvious that the same type of thinking was being embraced in the Hebrew epistle. In Hebrews 10:37 the Hebrew writer penned, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." That was written because they had been under the assumption that the return of the Lord was imminent, but discouragement with the delay was trying to deceive them. They began to feel that maybe Christ was not the One they had believed Him to be. Hebrews 10:38 tells us, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Evidently, they were in danger of drawing back. What were they going to revert back to? Back up to Hebrews 10:26, which says, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." They were in danger of reverting back to the practices of Judaism and the Old Testament sacrifices. Those people were Hebrew converts, those of Jewish stock, who had embraced Christianity.

Again, Hebrews 10:26 tells us they had received "the knowledge of the truth," but discouragement was working to deceive them and cause them to abandon the truth. This same spirit of discouragement can work today, if we are not careful. We can become discouraged with what we perceive as a delay of the Lord's return. Through discouragement the enemy can work to cause you or me to want to go back to those "weak and beggarly elements" of the world (Galatians 4:9).

The writer made a compelling argument in Hebrews 10:32, saying, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated . . ." In other words, they received light. In essence, the sacred writer was telling them, "After you have received light, you cannot go back on that light and be right." They were tempted to go back on light, to go back on the knowledge of truth they had concerning Christ and His vicarious work. They were being tempted to go back into the practices of Judaism. In essence, the Hebrew writer was saying, "Once you have received a knowledge of the truth, once you have been illuminated, or have received light, you cannot go back to those old sacrifices. You did not know better then, but you know better now. There is no more sacrifice for sin."

Let us look at some of the major distinctions between the covenants. Where was the first covenant received? Hebrews 12:18-22 reads: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come [this is present tense; A.D. 63-69 was the proximity in which this letter was written] unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

In verses 18-21 the Hebrew writer was referring to what had occurred on Mount Sinai, which is recorded in Exodus, Chapter 19. There are many truths contained in this passage, but let us lift a few in view of our study. We find in Exodus 19:23, "And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai." Exodus 19:21 warns, ". . . lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish." Exodus 20:21 says, "And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." So we see that under the old covenant, "the people stood afar off"; they could not get close to God. They could not come into the presence of God. They could not even touch the mount, lest they be put to death (Exodus 19:12).

Concerning those who had been afar off, Ephesians 2:13 says, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh [or you can come close] by the blood of Christ." Old Testament Israel could not come close; they could not have fellowship with God on a personal basis. They did not personally have access to God. The people stood afar off, trembling with fear.

Some may feel that Ephesians 2:13 is speaking of the Gentile, but look at it in context. Ephesians 2:11-14 and 16 state: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel [who? the Gentiles], and strangers from the covenants of promise [who? the Gentiles], having no hope, and without God in the world [who? the Gentiles]: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both [both the Jew and the Gentile] one . . . that he might reconcile both unto God in one body . . ."

Not only were the Gentiles afar off, but according to Exodus 20:21, the Jews were afar off too. They may have had the covenant of promise, they may have been of the Commonwealth of Israel, but they were just as far off when it came to having a personal experience with God. Ephesians 2:16 says that "he might reconcile *both* unto God." Both the Gentile and the Jew needed this reconciliation. Now, in the new covenant both have been brought together. We read of this in Ephesians 2:14-15: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances . . ." Who was that "law of commandments" applicable to? It was not applicable to the Gentile, but it was applicable to the Jew. Paul was talking not only about the condition the Gentiles were in, but he was talking about the position the Jews were in as well.

Look again at verse 15, which says, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [the old Jewish nation and the Gentile people] one new man . . ." They both needed the vicarious work of Jesus Christ. Concerning real redemption, the Jew was as far off as the Gentile was. Again, Ephesians 2:16 tells us, "And that he might reconcile both unto God [both Jew and Gentile; one needed reconciled as badly as the other] in one body by the cross . . ." It was Christ (verse 13) who brought them nigh, or gave them access; He enabled them to come close, to have a relationship with Him, and to be able to enjoy His presence.

Hebrews 12:22 reads, "But ye are [present tense] come . . ." Right when this epistle was penned, first century A.D., there was a people who had already come unto Mount Sion. Let us look at this in prophetic language. In Isaiah 2:1-2 we read: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days . . ." Let us biblically establish *when* the last days are. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past [speaking of the Old Testament era] unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days [this was written in A.D. 63] spoken unto us by his Son . . ." When the Son came on the stage of action and ushered in a new dispensation on the Day

of Pentecost, the last days commenced.

Someone might ask, "Can we substantiate it back farther than A.D. 63?" Peter, speaking on the Day of Pentecost, said: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [he was quoting Joel 2:28]; And it shall come to pass in the last days . . ." (Acts 2:16-17). The last days commenced on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 33).

Go back to Isaiah 2:2-3, which reads: "And it shall come to pass in the last days [or this Gospel Day], that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord [Old Testament Israel could not go up to the Mount Sinai; they were not allowed to; we read that in Exodus 19:23], to the house of the God of Jacob; [What was the Prophet Isaiah expressing? What does this text represent?] and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion [speaking of Mount Zion] shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

What a vivid contrast! The people of the Old Testament could not go up into Mount Sinai, but today we are *invited* up into Mount Zion. While man could not ascend into Sinai, we are invited to ascend to the heights of Zion. What else has changed? Under the old economy, God was a "thick darkness" (Exodus 20:21) to the people. Although the Scripture tells us that God is light, the people of Israel were in darkness. When they looked at God, all they could see was a thick darkness. However, when Jesus came on the scene, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light" (Matthew 4:16). Light sprung up; a new day dawned; a new era commenced.

In Matthew 4:16 Jesus was addressing people in Judaism. Matthew 4:14-16 reads: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias [which is the Greek translation for the Hebrew word *Isaiah*] the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; [Who were these people? The land of Zabulon and Nephthalim was Jewish territory. Thus, these were tribes of Israel (Numbers 2:7 and 29).] The people which sat in darkness [it was the Jewish people who were in darkness] saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

The people were in darkness because they were under the light of the moon, a lesser light. Let us go back to prophecy again. Isaiah 30:26 is a prophetic utterance that has reference to our day. Let us look at the symbolism employed there. It says, "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

At the dawn of Creation God made two great lights. Genesis 1:16 states, "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night . . ." The Psalmist gave an accurate description of what these lights were. Psalm 136:8-9 says: "The sun to rule by day . . . The moon and stars to rule by night." The greater light was the "sun to rule by day" and the lesser light, or the moon, was "to rule the night" (Genesis 1:16).

When time was instituted, it was instituted with night, or evening, first. You can read that all the way through the Genesis account: "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the *evening* and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5); "And the *evening* and the morning were the second day" (verse 8); "And the *evening* and the morning were the third day" (verse 13). So it was through the balance of Creation. The *evening* came first. Thus, when God instituted a dispensation, the Jewish night came first.

Since the evening came first, it was under the lesser light—the moon. That is why Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law having a shadow . . ." At night one operates in shadows, or in darkness. The moon casts enough light to see to move about, but not enough light to see things clearly. In the physical night, you see shadows, reflections, and outlines. That is what the people saw under the Old Testament economy—outlines and shadows; but they did not see the realities themselves. Although there was a lesser light to rule the night, in the spiritual reality it was a time of much darkness. They were under the dark Jewish night.

Look at the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 30:5. He said, "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." God's people wept under that Jewish night; they longed to see this Gospel Day. They inquired into it; they anxiously awaited it; they wept for it. But, thank God, though weeping may endure for a night, joy comes in the morning. How do you receive joy? Galatians 5:22 tells us that "the fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy." Romans 14:17 says that "the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Jesus came in the morning, when the Jewish night was ended and a new day dawned. When Jesus came, joy came; a real experience of salvation was made available by the new covenant.

When Jesus came, the day star arose, and a new day dawned. That dark Jewish night was ended when a new day dawned, when a new era commenced. We read in 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place . . ." When Jesus Christ came on the scene in His first advent, it was "a dark place." Isaiah 53:2 tells us He came "as a root out of a dry ground." The "dry ground" was the time between Malachi and John the Baptist, a period of 434 years when man did not hear from God (Daniel's sixty-two prophetic weeks, $62 \times 7 = 434$; Daniel 9:29). Though prophecy had grown brighter, yet conditions had grown darker, just as it does many times, right before dawn. Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Light sprung up. The day star arose.

Who is that day star? Revelation 22:16 states, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." That bright and morning star, that day star who

brought in the new day, is Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 6:2 says, ". . . I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is [present tense] the day of salvation." This new day that dawned is "the day of salvation."

If people had salvation under the Old Testament, there would have been no need for a new day to dawn, and that new day would not have been denoted as the "*day* of salvation." Salvation is an availability under the New Testament economy. It was not a reality or an availability under the Old Testament economy. This New Testament era is the "*day* of salvation."

First John 1:5 reads, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Under that old economy Exodus 20:21 very clearly speaks of "the thick darkness where God was." Yet, God is light. It was only thick darkness that Israel saw because they were in darkness. But now we have the privilege of walking in that light and having fellowship with God Himself (1 John 1:7).

What a contrast there is between these two covenants. It is no wonder the Hebrew writer's recurring theme and word was better, better, better. He called it a "better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6); "better hope" (Hebrews 7:19); "better testament" (Hebrews 7:22); "better promises" (Hebrews 8:6); and "better sacrifices" (Hebrews 9:23).

Why is the new covenant far superior to the old? What are the distinctions between the dispensations? In Hebrews 9:23 the penman declared, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." When the Hebrew writer spoke of "better sacrifices than these," Hebrews 9:12 tells us what he was comparing it to: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood . . ." He was comparing the "blood of goats and calves" to "his [Christ's] own blood."

The old sacrifices consisted of "goats and calves" (Hebrews 9:12) and "of bulls and of goats" (Hebrews 10:4). Those sacrifices were not willing; they had no power to exercise or operate a will. But Christ did. Hebrews 10:7 tells us, "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." Jesus was a willing sacrifice. John 10:17-18 says: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." Jesus had the ability to exercise the power of will, and He was willing to lay down His life. No man took it; He laid it down.

Let us look a little deeper. Sin demanded a penalty. We read in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death." This is not a New Testament concept; this is as old as time. To see that this is true, let us go back to the Book of Beginnings, Genesis, Chapter 2, and read where the Lord instructed Adam. Verse 17 says, "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." This was not speaking of physical death, because Genesis 5:5 tells us that Adam lived 930 years. Physical death was not activated by sin.

Physical death was always in the plan of God, even prior to the Fall of Man. How do we know? Genesis 1:28, which is before the Fall, states, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . ." He would not have told them to *replenish* the earth unless there was something in force that was going to *diminish* it. Physical death was already in the plan of God. God made man a mortal creature. God knew the earth would need replenished because man was going to die. Death was part of the natural process. Hebrews 9:27 says that "it is appointed unto men once to die." Although that Scripture is in the New Testament, the Psalmist said, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). God's Word was settled in Heaven before God ever inspired the Hebrew writer to write it down for us.

Sin did not activate *physical* death; so this death that is spoken of in Genesis must be *spiritual* death. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they died, and fellowship was broken right when sin entered in. I want you to see that sin requires a penalty. We read in Ezekiel 18:4, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." When one sins, it is the *soul*, not the *body*, that dies. We are talking about spiritual death, separation from God. The penalty of sin required death.

Go back to Hebrews 10:4. It says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Why could the blood of bulls and goats not take away sin? Where was the Law limited? Romans 8:3 tells us, "For what the law could not do, in that it [the Law] was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." How did Jesus condemn sin in the flesh? He was a creature of choice, just as we are. Hebrews 2:16 tells us, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Verse 14 tells us that He was a partaker "of flesh and blood."

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He was a better sacrifice because He had a will, and in the face of temptation, He "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). No other sacrifice was capable of achieving that. Bulls and goats had no will, no power of choice. They had no human flesh; therefore, they could not be victorious over it. But Jesus, made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" after the seed of Abraham, was tempted in all points as we are, yet was without sin. He condemned sin in the flesh. He was victorious over it. He had human flesh, but He was victorious over all the powers of the enemy.

Look again at Hebrews 9:12, which says, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood . . ." Both sacrifices gave blood, but what was the distinction? Jesus gave far more than His blood. Hebrews 9:14 tells us, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself . . . ?" He offered more than blood and a body. A goat

or a bull could offer its blood and its body, but that was as far as it could go. But Jesus offered Himself. He had more to offer than the animals. Isaiah 53:10 and 12 read: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his *soul* an offering for sin . . . Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out *his soul* unto death." Jesus not only gave His body and His blood, but He also gave His soul.

Jesus satisfied the justice of God and fulfilled the penalty for sin in feeling the pangs of the death of the damned. Jesus cried in Matthew 27:46, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" The verse continues, ". . . that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus was feeling the pangs of death, the pangs of hell. He was dying the death of the damned. He was pouring out His soul. His soul became an offering for sin. His soul became sin for us, and He died a death separated from God, the death of the lost.

Psalms 116:3 says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me . . ." At Calvary, while Jesus was assuming the sins of the world, God had to turn His back. God will not look on sin. He will not fellowship sin anywhere, not even in His own Son. Thus, when God turned His back, Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He felt the pains of a lost soul. No animal sacrifices could have ever experienced this, because they have no soul. No Old Testament sacrifice could have ever satisfied the penalty of sin. But Jesus defeated sin in life, which made Him a vicarious sacrifice in death. Because of that, He was able to go to the Cross in purity and holiness to satisfy the justice of God.

The new covenant has a superior sacrifice for sin. Jesus offered not only blood and body, but also His soul. Because a superior sacrifice was offered, sin has been acceptably dealt with, defeated, and dispatched. Speaking of the old economy, Galatians 3:22 says, "But the scripture [the Old Testament] hath concluded all under sin . . ."

The question might arise, "What about Job?" Bear in mind that chronologically Job is the oldest book of the Bible, written in the proximity of 2058 B.C. So, when the patriarch Job lived and penned the Book of Job, there were no other biblical writings. There was no Bible, no Law, and no understanding as we have today. At the beginning of Job's trial, Job 1:22 tells us, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

On the surface, this may seem to be saying that Job never sinned. But the first part of that verse says, "In all this [or Concerning this matter, up to this time] Job sinned not." However, remember that where there is no knowledge, there is no sin. Job was a patriarch without the benefit of the Bible. Romans 5:13 says, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." This is one reason Job "sinned not." "Sin is not imputed when there is no law," or when there is no knowledge or understanding. Go back to the Book of Job. After God came on the scene and started talking to Job, Job received some enlightenment. Job 40:4 says, "Behold, I am vile," and in Job 42:6 he said, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." After the Word came (bringing knowledge and understanding), Job repented.

Speaking of Christ, Hebrews 10:12 tells us, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." What did He do when He did that? Ephesians 4:8 says, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive . . ." In other words, whatever bound a man, Jesus bound it. We read in 1 John 3:8: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose [what purpose? sin] the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." What are the "works of the devil?" Sin!

Jesus came to deal with sin. This superior sacrifice has successfully dealt with sin. How did He accomplish this? First John 3:8 tells us Jesus' purpose was to destroy the "works of the devil." How did He accomplish that? Keep in mind that we are comparing and contrasting covenants. The old covenant concluded all under sin (Galatians 3:22), but Jesus came to usher in the new covenant. Matthew 1:21 says, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save [future tense, at the time these words were uttered] his people [the Jewish race] from their sins." When these words were spoken by the angel, evidently salvation was not an availability but was going to be an availability when Christ accomplished His work.

To see how Christ accomplished this, look at what Hebrews 9:23 says: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these [speaking of those articles under the old economy]; but the heavenly things [or the spiritual realities] themselves with better sacrifices [plural] than these." This verse speaks of the new economy, the one where the heavenly things that are ushered in have better sacrifices.

What are these "better sacrifices"? First Thessalonians 5:23 says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly [or completely]; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body [there is man's three-faceted nature] . . ." Man is threefold: spirit, soul, and body. Christ was made in the likeness of man; so Christ came in a threefold nature, and He "offered himself" (Hebrews 9:14). First of all, He gave His body (Hebrews 10:5). The life of the body is in the blood. Thus, He offered His body and His blood. Hebrews 9:22 says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Jesus shed His blood, and that blood has an important place in the redemptive plan. Romans 3:25 tells us, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past . . ." The blood remits sins "that are past." There is no life-giving substance or quality in the blood. It is for "remission." Jesus offered His body and His blood for remission.

What else did Jesus offer? We read in Isaiah 53:10 that Jesus made "his soul an offering for sin." He paid the penalty of sin by experiencing the death of the damned. Hebrews 9:14 tells us that Jesus also possessed the eternal Spirit. Notice what occurred when He yielded up the ghost on Calvary's tree. John 19:34 tells us, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and

forthwith came there out blood and water." We have already learned that the blood was for the remission of sins. But what does the water represent? John 7:37-39 reads: "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 . . .)" What did the water represent? The Spirit. Man must have water to live. Without water, man dies. Man is composed of about two-thirds water. Also, the earth is composed of about two-thirds water. Without water there is no life. Man can go without food much longer than he can go without water. Water is life, and the Spirit is life.

How was Jesus able to break the power of sin and death? Paul wrote in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." If you read Romans, Chapter 7, you will find that Paul was talking about his experience under the Law. He spoke of it in one place as "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:6). Although he was blameless in the eyes of the Mosaic law, he was still bound under the law of sin and death. What freed him from the law of sin and death? The Spirit of life that came from Christ Jesus. When His side was pierced, out flowed blood for the remission of sins and water for regeneration, or the rebirth. Christ gave new life to mankind.

Jesus was a superior sacrifice, One who sufficiently conquered sin. How? Christ's offering of His soul satisfied the penalty, and His Spirit has brought salvation to mankind. In the blood we find remission, in the pouring out of Christ's soul we find retribution, and in His Spirit we receive regeneration. What a contrast in these covenants! Christ offered "better sacrifices" (Hebrews 9:23), sacrifices that effectively dealt with sin. This new covenant provides man with the Spirit as an abiding reality. Jesus said in John 14:16, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." This abiding reality was not available under the old economy, but thank God, the bringing in of a better hope has made it available to all.

First John 1:1-3 reads: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of *life*; (For the *life* was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal *life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship [*fellowship* in the Greek is **koinonia**, which means to 'share in common'] with us: and truly our fellowship [or what we share in common] is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

What do we share in common? What is it that enables us to be in fellowship with God, the Father, and Jesus Christ? It is this *life*, which only came about when Jesus gave His Spirit. The Spirit, according to Romans 8:10, is life. When Jesus offered Himself, part of that offering was the eternal Spirit. We can now have that eternal Spirit, and that Spirit is life. When we have life, we are in fellowship with the Father, with the Son, and with everyone else who has this life.

Christ brought the Old Testament and its darkness to a conclusion by ending the night and bringing in a new day. When that new day dawned, it came with light, just as the natural day comes with the brilliance of light. He brought light and reality to the souls of men.

There are four major contrasts between the covenants. Sacrifices, sin, salvation, and the Spirit were dealt with in a far different way by this new economy than was ever possible under the old economy. I trust the Spirit of God has enlightened the eyes of your understanding. Christ gave us far more than just His blood. False religion often does not see any further than the blood. Jesus not only gave His blood, but He also poured out His soul unto death, to pay sin's penalty and to deal with the retribution that was coming to mankind. He also offered the eternal Spirit so that His Spirit could move right into us and regenerate us so that we could walk even as He walked (1 John 2:6) and have power over sin (Romans 6:14).

May God help us to understand and appreciate in a greater way the terrible, yet tremendous work that was wrought by Christ and our precious privilege of living in a day when we may enjoy the full benefit of it!

The Transition of the Testaments

Hebrews 9:16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

These words give essential insight concerning the testaments. The Apostle Paul penned in 2 Corinthians 3:14, "But their minds were blinded [speaking of those under the Old Testament era]: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ." The Apostle Paul was referring to the testament that was given to Moses and recorded on tables of stone. To read of what occurred when that Old Testament was given, back up to 2 Corinthians 3:7. It says, "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses . . ." The testament that was given to Moses was one "engraven in stones" and is referred to as "the old testament" (verse 14).

Jesus, the Apostle Paul, and the Hebrew writer all made reference to the New Testament. All three synoptic Gospel writers recorded our Lord's expression concerning "the new testament" (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). In 2 Corinthians 3:6 the Apostle Paul referred to it in that same manner: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the *new* testament." The Hebrew writer spoke of it in Hebrews 9:15, saying, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the *new* testament . . ."

As we begin to give consideration to the words incorporated in our lesson text, several questions arise: What actually is a testament? What puts a testament in force? What had to be accomplished before the testament could be executed? Who are the beneficiaries? What are the benefits or the inheritance? These are valid questions that we want to address as we examine this text.

Let us begin with the first question, What is a testament? The original language of the New Testament is Greek. The Greek word for *testament* is **diatheke**, and it means "a disposition." *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* defines *testament* as "a disposition, arrangement, the last disposition which one makes of his possessions after his death, a testament or a will." So in reality, a testament is a will. It is the ability to pass on to specified heirs what you possess. The purpose of a literal will is to reveal your wishes, or your desires, and to pass on to your heirs the possessions you have specified.

What puts a will in force? As long as you live, your will is revocable. You can go to an attorney's office, write up a will, and make whatever disposition you choose of your property. Later, if you wish, you can completely revoke or alter that disposition of property. As long as you live, as long as the testator (the one who creates the testament or the will) lives, that will is revocable. It can be changed.

As long as I am living, I can alter the terms of my will, but when I die, that will becomes irrevocable, or unchangeable. While I am living, my will has no force at all. My heirs cannot walk into my house and say, "Your will says that such and such belongs to me, so I am coming to take it." As long as I am living, it is still my property and under my control. Thus, my will is revocable. Its terms are subject to change.

What makes a will unalterable, or unchangeable? When does it become irrevocable? When do its terms go into force? Our text clearly states that a testament (or a will) is in force "after men are dead." Jesus said that the New Testament would not take effect until His blood was shed. All three synoptic writers recorded this. Let us look at Matthew's Gospel. We will lift that account rather than visit all three of the synoptic writers as they all reiterate the same truth.

In Matthew 26:28 Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many [when Jesus spoke these words, His blood had not yet been shed] for the remission of sins." One of the many truths contained in this passage is that the New Testament was not in force until Jesus' blood was shed. Again, a testament is not in force as long as the testator lives. It was not until Jesus died and shed His blood that this testament came into force. The words of Hebrews 9:16 are expressly clear. This verse in The Amplified Bible is rendered in this manner: "For where there is a [last] will and testament involved, the death of the one who made it must be established."

Under current civil law, it is not good enough to go to the probate court and say, "Mother died" or "Father died." They want a certified copy of the Death Certificate. They want to establish the fact of death; they want a certificate signed by the coroner or by the medical personnel who attended and certified the death. Even if one dies at home, he is not officially, legally dead until the coroner comes in and pronounces him dead and signs the Death Certificate. Thus, a death is required to place a will and testament in force.

What placed the first testament in force? Hebrews 9:18-20 tells us: "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you." We find that the first testament was established by the death "of calves and of goats" (verse 19). When verse 20 says, "This is the blood of the testament . . ." it is speaking of the "*first* testament" (verse 18).

The first testament was placed in force by the death of those animals in accordance with God's Word. But bear in mind, whatever dies can only pass on what it possesses. I could put in my will that I want to leave my heirs a million dollars; but if the million dollars is not there, I cannot leave it. You can only leave what you have. The calves and goats did not possess the Holy Spirit nor did they have spiritual life, so they could not pass it on. But our Testator did have the Spirit of God and did possess spiritual life. He could pass it on, and thank God, He did!

Let us look again at Hebrews 9:17, which states, "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." This reveals that as long as Christ lived, people were still under the Old Testament. While our Testator, Jesus Christ, lived and walked the shores of time, the New Testament was of no force; it had no strength at all. The Old Testament was still in effect as long as Christ lived.

Some people say the disciples enjoyed New Testament salvation, were regenerated, and were converted before Jesus died. But this does not line up with God's eternal Word. Verse 17 tells us that "a testament is . . . of no strength at all while the testator liveth." While Christ lived a physical life here on these shores of time, the disciples were still under the Old Testament. The fountain opened "for sin and for uncleanness," that Zechariah 13:1 prophesied of, was not opened until after Jesus gave up the ghost on Calvary (John 19:33-34). Prior to that it was a fountain sealed.

When Christ came in His first advent, He had to accomplish certain things before He could pass them on. His earthly life was a period of transition; it was a transition of testaments. In reality, they were still under the old economy. Why did Jesus tell the leper in Mark 1:44 to "shew thyself to the priest"? It was because they were still under the old covenant, the Old Testament. The old economy was still in force.

There was a transitional period because Christ had to fulfill the old and institute the tenets of the new. In Matthew, Chapter 5, Jesus gave His inaugural public message, the Sermon on the Mount, the first publicly recorded discourse after He commenced His ministry. In Matthew 5:17-18 He said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

What was one of the major things that Jesus came to do? The answer is throughout Matthew, Chapter 5: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . : But I say unto you . . ." (verses 21-22); "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . : But I say unto you . . ." (verses 27-28); "It hath been said . . . : But I say unto you . . ." (verses 31-32); "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . : But I say unto you . . ." (verses 33-34); "Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . : But I say unto you . . ." (verses 38-39); "Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . : But I say unto you . . ." (verses 43-44). Jesus quoted the old, and then He brought the reality, the fulfillment, the institution of the tenets of the new economy.

Jesus appeared to the brethren on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection, and Luke 24:27 tells us that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he [Jesus] expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." After He revealed Himself unto them, verses 44-45 tell us: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things *must be fulfilled*, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." What did they need to understand? That all things must be fulfilled, and He fulfilled them.

When Jesus uttered the word on Calvary's tree, "Tetelestai," or "It is finished," He was fulfilling the tenets of the Old Testament. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, He continued to fulfill more. Before this New Testament, or new will, could be executed, Jesus had to fulfill all things so that He might be in a position to pass an inheritance onto mankind.

If the New Testament was not in force while Jesus was alive (Hebrews 9:17), then New Testament *salvation* was not in force, or an availability, while He was alive. Hebrews 1:14 tells us, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" The inheritance is salvation. We are "heirs of salvation." How could mankind receive an inheritance or become an heir if the Testator had not yet died? Here is where confusion arises, but in reality, those who were with Christ during His earthly sojourn did not receive New Testament salvation until the Spirit of God came on the Day of Pentecost.

Some might say, "Well, repentance was taught, and they repented." Let us study *repentance*. John the Baptizer, the forerunner of our Lord, said in Matthew 3:2, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He preached repentance. He told the Pharisees and the Sadducees in Matthew 3:8, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." When Jesus commenced His public ministry, Matthew 4:17 says, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." However, bear in mind that the teaching and practice of repentance is recorded repeatedly in the Old Testament. Repentance is not a New Testament teaching only; it was an Old Testament practice as well.

Solomon, speaking in 1 Kings 8:47-48, said: "Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies . . ." Repentance was being taught in the proximity of 1004 B.C.

In Job 42:6 Job said, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This was written in 2058 B.C. In Ezekiel 14:6 we read, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols;

and turn away your faces from all your abominations." Ezekiel 18:30 says: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Thus, we can see that repentance was practiced and taught throughout the Old Testament economy. The Scriptures tell us on more than one occasion that God repented (Genesis 6:7 and 1 Samuel 15:11). Certainly, the Lord was not gaining an experience of salvation. There is a vivid distinction between *repentance* and *salvation*.

Although repentance plays a vital role in salvation, in and of itself repentance is not salvation. God repented, but He certainly did not need salvation. The word *repentance* means "a reversal, a change of mind, or a change of direction." In 2 Corinthians 7:10 we read, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation . . ." If it works as it ought, godly sorrow will lead you to repentance, and repentance will lead you to salvation; but there is a definite distinction between repentance and salvation.

Repentance portrays a complete change of direction. God did that. He said, "It repenteth me that I have made man" (Genesis 6:7). So He changed His mind and destroyed all but eight. Therefore, to say people had New Testament salvation before the Day of Pentecost because repentance was taught or because they repented is flawed and faulty thinking.

Let us give consideration to the thought of conversion and regeneration. In reality, both are different expressions for the same event. Conversion and regeneration are wrought by the Spirit of God and were not available until the Spirit came. We read in Matthew 18:2-3: "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." When Jesus said, "Except ye be converted . . . ye shall not enter the kingdom," whom was He addressing? Verse 1 tells us that He was addressing His disciples. Evidently, at this point the disciples were not converted and had not entered the kingdom. Look again at verse 3: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter . . ." They had not entered into the kingdom yet, otherwise they would not have needed instruction on how to enter. Jesus was giving them instruction on the requirements to enter into the kingdom. He sat a little child in the midst and said, "Except ye . . . become as little children . . ." How does one become as a little child? There is only one way—through a birth.

Jesus said to Simon Peter in Luke 22:31-32: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted [future tense] . . ." Obviously, Peter was not converted at this point, for at this point conversion was not a possibility. Matthew 18:3 in the Diaglott says, "Unless you be changed." Yet, man could not "be changed" under the old economy. That is why Jesus spoke of it to Peter as "when thou art [future tense] converted"; it was not available then.

After Christ went to Calvary, ascended into Heaven, and sent the Holy Ghost, Peter preached in Acts 3:19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . ." Now it was a reality. After the Testator died, the testament came into force and conversion became an availability. Peter preached to *repent and be converted*. That shows that there is a distinction between repentance and conversion, or between repentance and salvation.

Acts 28:27-28 says: "For the heart of this people [quoting prophecy concerning Old Israel; Isaiah 6:10] is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." What will they hear? "The salvation of God." What will it do? Verse 27 tells us that they "should be converted." Salvation became an availability and a possibility at this time, after the Day of Pentecost.

Let us consider regeneration. We read in Matthew 19:28, "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [when is regeneration possible?] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory . . ." When did the Son of man sit "in the throne of his glory"? Hebrews 8:1 tells us, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." To see who this high priest is, consider Hebrews 4:14, which reads, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God . . ." This high priest is Jesus.

Hebrews 8:1 tells us that Jesus is back on the throne of His glory. Verse 2 says that He is "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." This "true tabernacle" is not an old earthly tabernacle; it is not bound by the things of this old earth where one has to make remembrance again of sins every year. Verse 6 reads, "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant . . ." What is this better covenant? Verse 10 answers that question: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days . . . ; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." How did that happen? Through the Holy Spirit that Jesus gave when He went back to the right hand of the Father. When He sent forth the Holy Spirit, regeneration, or rebirth, became possible.

How did Jesus write His laws in their hearts? Second Corinthians 3:3 says, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." God's laws are written in the heart by the Spirit of God. When did Jesus send the Spirit of God? When did He make regeneration possible? When He ascended back on high (Hebrews 8:1).

The Greek word for *regeneration* is **paliggenesia**. According to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, it means "a new birth, a re-creation." How do we obtain a new birth, or this regeneration spoken of in Matthew? Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done . . ." That is what the Old Testament, or the old economy, was full of—"works of righteousness." When Paul was giving his credentials in the Philippian letter, he said, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:6). It was a righteousness of *works*; it was not an actual righteousness.

Look again at Titus 3:5. It reads, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us [what does salvation consist of?], by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." What does "the washing of regeneration" mean? The Diaglott calls it, "A bath of a new birth." What bath, or washing, is that? When we come in old-time Bible repentance, 1 John 1:7 tells us that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Romans, Chapter 3, tells us that faith in His blood remits the sins that are past. However, this is not a "bath" that the new birth brings.

What bath does the new birth bring? Let us go back in prophecy. Zechariah 13:1 begins by employing a prophetic expression: "In that day." Acts, Chapter 2, tells us what "that day" is. Peter, preaching on the Day of Pentecost, said in Acts 2:16, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." In other words, "This is that which was spoken of in the Prophetic era." This Gospel Dispensation is "that day." Zechariah 13:1 reads, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened [The song entitled *The All-Cleansing Fountain* reads, 'There's a fountain opened in the house of God, Where the vilest of sinners may go, And all test the power of the crimson flood, Of the blood that makes whiter than snow.'] to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin *and* [a conjunction] for uncleanness." Jesus was crucified on Calvary's tree; and after He yielded up the Ghost, John 19:34 tells us, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." The blood was for the remission of sins (Romans 3:25), and the water is a picture of the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39) that brings the new life (Romans 8:10), that brings regeneration.

Back in Zechariah 13:1, when that fount was opened, it was "for sin and for uncleanness." The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from *all* sin: it remits the sins that are past. But what about the "uncleanness"? This is a real necessity because this is what caused man to sin; and unless this uncleanness is removed, man will go right back into sin again. Zechariah 13:2 reads, "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the *unclean* spirit to pass out of the land." Man does what he does because of the spirit he possesses. If a man is worldly, he has a worldly spirit. If he lies, he lies because he has a lying spirit.

When that fount was opened in the Savior's side, forthwith flowed blood and water—blood for the remission of sins and water representing the Spirit of God. When we come to Christ and gain that experience, we receive the washing of regeneration, or the bath of a new birth. What does God bathe? What does He wash? He cleanses our spirit from the "unclean spirit." He takes out that which caused us to sin. Forgiving a man for a sinful deed does not give him power to keep him from doing it again. The blood cleanses the sin, or the wrong deed, but the Spirit of God cleanses the spirit—that which caused us to do the deed.

Let us read Matthew 12:28-29: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he [speaking of Christ, by the Spirit of God] first bind the strong man [the strong man is the devils, or spirits, referred to in verse 28; the spirit of the enemy is the unclean spirit]? and then he will spoil his house." These verses clearly are talking about the work that the Spirit of God does by expelling an unclean spirit.

Let us read this same account in Luke 11:15. It states, "But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." Look at what Jesus said in verses 20-22 and 24: "But if I with the finger of God [in Matthew 12:28 it is termed the 'Spirit of God'] cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man [to understand who that strong man is, look at whom He had been casting out: devils, demoniac and unclean spirits; the spirit people possess is what causes them to do what they do] armed [he is armed with darkness and deceit] keepeth his palace [his palace is where he dwells—in the sinner's heart and life], his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he [the Spirit of God] shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. . . . When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man . . ." When the Spirit of God comes in, the stronger than the strong man comes in, binding the strong man (the unclean spirit), and casting him out. The bath of the new birth is when the Spirit of God expels those unclean spirits from your heart.

That is why this fountain deals with sin and uncleanness. Sin is the product—the deed that is done—and the unclean spirit is the cause that produced the end result of sin. The majority in the religious world are only dealing with sin. They say they are sorry, but they are not truly repenting. If they were truly sorry, they would change directions. However, they confess their sins and say they are sorry; yet they go right back into the same sin. Why? They never received the washing of regeneration: their spirit was not cleansed. When your spirit is cleansed, the unclean, lying spirit will go out, and you will quit lying; the unclean, worldly spirit will go out, and you will quit being worldly.

Someone may ask, "What about the story of Nicodemus?" Let us look at it in its context. John 3:5-7 says: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That

which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Now, Christ was not finished speaking. Verses 5-7 were only part of the discourse. In verse 14 He said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." What was Jesus saying? John 12:32-33 reads: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."

So when you view John 3:14 in conjunction with John 3:5-7, you will see that this new birth was not available until after Christ was lifted up, or until after He died. If you read the context, it is very clear. Jesus was letting us know that this new birth was not available until after He was lifted up.

What kind of birth is the new birth? John 3:8 reads, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It is a spiritual birth, a birth by the Spirit. John 7:39 says, "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive [future tense]: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given [why?]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" Thus, they could not have had a birth of the Spirit, or have been born of the Spirit, because the Spirit "was not yet given" and would not be given until after He died.

Remember, the Testator did not give what He possessed until after the testament was in force, or until after His death. As a matter of fact, even after a testator dies, his heirs will not get their inheritance immediately. There is a process, called the probate process. The will has to be produced; then there is a reading of the will; then the will has to be sent off to the Probate Court to the Probate Judge to be "perfected," or entered. After that, the will has to go through a process called "probate." Then when the judge adjudicates that all is right and proper and he approves the will, then there is a distribution of the proceeds. According to how simple or complex an estate is, it could be several weeks, months, or several years before the will is completely probated. When Christ died, the gift, or the benefits, were not immediate. There was a time between when the Testator died and when the Holy Spirit (the promise; Luke 24:49) was given on the Day of Pentecost.

Under the old economy, the Holy Ghost was not an abiding presence. He did not bring a new birth to men. You might say, "What about Luke 1:15, which says that John the Baptist was 'filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb'?" We read in Luke 1:41 that "Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost." Luke 1:67 tells that "Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost."

Acts 2:5 says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" Then Acts 4:31 says, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" Here we read that they were filled again. Did they run out of the Holy Ghost between Chapters 2 and 4? To understand these verses, we need to realize that Luke and Acts were both penned by a common writer—Luke. Also, we must understand how Luke used this word that the English language translates as "filled." In the Greek language it is the word **pletho**. According to *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, it means "be under full influence." In the preceding passages, it is not referring to anything in this specific word except "being under full influence" for a purpose.

Let us go back and look at these verses again. Luke 1:41-42 says: "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled [**pletho**, meaning 'under the full influence'] with the Holy Ghost: And she spake" She was under the influence for one purpose—she spake prophetic words. Luke 1:67 tells us that "his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost [**pletho**], and prophesied, saying" He was under the influence for a purpose—he prophesied.

Acts 2:4 reads, "And they were all filled [**pletho**] with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak" The apostles were influenced for a purpose in this particular setting, and they began to speak. We read in Acts 4:18 that they were told to not teach any more in the name of Jesus. We find in verse 29 that they prayed, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Then, verse 31 says, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled [**pletho**] with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." They prayed for boldness. They came under the influence of the Holy Ghost, so they had boldness instead of fear. When Luke used this word "filled," He was talking about being under the influence for a purpose.

In each of these passages, the word "filled" is not speaking of an abiding presence. Yes, in Acts they had an abiding presence; they had the indwelling Holy Spirit. But in the verses previously mentioned, the word "filled" is not portraying that. Acts 10:47 lets us know that they had that reality. At that time, they had already received the Holy Ghost. But prior to the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was not an availability.

Jesus, speaking in John 7:38, said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Without this "living water," there is no life. The Spirit is the "rivers of living water." Water is an absolute essential to life, whether it is physical or spiritual. The Scripture is very clear in verse 39: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given." Prior to Pentecost, they did not have the "rivers of living water"; they did not have this new life. Romans 8:10 tells us that "the Spirit is life." They did not have the water prior to Pentecost, so they did not have new life prior to Pentecost.

What are the benefits? What is the inheritance? What was the promise? In John 14:16 Jesus said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." That was the promise: "Abide with you for ever."

If that had been a reality prior to this time, it would not have been a promise. If they already had an abiding presence, it would not have been a novel thing for Jesus to promise one. Again, they did not have an abiding presence of the Holy Spirit under the old economy.

In John 16:7 Jesus said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: [Where was He going? He was going to Calvary and after that, ascending into Heaven.] for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you [before Christ went away, the Comforter had not come to mankind in the sense of an abiding presence]; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." These were the promises.

Notice Jesus' words prior to His ascension. In Luke 24:49 Jesus said, "And, behold, I send the promise of my father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." To see what this "promise of my father" was, go to Acts 1:4-5. It reads: "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The promise was to be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

When you receive the promise, you receive the Holy Ghost. Being baptized with the Holy Ghost was the fulfillment of the promise. When you receive the Holy Ghost, what will He do? Acts 1:8 tells us, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." What kind of power? Well, there are many facets to this. Acts, Chapter 1, speaks of the promise. In Chapter 2 we see the advent of the Holy Spirit, which was the power that was promised. Now let us turn to 2 Peter 1:3-4. It says: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these [by the power and promises] ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

What was Peter talking about? Jesus said to "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power" (Luke 24:49). In other words, He said to wait for the promise. What was the promise? You will receive the Holy Ghost, and when you receive Him, you will have power. What kind of power? At least one aspect is the power to become a partaker of His divine nature. When did it happen? On the Day of Pentecost.

To see if this is the inheritance, look at the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:10-13: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times [when the old came to its point of being fulfilled, Jesus Christ came and ushered in a new dispensation] he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

Look at these verses closely. Verse 11 speaks of "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance," and verse 13 tells of "the gospel of your salvation." What is the inheritance? It is salvation. ". . . after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (verse 13). There is the inheritance. When we obtain salvation, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Who are the beneficiaries of this will? Verse 13 says that those who "heard" and "believed . . . were sealed." When you hear and believe the Gospel, then you are sealed. The Holy Spirit moves in, and you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. That is who obtains the inheritance.

Let us lay another old, false conception to rest. When the Spirit comes to us, He is a person. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the triune Godhead. He does not come in portions or in measures. He is either there, or He is not there. You do not get saved and receive a portion of the Spirit, and then later get sanctified and become filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a liquid; He is not like gasoline that you have to fill up on when you are running low. The Holy Spirit is a person, and you cannot get more or less of a person. You either have His presence, or you do not have His presence. In reality, it is not a matter of us getting more of the Spirit; it is a matter of the Spirit getting more of us, of our coming under His influence in a greater way. In Ephesians 5:18 we are admonished to "be filled with the Spirit." The Word *filled* in the Greek language means "under the influence of."

For an illustration, let us say that you had come to my home to live. Suddenly, my electric starts malfunctioning, and I think: "I don't know how to fix the lights. I am not an electrician." Then you say: "Well, I am an electrician; I have my card. I belong to the electrical union. Let me fix that." I yield to you. I let you fix it. Now, I do not have any more of you than I did before. Your presence was there all along, but as I found what you could do and that my abilities were inadequate, I yielded to you. And you fixed the electric.

Let us say that a day or so later, the plumbing begins leaking, and I think, "I don't know what the problem with this sink is," and you say, "Well, I also can do some plumbing." The more I learn about you and what you can do, the more I yield to you. I do not have any more of you; you were already there. You dwelled there; you were already abiding there. I did not get any more of you, but I yielded to you, and as I yielded to you and got out of the way, you were able to do more for me.

That is a picture of the Holy Spirit. It is not a matter of us getting more of Him. It is a matter of the Spirit getting more of us, of our yielding to Him in a greater way. John 3:34 tells us, "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." Notice that the last two words in this verse—"unto him"—are italicized in the King

James Version. They are not in the original text. Translators inserted those words. The original says, "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure." The Holy Spirit does not come in portions or measures. He is either there, or He is not there.

Christ's earthly pilgrimage was a time of transition. Had those disciples died while Christ still lived, they would have been like any other Old Testament person whom Hebrews 12:23 defines as "just men," or justified men. They were not converted, for conversion was not available. They did not reflect the characteristics of being partakers of His divine nature.

Let us examine a few of these accounts and see if there is evidence of a changed nature or characteristics of conversion. Mark 9:33-34 reads: "And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace [they held their peace because of guilty consciences]: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest." Does that sound like an evidence of a converted heart? They disputed, or debated, who was going to be the greatest.

It is evident by examining other Scriptures that the disciples had no tolerance, grace, or soul burden working in their lives. We read in Matthew 15:22-23: "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away [what kind of a soul burden is that?]; for she crieth after us." In other words, they were saying, "She is bothering us; she is making too much racket; she is disturbing the peace." Does that sound like the attitude of a converted heart? Someone might ask, "Why is this important?" If the disciples had New Testament salvation before Pentecost, then people today can look at them and say, "Well, if they lived that way and got by, then I can live that way too." They were not converted, and you cannot live the same way they lived and be converted. That is the danger of thinking the Old Testament brethren had what we have today. If you believe that the disciples before Pentecost had conversion, then you can say: "Look how they lived. Look at what they were involved in, and they were clear with God. So, I guess I can do the same thing and be clear with God." No, you cannot live the same way they lived and have real conversion.

Let us look at another example. Luke 9:54-55 tells us: "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias [or Elijah] did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." If they had possessed the Holy Spirit, they would not have acted that way. There must have been some other spirit than the Holy Spirit working. It was certainly not a manifestation of the Holy Spirit or of converted hearts.

Let us look at a few more Scriptures. John 18:10 states: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus." Is that the way a converted individual resolves his difficulties? Are those characteristics of the converted? No! That is why Jesus said to Peter "when thou art converted" (Luke 22:32). He was not converted at that point. These were the actions of a carnal, unregenerate man.

Look at the disciples' action in Acts 1:20-26 concerning a replacement for Judas Iscariot. Was this a move of the Holy Spirit? No. This was a move of carnal minds, because they said, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (verse 21). Yet, the one the Lord chose (the Apostle Paul) was not with them from the time John the Baptist came on the scene and all the way through. That was human thinking, human reasoning.

Acts 2:1 tells us, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord . . ." They were in one accord concerning the one thing Jesus spoke of in Acts 1:4: "wait for the promise of the Father." They were in one accord about that, but they surely were not in one accord about appointing a replacement for Judas. Some of them wanted Matthias, and some of them wanted Joseph. They appointed two, and then they had to cast lots to see which of the two. Thus, they were not in one accord; if there had not been some dissension among them, they would not have had to cast lots.

Another danger in thinking that these men were saved is the succession to that thought: "They voted, so we can vote too." That was out of order then, and that would be out of order today. That is not the way the Spirit of God sets members in the body. That is the way a carnal mind resolves issues.

Prior to Pentecost the disciples did not have conversion; they did not have the Holy Spirit; they did not have a change of nature. That is why Jesus told them to wait. They were not in any spiritual condition to go forth until they had experienced the real change themselves. (Neither is anyone ready to go forth today until first of all he or she has had a real change of heart and life.) Second Timothy 2:6 tells us, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." The last time Jesus told anybody to wait was when He told the disciples to wait until the promise of the Father was given, which came on the Day of Pentecost. But now we do not have to wait. If we will meet the Bible conditions, we can enjoy the benefits of this everlasting covenant.

Time after time, you can read accounts which reveal that the disciples did not have a change of nature until they received the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. Peter preached in Acts 2:21: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." He preached this on this Day of Pentecost. In verse 38 he said, "Repent, and be baptized [he was not speaking of water baptism, but of a spiritual baptism] every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The gift is the Holy Ghost. Remission and regeneration are what constitutes New Testament salvation.

Until the Spirit of God was given on the Day of Pentecost, New Testament salvation was not available, because the gift—the

inheritance—could not be given to the heirs until after the death of the Testator (Christ). When the Testator died and sealed the Word with His own blood, He then made a gift of what He had, and we became heirs of salvation, for He gave us what He had. Luke 4:1 tells us what Jesus had: "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost . . ." He gave man the Holy Ghost. That was the gift, the inheritance.

I trust you can see that there was a time of transition of testaments, a time when the Old was being fulfilled and the New was being instituted.

Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God . . ." We see that Christ offered Himself "through the eternal Spirit." The Old Testament sacrifices did not have the Spirit that Christ had. All they could do was give their lives, but He gave us life. He not only offered man the "blood of Christ" but also the "eternal Spirit." Romans 8:10 tells us that "the Spirit is life."

Hebrews 8:6 tells us that Christ is the "mediator of a better covenant." Thank God, this new covenant is far superior to anything they had under the old economy. We are privileged to enjoy it today!