

BIBLE EXPLORATIONS

March 1998
Volume 12, No. 2

...to know the love of Christ
which passeth knowledge
that ye might be filled with
all the fulness of God Eph 3:19

SOME QUESTIONABLE CASES

LAZARUS, THE

MALEFACTOR, AND OTHERS

In the previous article we considered Jonah and Paul, who were revived out of death to complete the tasks which God had prepared for them. Others also, in the Old Testament and New Testament, were raised and became witnesses to Israel of the power and glory of God. Such miracles were also signs to Israel. They showed God's endorsement of His servants, and that the words they spoke were His words.

1 Kings 17 records Elijah's raising of a widow's son. The woman had shown kindness to Elijah and so when her son died, Elijah sought God's power to revive him. He prayed, "**O Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul (life) come into him again'. ...and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. ...and Elijah said, 'See, thy son liveth.'**" By this act God received glory and Elijah was proved to be God's prophet. And, by this, the woman testified to the truth and power of God.

Jesus took compassion on a widow whose only son had died and was about to be buried. He touched the young man's bier, "**And He said, 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.'** And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak... And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us." (Lk 7:14-16)

When Jesus raised Lazarus it was a powerful witness to Israel that He was the Messiah, and many believed because of Lazarus. We read that, "**Then many of the Jews which**

Resurrection #9

came to Mary (Lazarus' sister), and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him." (Jn 11:45) Later many more came, "**...not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.**" (Jn 12:9-11)

In Luke 23:42,43, we read of a malefactor who was crucified along side Jesus. He believed on Jesus as Israel's King, and said unto Jesus, "**Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.**" However, Jesus did not agree to do that. Instead He told the malefactor, "**Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.**" Paradise was well known at that time as the garden of God, lost by Adam, but to be restored one day by God. Jesus promised the malefactor he could be with Him there.

But, was it that very day that the malefactor and Jesus would be together? Scripture tells us that Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave, not in paradise. Scripture never contradicts itself and so we look for some explanation of Jesus' words to the malefactor.

A traditional understanding of Luke 23:43 has been based on the placement of capital letters and punctuation. However, there are no differentiating sized letters and no punctuation marks in the earliest Greek manuscripts. Those read today were introduced about 800 years after the Scriptures were written. They were placed according to the variable opinions of

human scholars, not by the original God inspired writers.

The placement of one comma in Luke 23:43, by human authorities, has led some to believe that one goes some place the same day he dies. The comma in the KJV, placed before "to day", seems to indicate that the malefactor would be in paradise that very day. If the comma is placed after "to day", it reads that Jesus spoke a common Hebrew idiom. He said, "Verily I say unto thee today."

This expression indicated that some thing of great importance was about to be uttered. Such an expression is used 42 times in Deuteronomy. For example, Moses warned the children of Israel saying, "**I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, ...Know therefore, this day.**" (4:26,39)

If we accept that Jesus spoke the common Hebrew idiom, then there is no contradiction to other Scriptures. We understand that Jesus solemnly promised the malefactor that he would be with Him, not that day, but when Paradise is restored.

Lazarus and others were raised for the glory of God and for a witness to Israel that God had come as the Christ. We know that those revived, died later, for 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 tells us, "**...now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept ... in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming.**" Christ has not come again. Therefore, those believers sleep, to rise in the great resurrection harvest when He comes.

J.H.

The Deity Of Christ #11

4:12); and “**No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.**” (Jn 1:18)

And that this was not because they did not want to see Him, but that they could not see Him with this “glory” around Him. In the Scriptures, there are references, from both Old and New Testaments, that tell us how aware people were of not being able to see God and live. In fact, if they did, or thought they did, it was in a form that disguised His GLORY from them:

a) in Genesis 16:13,14, see Hagar’s surprise that she is still alive and the name of the place;

b) in Genesis 32:30, Jacob is amazed that he has survived after encountering God “**face to face**”;

c) Exodus 3:2-6 states that “**Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God**”;

d) At Sinai, God is hidden from view in thick darkness, a cloud, fire (Ex 19:18, 20:21). The Glory of the Lord was likened to a “**devouring fire**” in Exodus 24:15,17 and the children of Israel were afraid;

e) Moses asks God “**I beseech thee, show me Thy glory.**” and God responds: “**Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live**” (Ex 3:18,20) and He hides Moses in the cleft of a rock while He passes by in order to protect him;

f) Moses had to wear a veil over his face to shield the people from the reflected light from his face after his meetings with God;

g) In Ezekiel 3:23 we read: “**Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face**”;

h) In Ezekiel 44:4 again we read: “**...the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face.**”;

There is so much we can never know about our Creator except through His Word. We have heard of the term “God’s glory” and we sing about it in our hymns. We know that it is another attribute that we can only understand by applying our limited human ideas to it. However, let us see why it is important, and how New and Old Testaments agree Who had and has this “glory”.

God’s glory We know that God has “glory”. What exactly that is, we cannot tell. In human terms, we could think of this as something connected with extreme brightness and light, and we know that attribute of God does not allow us to “see” Him. It is mainly that attribute that He had to shed in order to enable us to be able to see and relate to Him better in the form of a human being.

In the Old Testament, we read that God guarded this attribute very closely and made some very strong statements about it. For example, God does not give His glory away to anyone. This is made very clear in Isaiah 42:8 & 48:11: “**I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images. For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? and I will not give My glory unto another.**” This means that the only explanation for John 17:5 is that Christ and God are One: “**And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.**”

Christ is not here declaring that He wants to share the glory of God. The glory was something which he already had. What He is saying is that, for our sakes, He temporarily put off this glory so that we could look on His face and not die.

We will remember that: “**No man hath seen God at any time.**” (1 Jn

i) Luke 2:9: “**...and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.**”

This is the reason that we needed God to appear in a form that human eyes could look upon. So, leaving His GLORY behind, and taking the form of a mere man, God came to this earth.

Some day, we believe we will be able to see Our Lord in His glory. In Luke 9:26, Christ states: “**For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and (in His) Father’s, and of the holy angels.**”

In article twelve, we will look at God/Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. We will see how both Old and New Testaments use the terms to refer to the same God, once invisible, later incarnated in the flesh; once covered in glory; later with that glory temporarily shed but to be regained.

L.A.

Phoenix Bible Conference (April 3-5th, 1998)

Location:

Glencroft Retirement Community,
8611 N. 67th Ave., Glendale, AZ.
(67th Ave. between Northern Ave.
and Olive)

Meetings:

Friday

7:00pm

Saturday

9:30am, 10:30am

11:45 Lunch

1:30pm, 2:30pm

Sunday

9:30am, 10:30am

Speakers:

Nathan Sharff, Jim McWilliams,
Philip Bagby, Forrest Cottrell,
Barnabas Bagby

For further information, please
write Bible Explorations or call Jean
Heltzinger at (602) 972-7234.

An Act of Worship

In the book of Leviticus chapter one, the burnt offering is presented to Moses as a means for God's people to come before Him and gain acceptance. There were four distinct characteristics of this particular offering:

1) *It was a sweet-smelling savour unto the Lord (vs.9,13,17)*

2) *It was offered for acceptance (vs.4)*

3) *It was the offering of a life (vs.5,11,15)*

4) *It was wholly burnt (vs.9,13,17)*

The offerer was commanded to lay his hand on the head of the victim, an expression of identification between the offerer and the offering. It represented the offerer as totally surrendering himself on the altar to Jehovah. It is readily seen as a type or shadow of the great offering to fulfil all offerings, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us as a sweet smelling savour unto God. It was not the surrender of what cost nothing, or little, or was convenient. He surrendered His most valuable property, His life. Note that this offering was not made to atone for sin. It was an act of worship.

Paul instructed believers to partake of this same offering in Romans 12:1-2. **"I beseech you therefore... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."**

Our duty to God, our "reasonable service," is the transformed mind that is conformed to the will of God. **Ps 49:18** says **"and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself."** Self - the great enemy - is evident when we are more con-

cerned with our own ease, our own pleasure, our own desires and interests; it is a life guided by feelings. Samuel condemned the acceptability of such offerings when the People of Israel brought to the altar the spoils of war that, by God's command, should have been "utterly destroyed." **"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."** **1Sam 15:22-23** Here self-will is equated with witchcraft (dealing with Satanic spirits), and idolatry. These are sobering words, indeed. But when we obey our own will, we become gods unto ourselves, which is exactly the enduring Lie that Satan wanted Adam and Eve to believe, **"...ye shall be as gods..."** **Gen 3:5**

Conversely, our Lord Jesus Christ's first recorded words were: **"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."** **John 4:34.** He illustrated through a parable that there is no particular virtue in obedience (Luke 17:9); we have our orders and doing the will of the Father is our "reasonable service." What we owe to God - our yielded lives - is our duty to Him.

Paul equated the yielded life and walk to the sweet-smelling savour in Eph.5:1-2. We are to imitate Christ as evidenced by a walk emptied of self will. When we fulfil this walk, every part of our lives can be elevated to an act of worship. If I lay down my own desires, my own preferences, my own likes and dislikes, to perform what God has commanded me to do, it becomes a life wholly yielded to Him. The everyday toils and duties that are a

part of my "job" become sacrificial acts of service, if they conform to the will of God and not my self-will. Even the lowliest and most menial chores can take on new significance, as each becomes a chance to die to self. Self-will makes me comfortable. God's will is the cross.

The hallmark of the burnt offering was man giving to God that which truly satisfies Him. Acceptance was signified by a fire from heaven that wholly consumed the offering. May we thus illustrate the words of Amy Carmichael: "Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God."

T.P.

Wise Sayings

God commands us to do slowly and blunderingly, what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye. God does not need you or me, but He gives us the privilege of collaborating and working with Him. He will reveal His secrets to us and let us share those with others. But, He waits until we are prepared. And, He tests us for our readiness and endurance. He teaches us more than, revealing our weaknesses to us and His strength to overcome those, even as He did with Israel.

"...the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." (Deut.8:2,3)

A Tribute To Stuart Allen

There are few who will read these words who have not been affected in some way, directly or indirectly, at some time in their life by our dear friend Stuart Allen who recently fell asleep in Christ. His many talents included a rare gift and talent in music which blessed many of us whether in listening to him on the organ or singing the words and music which he composed. Most of us have been blessed by his many books and articles in the Berean Expositor. He was able to take passages of a difficult nature and put them into simple understandable terms.

From those of us who were privileged to meet him, we offer a few words of remembrance and thanksgiving for times when our heavenly Father directed our paths and allowed us a few moments with this dear saint.

Spencer and Jean Heltzinger:

"In 1995, when we visited the Berean Chapel, Mr. Allen played the organ for the hymns, then entered the pulpit and spoke on 2Tim.1:8-18. He reminded us that Paul knew this was

his last letter to Timothy. In the same manner Mr. Allen spoke to us, as a father to his children. There were no Greek words, nor analytical arguments, rather, he called our attention to Paul's words, "...for I know WHOM I have believed." He said it was not WHAT Paul believed that made the difference, but rather, Whom he believed. It was Christ Jesus, his Lord.

It was evident that Mr. Allen also knew Him WHOM he believed, and now he has faithfully endured with Him to the end. He has finished his course and touched the tape for the prize of the high calling."

Nathan and Elizabeth S. Scharff:

"Our hearts, Nathan's and mine, are saddened at the news of the death of the Lord Christ's valiant warrior and our friend, Stuart Allen.

After C.H. Welch, as principal of the Chapel of the Open Book in London, he championed and spearheaded the drive, by God's grace and enabling, to make known world wide, the Dispensation of The Mystery as

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revealed to the Apostle Paul, written in the Book of the Ephesians. This through his precious books and teaching.

We first met him for fellowship at the Church of the Open Book in 1968 when Nathan gave his testimony there. We were in meetings with him again at various places in England throughout the '70s also.

He was always a sweet fragrance of our Lord and Head where ever he went, a joy always to be with, never failing to give a word of encouragement, comfort, and answers of spiritual depth in the Scriptures.

We will rejoice with Stuart when the rewards are given out at our appearance with him in glory, when He shall appear, our Lord and Life."

(Phil. 3:10-14,20,21)