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The Obedient Rechabites

Joel Portman

The only place that we read of this remarkable family called the Rechabites is in Jeremiah 35. There we learn that Jeremiah was instructed by the Lord to bring all of them into a chamber in the temple and give them wine to drink. He obeyed the Lord's voice and did so, possibly including in the event the man whose chamber it was, "Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God". But even in the presence of such a man, if that is true, and possibly encouraged to follow his example and to drink wine, they absolutely refused. Their reason was that Jonadab, the son of Rechab had commanded them not to drink wine, nor build or live in houses, nor engage in agricultural activities such as planting vineyards or sowing seed. Rather, they lived in tents and moved from place to place as a nomadic people, never drinking wine. They had made an exception to the injunction to dwell in tents when Nebuchadnezzar's army had come into the land because they feared him and the army of the Syrian forces. They seemed to have been somewhat ashamed of their doing so, but it was only because of the fear that they felt. No doubt, after he left, they would return to their former lifestyle and fully obey the voice of their ancestor.

This family seems to be descended from the Kenites, who were related to Moses by marriage (Judges 1:16, 4:17). They were sometimes found among the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:6) and sometimes they were linked with the Midianites. They mingled with the Israelites, as we see in the case of Heber, the Kenite in Judges 4:17). They were descended from Jonadab (Jehonadab), who was a godly man in Jehu's time (1 Kings 10:15), who took him with him to see Jehu's zeal in destroying the worshipers of Baal

The notable thing about this family is that Jonadab gave this command over 200 years prior to this occasion. Many years had passed and times had changed. He was no longer living and they could easily have deviated and disobeyed his command. But they tenaciously held to his command and refused to deviate from it, even when

encouraged to do so by a prophet of Jehovah given in sacred precincts. Their determined obedience to an earthly ancestor stood in stark contrast to the disobedience of Israel and Judah to the repeated commands and pleas of their eternal God.

There was no reason given why they were to do these things and perhaps there was no rationale behind them. They were only the commands of a man who they respected and obeyed. Perhaps he had given these injunctions to them to preserve them from the evil of licentious, immoral acts that were connected religiously and socially with drinking wine and strong drink. Such practices were linked with a people who were rapidly moving toward God's judgment, even in Jehu's time. But after these years, they were still continuing to obey and carry out his word to them. Most strikingly, these people were not Israelites! Though related by family ties through Moses, they were outside the covenant that the Lord had made with Israel. But they displayed more obedience than did Israel, who enjoyed the blessings of the Mosaic covenant. Their consistent practice is brought in at this point to highlight Judah's disobedience.

Notice three things about them:

The Foundation of their Lives: Obedience

They obeyed their forefather's command even though he was no longer alive, but Judah disobeyed the command of God who was alive. His was only the word of a man, but they respected him and obeyed his word. Sadly, often men show more respect for a great dead man than God's people show for the living God. They exhibited what were the utmost desires of the Lord for His people, desires that Samuel expressed to Saul, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22). This is still true today!

An essential feature that God's people should constantly display is obedience to His Word. We cannot avoid that principle. These people didn't deviate, distort, diminish, or dilute the command of their ancestor, but this is often the case when a professing believer approaches truth and commandments that are found in God's Word. Pleasing the Lord is not based on how much we know or don't know. It is based, rather, upon obeying and practicing those things that we do know, and we often say that we know much more than we practice in our lives.

The Lord Jesus emphasized this principle at the close of the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 7 by using the illustration of the two men who built houses, one on the sand and one on the rock. The only difference in the application that He made is that the one on the rock heard His sayings and DID them whereas the one

on the sand heard but didn't do. It is that consistent obedience to His Word that will enable a believer to prosper in life and to be preserved in times of stress and trial. It is an indication that His living Word, being realized and revered in daily living, will be operative to provide a foundation in trials.

The Features of their Lives: Avoidance

This extended family lived as strangers and pilgrims in the land. They were a nomadic people, sojourners in a literal sense. At times they were in the northern part of the land and at times in the south. But they didn't settle down, build houses, establish cities, or desist from moving. This relates to the teaching of Hebrews 11:13 and 1 Peter 2:11. In Hebrews 11, the emphasis is on anticipating the future permanent city beyond this earthly life with all its problems. In 1 Peter 2, the emphasis is on abstaining from the fleshly lusts that will ruin a person's life.

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There were three facets of this injunction that they obeyed. These represent three areas of enslavement for us.

1. They drank no wine. They avoided what stimulates fleshly lusts that are linked with earth's pleasures that entrap men and women. Drinking wine in this way is always linked with moral degeneration and the world's pleasures that are not of God. It was identified with Religious False Worship and was a part of the licentious practices of Baal worship. Abstaining from drinking wine suggests one's determination not to indulge in the pleasures, joys, exhilaration, and intoxicating activities of earth's activities in which the majority are involved to some extent. They were not literal Nazarites, but they were following the same pattern of life as if they were and in this way typified a life that is set apart to God. They are a pattern for us as well. If we are to be useful to God and His kingdom, there is always a need to abstain through discipline. Galatians 5:17 tells that there is a constant conflict taking place between the flesh and the spirit. If we are to be useful for the Lord, then the spirit (Spirit) must have control.

2. They built no Houses. So that social settlement was refused. The houses and cities in Scripture suggest (in one sense) the security and comforts that are found in the routines of earth. They lived as pilgrims and strangers and typified what God's people are to be spiritually. In this lifestyle, they were also repeating the manner of life that marked the Israelites when they were in the wilderness. Israel had the promise of the land that God provided for them but they were yet moving forward in the anticipation of its joys. This is where we are in our lives today. We enjoy certain aspects of the Lord's presence and blessing, but we also live in view of the fulfillment of His promise when we shall have a settled, permanent state in His own presence. Being in this world but not of this world, we are here for a purpose that isn't connected with making this world a better place but seeking to attract sinners to a place that is far better. As God's people, we can get our roots too deep in the aspects and activities of this world and lose our effectiveness to be used for the Lord in view of the eternal kingdom (Hebrews 12:28).

3. They didn't sow or reap. This suggests a refusal to depend on earthly supply. It rejects the expectation that we should depend on anything suitable for spiritual living from this world. These people lived on what they expected to receive from God to meet their needs. It is interesting that the name "Jonadab" means "Jehovah is a willing Giver", or "is Liberal". He never fails those who look to Him in quiet confidence to support and supply their needs. His hand is always able to minister to His saints. Israel murmured after they crossed the Red Sea when they were hungry. The Lord provided the daily manna for them, a provision that was evidently what He alone could supply, and on occasion, He gave them flesh to eat. They had water from the Rock that was

continually available to them. In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses reminded them that God's purpose was to teach them that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The Lord personally proved this principle in the wilderness temptation when He quoted this verse to the devil and showed that He was happily dependent on what His God would supply.

The Fruit of their Lives: Preservation

The prophet, speaking for the Lord, commended this family for their faithful obedience. It was a contrast to those who professed to be the Lord's people and who had received every evidence of the Lord's favor. The result was that they were promised surety for their lives in the time of trial and conflict. He assured them that there would never fail to be a man among them, never be a time when they would be annihilated. This promise is a contrast to His Word to Jehoiakim in 36:30: "Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost." What made the difference? Jehoiakim despised God's Word, cut it into pieces, and burned it in the fire. We learn from God's Word that His blessing, preservation, stability in our lives, and fruitfulness for Him are all linked with obedience to His Word.

This family is an outstanding example of what the Lord always desires to see in His people and this is still true today. The mindset of the current world religiously is that of selective obedience, basing one's decisions whether to obey or not obey certain parts of God's Word on what the individual feels and whether it is something that they want to carry out or not. This is like "cafeteria obedience", a system where one can select what they obey based on what appeals to the person. This puts "self" in control instead of God. It relates to what the Lord said to the religious ones of His day, "Why call ye me, 'Lord, Lord', and do not the things that I say?" (Luke 6:46). This is dangerous ground, so our earnest desires must be to seek in all things to do His will and to obey His Word in practice in a consistent manner in our lives.

Notes from other sources:

John of Jerusalem says Jehonadab was Elisha's disciple. The ascetic rule against wine, houses, sowing, and planting (Jeremiah 35), was a safeguard against the corrupting license of the Phoenician cities and their idolatries (Amos 2:7-8; Amos 6:3-6). They must rigidly adhere to the simplicity of their Arab tent life. Jehonadab's name, containing "Jehovah," and his abhorrence of Baal worship, imply that the Rechabites though not of Israel, were included in the Abrahamic covenant; the Arab Wahabees, ascetics as to opium and tobacco, present a parallel. In Jeremiah's day they were still faithful to Jehovah. Their strict Nazarite vow was the ground of their admission into one of the temple chambers devoted to the sons of Hanak who

sprang from "Igdaliah a man of God," or a prophet of special sanctity.

There they resisted the temptation to drink wine; and Jeremiah makes their faithfulness to their earthly father a reproof of Israel's unfaithfulness to their heavenly Father. God consequently promises, "Jehonadab son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me forever," i.e. to minister in the sanctuary before Jehovah so long as Israel's sanctuary and polity stand: so Levi (Deut. 10:8; Deut. 18:5-7; Gen. 18:22; Jdg. 20:28; Psa. 134:1; Jer. 15:19); so the targum of Jonathan translated "ministers before Me." It was an adoption of the Rechabites into Israel, by incorporation with Levi, on the ground of their Nazarite-like purity and consecration.

The Rechabites are spoken of as "scribes" (1Ch. 2:55); at the return from Babylon they took a profession, almost exclusively a Levite one. Kimchi (in Vatablus) cites the tradition recorded by Rechab. Judah that the Rechabites married Levites, and their children ministered in the temple. Their close juxtaposition with the sons of David (1Chron. 3:1) shows in what esteem the sacred writer held them. Hegesippus (Eusebius, H. E. ii. 23) mentions that a Rechabite priest protested against the martyrdom of James the Just. Hegesippus thus attests the existence of the Rechabites as sharing in the temple ritual down to its destruction by the Romans; fulfilling Jer. 35:19.

Benjamin of Tudela (12th century) says that near El Jubar (Pumbeditha) he found 100,000 Rechabite Jews, who tilled, kept flocks and herds, abstained from wine and flesh, and gave tithes to teachers who devoted themselves to studying the law and weeping for Jerusalem; their prince, Solomon han Nasi, traced his descent to David and ruled over Thema and Telmas. Wolff found a tribe, the Beni Khaibr, near Senaa, who called themselves "sons of Jonadab," and said they numbered 60,000 (Journal, ii. 334,335). The Septuagint prefixes a title to Psalm 71, "a psalm by David, of the sons of Jonadab, and of those first carried captive": this implies, in the third century B.C., a Hebrew title existed declaring that the Rechabites shared the Babylonian captivity, and with the Levite psalmists expressed the nation's sorrows and aspirations.

The only way for any man to be right is to change his thinking and unreservedly accept God's thoughts. If he holds to his own thoughts, he will be wrong forever.

The Believer and Politics

J. R. Caldwell, edited

We should count it folly for a ship's captain to sail his vessel in seas for which he had no chart. If asked to do so he would say, "No; my chart extends from the Arctic Circle to the Equator, but not beyond. Into

southern seas I dare not venture, I have nothing to guide me. I should only be courting certain disaster." What then is the danger of a child of God who launches out into the political conflicts of today without one syllable in the Scriptures to guide him as to what party he should vote for, or as to what political principles God would have him support?

We have more than once sought to emphasise the fact that whilst God has legislated for the behaviour of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, and thus touches upon every department of social life, He is absolutely silent, as far as instructions to the Christian are concerned, with regard to the sphere of politics. The one instruction given is to subjects, to be law-abiding, submissive to every ordinance of man, to pay tribute, to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to honour the king and all in authority over us.

Not one word of guidance or instruction is to be found in the New Testament to kings or rulers, magistrates, or to those in any sphere of worldly authority. Is it not a reasonable, indeed an unavoidable inference, that God does not contemplate His children occupying such positions in this evil age? In the age to come the saints will indeed rule and judge under Christ the King, but in this world they are "strangers and pilgrims," their citizenship (polituma, enfranchisement, or politics) is heavenly, their real interests are apart from it all, they wait the coming of the Kingdom of God, when His will shall be done on earth even as it is done in Heaven.

But if we enter the arena of politics, what have we to guide us? The Government of today may announce certain measures and principles, and on these may be elected by the people, whose voice is rapidly coming to be regarded as the voice of God and of higher authority than His Word. But within a few years that same Government which we have helped to put in power may have whirled round to other ways and measures. If a believer is to enter into the contest and record his vote, before the Government has been two or three years in office those considerations which induced him to vote for one party in preference to another may be altogether changed, and as has often been the case, the voter may bitterly regret his choice. Clearly a Christian elector is absolutely without guidance from the Word of God as to what party he ought to vote for. He may act up to the best of his knowledge and belief, but without the Word of God to guide he cannot act in faith, and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

But has God left His people utterly powerless? Must they stand idly by and see before their eyes the principles at work, and rising in influence and popularity, which are preparing the platform for the final apostate Gentile dominion? No; God has entrusted His people with a mighty power, mightier far than "the franchise." Our appeal is to Him before whom "all the inhabitants of

the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand from working, or say unto Him, "What doest Thou?" (Job 9:12).

It is the expressed will of God that supplications be made for all men: "for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2). Alas! how sadly has this command been neglected in our assemblies. How often in a year are our rulers prayed for? But clearly as it occurs in 1 Timothy 2, it is a public responsibility, devolving upon the assembly as such; a definite instruction, which to neglect is to be losers of blessing to which as the children of God we are entitled in this world of which Satan is the prince and the god.

In addition, we are to be guided by the knowledge of God's will in all our decisions and actions. One might argue that voting is a necessary part and privilege of citizens in most countries of the world. When a believer is faced with making a decision between varying candidates for public office, can he depend on God to guide him in doing so? If one were to vote to elect a certain candidate to an office, all he can base his decision on is what that person says or has done. And we know that often a candidate says things or promises actions that are never carried out in practice. In many cases, it would be a decision based on how that candidate presents himself or herself. If God raises up persons to public responsibility, as is taught in the Scripture (Daniel 4:25, 5:21, Psalm 75:7, 84:17-18, Jeremiah 27:5), then one's responsibility in this case would be to discern which person the Lord intended to place in office. And if that is so, and His will would result in the election of an individual to that office, then why should a believer vote for him? And if he would vote for the wrong person, is he not voting against God's will?

There are many clear issues that seem to definitely speak against any participation of a believer in the political scene of this earth. One good brother spoke highly of a certain candidate for high office based on what he thought of him from distant impressions. But his opinion was totally contrary to the actual type of character he displayed and the decisions that he made when in office.

Certainly, we do better and are on more solid ground if, as believers with confidence in God to work out all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11), we pray for such leaders as we are instructed to do in 1 Timothy 2:1-3, and trust the Lord to work through them to execute His purposes among the sons of men.

"The man of faith may live in the absolute assurance that his steps are ordered by the Lord."

The Day of Atonement

(Yom Kipper)

Leviticus 16:1-34, Leviticus 23:26-32, Numbers 29:7-11

Larry Steers

I do fear, as I attempt to write, that both writer and reader may miss much of the glories, beauties, and wonder of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ presented in these versus.

These last three feasts in this chapter, the Feast of Trumpets, the day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles were observed in the seventh month of the Jewish year and represent future events awaiting fulfillment. On the first of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets, on the tenth was the Day of Atonement, and on the fifteenth was the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Day of Atonement is saturated with pictures of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The significance and the truth presented in these details is like a thread of Divine Truth winding its way through the Word of God. Even today, Yom Kipper is still recognized and observed by Jewish people the world over; but they miss its wonder and deep significance. In the likely not-too-distant future a faithful remnant of Israel, having returned to the land, will embrace and understand the deep significance of the Day of Atonement.

Kipper comes from the word "Kapher" which means "to cover". Hence, (in one sense), the word atonement means "to cover". For Israel, the previous years sins were covered by the blood of an innocent animal sacrifice (Leviticus 17:11).

Rather than a feast, the Day of Atonement was more like a day of fasting. There was little joy on this day, for there was reflection on past departure with confession and sorrow. This was the most solemn of all the seven feasts. The soul that did work on this day, "will I destroy from among the people" (Leviticus 23:30). Twice it is emphatically stated they were to "afflict" their souls (Leviticus 23:27, 32). The word "afflict" has the significant of "deny yourselves".

Why? It was to fathom the serious solemnity of their sin as it appeared before a holy God. Here lies the great, serious issue today. There is little concept of sin and the holiness of God. When sin is not presented in the Gospel message, there is little understanding how the holiness of God is violated. There can be no repentance or salvation when there is no conviction of sin.

The Holy Spirit in Leviticus 23:26-32 gives instructions for the children of Israel while in Leviticus 16, the priest's responsibility is given in detail. Numbers 29:7-11 describes the various sacrifices that were required to be offered on this day. Limitations of space does not allow a detailed comment on these instructive chapters.

The Day of Atonement was the one day of the year that Aaron (or succeeding high priests) entered into

the Holy of Holies to stand alone in the presence of God before the Mercy Seat. It is also the only day when he put on "the holy linen coat and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and be girded with a linen girdle and the linen miter shall he be attired (Leviticus 16:4). There was no casualness here.

It would appear that three times he would make what must have been to him a solemn journey into the most holy place. He had to be clean and was required to wash his flesh in water (Leviticus 16:4). Note, not just his hands and feet, but "his flesh". He had to be ceremonially clean to represent what our Great High Priest is.

However, Aaron was a son of Adam's fallen race of humanity. He had to bring an offering for himself. He needed to kill the bullock of the sin offering which was for himself and for his house (Leviticus 26: 11). He had to take some burning coals, possibly from the Golden Altar. His hands would be full of incense as he moved beyond the veil. As the incense filled the place, he stood before the Mercy Seat. He took blood from the sin offering and with his finger, he sprinkled it seven times upon the Mercy Seat. He then stepped back and seven times sprinkled the blood on the ground before the Mercy Seat.

The blood, not the ground, provided the basis of redemption. As God decreed with the application of the blood on the side post and the lintel in Egypt, "when I see the blood". (Exodus 12:13), the blood on the Mercy Seat met the eyes of God. Perhaps Peter had this before him when he wrote "redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). The incense filling the Holy Place speaks of our worship. How good when brethren have that which is fresh to offer to God in worship as we gather to remember Him.

The blood of the Passover Lamb has the sinner in view. The blood on the Mercy Seat on the Day of Atonement has the holiness of God in view.

Likely Aaron would approach the eastern entrance of the court of the Tabernacle to be close to the gathered people. Two goats would be brought to him. He would cast lots to indicate the use of each goat. One was to be identified as YHWH (YHWH means "the Lord"). This goat was to be sacrificed as a sin offering for the people (Leviticus 16:15). The blood of this goat would be brought within the veil and sprinkled upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. This was the second time Aaron would enter the Holy place. The second goat was "azazel" (meaning a scapegoat). This goat would escape death at the altar, but as we will note, it would likely die in the wilderness. This would teach us in type a powerful truth relative to the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Aaron, no doubt standing at the entrance of the court and again within the hearing of the people, would place both hands upon the head of the scapegoat. He would confess "all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins" (Leviticus 16:21). This act would signify all the confessed sins

transferred to the head of the goat. How solemn as we would listen to Aaron. "We made a golden calf and danced before it. We despised the manna. We spake against God and Moses. We longed to go back and feast on the food of Egypt. We questioned if the Lord was among us or not." The little word "all" in Leviticus 16:29 appears twice. Yet he could never confess every sin of Israel. How blessed and with assurance that we can sing, "All our sins had to go beneath the crimson flow". Not one sin for the believer has been overlooked or missed.

The goat would then be led by a fit man far away into the wilderness. Take careful note of the words "the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto "a land not inhabited"". In this land there would be no one to care for it. None to provide for it. It would be alone. Concerning our Lord, He bore it all alone. The uninhabited land, the awful darkness of the cross. They all forsook Him and fled. The cry from the cross which should stir us was, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Psalm 22:1). Our Lord answers the question "But thou art holy" (Psalm 22:3). The goal bearing sin was alone in the wilderness. Our Lord was bearing sin alone in the darkness of the cross.

Notice that the goat was led by the hand of a fit man. There are at least two beautiful pictures of our Lord. The goat, reminds us of our Lord bearing sin alone. But He was not left in the garden tomb. In triumph He arose. Looking over the horizon, Israel would see the fit man returning. Two types are essential to present the Lord. The land not inhabited, our Lord's death. The fit man returning, He arose and was manifested alive by many infallible proofs.

Today, Jews world-wide observe the Day of Atonement in a measure but in ignorance with no understanding of the significance touched upon briefly here. The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that the glorious gospel message was unto the Jews a "stumbling block" 1Corinthians 1:23" A man hanging upon a cross, visage marred, brutalized by men could not be their Messiah.

We have noted in previous articles that the Feast of Trumpets and its fulfillment will occur after the rapture. God will put it into the being of every Jewish person in this world to return to the land which was promised to Abraham. A mass movement of Jews, far greater than the exodus out of Egypt will occur. However most will go back in unbelief with the cross and the death of Christ a stumbling block.

From the acres of earth they will return, not to a land of peace and safety but to indescribable sufferings and death. The armies of the nations of this world will invade the land (Zechariah 12:9, 14:3) and inflict total carnage upon Jerusalem. The city will become a cup of trembling (Zechariah 12:2). Zechariah further writes that Jerusalem will become a "burdensome stone" (Zechariah

12:3). How terrible to contemplate that "two parts therein shall be cut off and die" (Zechariah 13:8).

Note further the wonder of Zechariah's prophecy in 9:9, which he wrote in 520 BC, 553 years before fulfillment. He prophesied that the Lord would ride into Jerusalem during the last week of His sojourn upon this earth. This was fulfilled. In Matthew 21:1, Matthew quotes Zechariah 9:9. The disciples found a colt for the Lord to ride from the Mount of Olives, through the Kedron Valley to the Golden Gate. They spread garments and branches of trees on the path. He entered Jerusalem to the acclaim of the city. At the end of the week He was nailed to the cross.

The scene will be repeated. The Lord led a few of His disciples to the Mount of Olives, and gave them His parting words. No doubt with wondering souls they watched Him rise from earth and go back to heaven. The angel told them He would in like manner return again. His feet will stand once more on the Mount of Olives. In that glorious day "there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1). This does not suggest a fresh shedding of blood, but the opening of the eyes of the remnant to grasp the significance of the Day of Atonement.

That the blood of the sin offering that was taken within the vail and sprinkled upon and before the Mercy Seat speaks of the precious blood of Christ that was shed for us. The sins that Aaron confessed over the head of the goat speak of our sins. The man of the cross who was a stumbling block to us was the man who died for us. It will become real that "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." The remnant will accept the One who their Fathers pierced as the Son of God who died for them.

God will look upon this faithful remnant "It is my people" and they will respond "the Lord is my God" (Zechariah 13:9).

"Faith doesn't make something true, it only affirms the certain reality of its object. Faith in God doesn't make God real; it is faith in God because He is real."

The Last Adam — The Second Man.

F. B. Hole.

At first sight the subject now before us may seem to belong rather to the superstructure of the faith than the foundations: but it is not so. It is truly fundamental, and this we shall see as we proceed.

Both the expressions which head this chapter are found in the course of the great argument on the

resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. If their force is to be grasped, verses 35 to 49 should be read.

The point raised in these verses is as to the body in which the risen saints will appear, and the Apostle shows that though there is identity preserved between the body which is buried and the body which is raised, yet in condition and character the risen body will be altogether new. As to condition, the former is marked by corruption, dishonor, and weakness; the latter by incorruption, glory, and power. As to character, the former is a natural body, the latter a spiritual body.

The next fact that confronts us is that just as there is a natural and a spiritual body so there is a natural and a spiritual race. "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam . . . a quickening spirit" (v. 45).

Adam is presented to us in Scripture as the original progenitor of the human race. He came fresh from God's hand as recorded in Genesis 2:7, as to his body formed out of the dust, but receiving the spiritual part of his constitution by God's in-breathing, and in this way becoming a living soul. This tripartite nature of man is clearly stated in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. What characterized Adam's position in creation was, however, that he was a living soul — a living soul, we may say, possessing spirit as well as body. The last Adam, who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, bears an infinitely higher character. He is "spirit" rather than "soul"; and not merely "living " but "quickenings" or "life-giving."

Here there breaks out upon us the true Divine glory of the Lord Jesus. He is a Spirit — so is God. He is life-giving because the Life-Giver. "Am I God to kill, and to make alive?" asked the distracted King of Israel (see 2 Kings 5:7). No; he was not; but Jesus was and is. But then He who is the life-giving Spirit is the last Adam, i.e. really and truly Man; the Head and Source of a new race of mankind, having stamped upon it the character of spiritual as definitely as the character natural is stamped upon the first Adam and his race.

Notice, too, that He is "the last Adam." The contrast here is between the first and the last, not the first and the second. Why last? Evidently because that word excludes the idea that any third or subsequent race can ever be needed, or enter upon the scene. "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second," is what Heb_10:9 says. He never takes away the second in favor of a third! The second is established. The last Adam abides without rival or successor, for perfection — Divine perfection and not merely human — is reached in Him.

The forty-sixth verse of our chapter points out the historic order of the two Adams. First the natural, then the spiritual; though, of course, in importance and in the thoughts and purposes of God, the last was always first.

Verse 47 again speaks of the two heads, emphasizing the condition that marked them rather than their respective characters, as in verse 45. The one is "of the earth, earthy," or as it may be translated, "out of the earth, made of dust." The Other is "out of heaven." In this

verse they are termed "the first man" and "the second Man"; not this time "the first" and "the last." Now why is it second? Because here, where Christ's manhood rather than His headship is before us, the object of the Spirit of God is to exclude every other man. After the first Adam and until the last Adam historically appeared no man counted at all. The last Adam was the second man, and not Cain, as we might have supposed.

Who and what, then, was Cain? Simply Adam reproduced. Adam "begat . . . in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:3). "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him" (Genesis 5:1). This likeness, alas, was marred by the Fall, and it was not until he was a fallen creature that Adam begat "in HIS OWN likeness. He reproduced his fallen self both morally and physically. Hence from the point of view of this passage in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 there was nothing but "the first man" until the appearance of Christ, who is the second. Adam was a marvelous and complex being, and every one of his millions of descendants during that time was an individual with characteristics, that showed on the surface, if we may so put it, some fresh permutation or combination of the many features which make up the Adamic nature; yet fundamentally all were one in both nature and character.

At this point we may perhaps appreciate more fully the immense importance of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a Virgin. There was a hint of this great fact in the first prediction concerning Him ever given. It was the Lord God Himself who spoke of "the woman" and "her seed" (Genesis 3:15). Hence, "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4), yet conceived under the direct action of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35). Therefore it is that while the Deliverer was by the woman He was not an ordinary son of Adam at all. The virgin birth means that the Lord Jesus while truly Man was yet a Man of a new order.

Verse 48 turns to the two races, ranged respectively under the two heads; stating that the earthy race of the first man partakes of the character and position of Adam; the heavenly race of that of Christ. To understand rightly the race we must therefore rightly understand the head.

Verse 49 links on the truth of the preceding verses with the great theme of the chapter, viz., resurrection, by showing that the identity between the last Adam and His race is to be complete even as to the physical body. We certainly have borne the image of Adam in our physical bodies. So certainly shall we bear the image of the last Adam, the heavenly Man. Our resurrection bodies will be fashioned in conformity with His body of glory.

The latter part of Romans 5:1-21, beginning at verse 12, should also be read. Here we find the spiritual results flowing from the characteristic actions of the two heads. Adam's characteristic action was disobedience,

whilst obedience even to the death of the Cross characterized Christ. From Adam's sin there flowed death and condemnation. From Christ's obedience unto death flows life and justification. The main line of the Apostle's argument runs straight from verse 12 to verse 18. Verses 13 to 17 are parenthetical, running like a loop line between the same two points and giving details which show that what is offered in Jesus Christ the risen Head of the new order cannot be confined to any section of humanity, such as Israel. It must be as universal as the calamity it is designed to overcome. Moreover, the blessings thus introduced are of a nature to meet, and more than meet, the penalties incurred by Adam's fall.

Verses 18 and 19 are important as summing up the whole matter. One distinction which is not quite clear in our excellent Authorized Translation should be noted. We quote therefore from the New Translation of the late J. N. Darby. Verse 18 deals with "one offense towards all men to condemnation" and "one righteousness towards all men for justification of life." Verse 19 states that "the many have been constituted sinners" and "the many will be constituted righteous."

In these words we observe the same distinction as we have before seen when sins were in question in Romans 3:22. It is a question of sin — the nature — here, but again the bearing of Christ's one righteousness, consummated in His death, is distinguished from its actual effect. Its bearing is towards all with justification as the objective, only here the justification is not contemplated as being from offenses, but rather as being "justification of life." The former is, of course, perfect and absolute, but somewhat negative in its bearing i.e. by it we lose both guilt and condemnation. The latter is more positive and indicates that full and perfect clearance which is the portion of every believer by virtue of his standing in the life and consequently nature of the risen Christ as Man. It might have pleased God to clear us from the guilt of our sins without cutting the old links with the fallen Adam and implanting us in the risen Christ. This further great favor is, however, ours as believers and consequently we are now "constituted righteous." While we are in this world the old nature with its unchanged tendencies is still in us, as other scriptures show; but in this verse the Spirit of God is contemplating what we are in Christ as God sees us.

Romans 8:1 sums up this section of the epistle and reverts to the truth we have just considered. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." If it stated that in the day of judgment we believers should escape condemnation, that would be wonderful. What it does state, however, is that there is NOW no condemnation. The condemnation has been borne and exhausted as far as we are concerned, and we are now in the life of the risen Christ and as clear of condemnation therefore as He is.

A great many Christians, we fear, have never seriously considered this important side of truth. It deals

with life and nature rather than with the overt acts in which life and nature express themselves, or, as we commonly say, with what we are rather than with what we have done, and hence it is not quite so easy of apprehension. Still, it really conducts us to that which is the secret of the profound blessedness which characterizes Christianity, and we are great losers if we ignore it.

Some questions may arise in the minds of some:

What is the difference between "the first man" and "the old man?"

The first man, as the context in 1Corinthians 15:1-58 shows, is Adam personally, if the expression be taken in its primary sense. There is, however, a secondary sense, as is clear from the fact that we do not meet with the second man until Christ appears. How then shall we designate the millions of humanity that came between? They were all "first man" in character; so that in a secondary sense "the first man" covers Adam and his race.

The "old man," on the other hand, is a purely abstract conception. It does not indicate any particular human being or group of human beings, but rather is the personification of all those moral features which characterize fallen Adam and his race. It is the fallen Adamic character personified.

"In Christ" is a phrase often met with in Paul's Epistles. What, in a few words, is its significance?

As 1Corinthians 15:22 shows, it is an expression in contrast with "in Adam." We are all "in Adam" by nature, i.e. we originate from him and stand before God in exactly his nature, position and status. The believer is "in Christ" by grace, inasmuch as we owe our real and spiritual existence to His quickening action as the last Adam. We therefore stand before God in exactly the nature, position, and status of the risen Christ, as Man.

We might use the process of grafting as an illustration, if at liberty to exactly reverse what is actually carried out by the gardener. He grafts the good into the worthless, whereby the worthless is condemned, and the good dominates and characterizes the tree. In Romans 11:1-36 grafting is used as an illustration of God's dispensational dealings with Jews and Gentiles, and the Apostle points out in verse 24 that he uses the figure in a way "contrary to nature" by supposing the wild olive branch grafted into the good olive tree and thereby partaking of the virtues of the good. This is the adaptation of the process we want for our illustration. The Christian is one disconnected from the "Adam" stock by God's work and grafted into Christ, partaking of His fullness. He is "in Christ," though the flesh is still in him.

Does "in Christ" then only refer to the believer's new position or status before God?

If the early part of Romans 8:1-39 be read we find that verse 1 gives us "in Christ," but this is followed in verses 8 and 9 by — "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."

Now "in the Spirit" is as clearly contrasted with "in the flesh" as "in Christ" is with "in Adam," and it indicates the new condition or state which corresponds to the position in Christ.

Now these two things, though distinct and distinguished thus in Scripture, are not to be disconnected. There is no such thought as a person being in Christ and not "in Spirit," nor vice versa. They are two parts of one whole. Speaking generally, we may say, then, that the expression "in Christ" often covers the fact of our new state as "in Spirit;" yet if we come to a closer analysis, as in Rom. 8:1-9, it does mainly refer to the believer's new position rather than his new condition.

Has all this anything to do with that "new creation" of which Scripture speaks?

It certainly has. It says, "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature" or "there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

New creation clearly does not mean the destruction of personality or identity. If that reversed form of grafting — "contrary to nature" — of which Romans 11:1-36 speaks could be carried out in Nature we should see the once wild olive bearing good fruit, and generally behaving as the cultivated stock. It would indeed be new created, yet the identity of the engrafted twig would remain.

Still, it is creation: as positive a work of God as the creation of Genesis 1:1-31. As Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works . . ." To be God's workmanship is a wonderful thing.

The first man is evidently superseded by the second Man. When did this take place?

If we consider things from the standpoint of God's purpose, He never had any but the Second before Him. We never were chosen in Adam in any sense whatever. God has "chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

If, however, we consider things from our standpoint, we may say that the true character of the first man was fully revealed at the Cross. There he was judged, and at the same moment the perfection of the second Man also came fully to light and He was glorified (see John

Good Luck

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How often one might overuse phrases such as, "it's the luck of the draw" or "just my luck", or "as luck would have it" to assess positive or negative outcomes in our life's circumstances! Luck is an interesting word with a history behind it. Coming from the middle Dutch word "gheluc" which means "good fortune", it is believed to have been adopted into English in the 15th century and shortened to "luc" at first. When the "k" was added is unknown but it was likely done to phonetically emphasize the hard "k" sound. The Irish brought this word into their folklore as relating to the existence of leprechauns, fairies, goblins and such. This is not to say that the Bible has not touched on the subject as we find the words, "hap" in Ruth 2:3, 1 Samuel 6:9 and Ecclesiastes 9:2-3 (Anglo-Saxon word for chance or an event) and "lot" in Proverbs 16:33 (the Hebrew reference to the interposition of God's will, the lot being a pebble cast to make such a determination based on where/how it lands).

The Bible is replete with evidence that many occasions arose when good men of God were not able to make a decision. So they cast lots, similar to our flipping a coin or drawing straws, to arrive at a conclusion. An example of this, even in the New Testament, is found in Acts 1:26 when a need arose to decide between two men who would replace Judas to complete the 12 disciples. But notice one important thing. This was, as far as we know, the last time believers would use such a system for making decisions because the sending of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 to guide God's people would do away with the need for ever having to resort to any form of chance or serendipity again. Granted, the 11 disciples using lots was done with the presupposition that it would be God, as an involved participant, who would determine outcome.

We've already cited Proverbs 16:33, "The lot is cast into to the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord." This is Old Testament ground. Our verse would suggest that while direct inquiry through prayer would always be God's preference, He would visit the system of lot-casting if there were to be a result that would ultimately serve His purposes in glory and properly benefit the lot casters in each case. That is to say, there was no outside element of "luck" or "chance" that could have any influence upon a casting of lots method.

We could look at Job's life and say, "My, if there were ever a case for a man having bad luck, Job was a perfect example. If it weren't for bad luck, he'd have no luck at all!" But notice two things with Job's example. In chapters 1-2, we see a challenge from Satan regarding Job, a challenge delivered to the throne of Job's God. He dared God to touch Job's life in such a way that would result in Job cursing God to His face (Job 1:11). God had

a different purpose in mind that would ultimately overrule Satan's prediction and the glorious result is noted in the last two chapters of the book. Secondly, Job did not sin (Vs. 21-22) but acknowledged that it was the divine prerogative for the Lord to both give and take away. The non-entity/principle we call "luck" was not a factor in Job's case or in any case since the beginning of creation.

Once again, let's review the example the Lord gives us in Luke 13:1-15. Eighteen men were crushed to death by a falling tower in Siloam. The world would decry it was not their lucky day. God's word would tell us that it was their appointed time (Herews 9:27) and not necessarily due to any circumstances finding them to be greater sinners than others. We are told not to boast of tomorrow (Proverbs 27:1 and James 4:4) as even Job could say "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle".

So, the whole premise of cause-and-effect being the reason why people suffer adversity is often hid from our view, and shouldn't be speculation fodder for us mortals to bat around for curiosity's sake. Misfortune may be just a more acceptable word for "luck" but still leaves the happenings in our life to an unsupervised, uncaring and raw bedlam of chance with a naughty nickname: LUCK. Not so with God.

Even before I became a Christian, there were two verses in the Bible that fully convinced me that the fact I was allowed to live nearly 39 years before I trusted the Lord Jesus for salvation was no matter of luck or chance. Rather, it was divinely directed by God and motivated by His love for me, the guilty one, as thoroughly explained in Ephesians chapter 1. Those two verses I mentioned above were: "...He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain to the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45b) and in Luke 6:35b, "He is kind unto the unthankful and the evil." And if there were still any space between the nail's head and the board regarding the absolute emptiness of the luck principle, the following verse hammers this truth home very well, particularly for all believers: "And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Those "all things" refer to our circumstances; and how they work together for good is determined by the glorious Conductor Who has written a perfect score.

Whether "the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:6) or "All these things are against me" (Gen. 42:36), one thing is certain, only God alone has either actively arranged "those things" or permissively allowed them.

No Greater Love

JNP

No greater love hath mortal man,
Than for His friends to die;
The Savior left His glorious throne,
For sinners such as I.

The price He paid for all my sins,
Surpasses human thought;
The value of His precious blood,
Deliverance hath wrought.

The suffering of His holy soul,
Beneath my load of sin;
Its depths are known only to God,
Experienced all by Him.

Man's enmity and hatred cried,
"Away with Him to die;"
And yet far greater than the nails,
Far greater than their cry,

It was the judgment of my sins,
As in death's vale He trod;
The deepest suff'rings which He bore,
Were from the hand of God.

How could He suffer so and die,
What took Him all the way?
'Twas love for God and love for man,
His love has won the day.

Such love as this demands my heart,
Draws forth my love to thee;
Would wean me from this passing world,
Until my Lord I see.