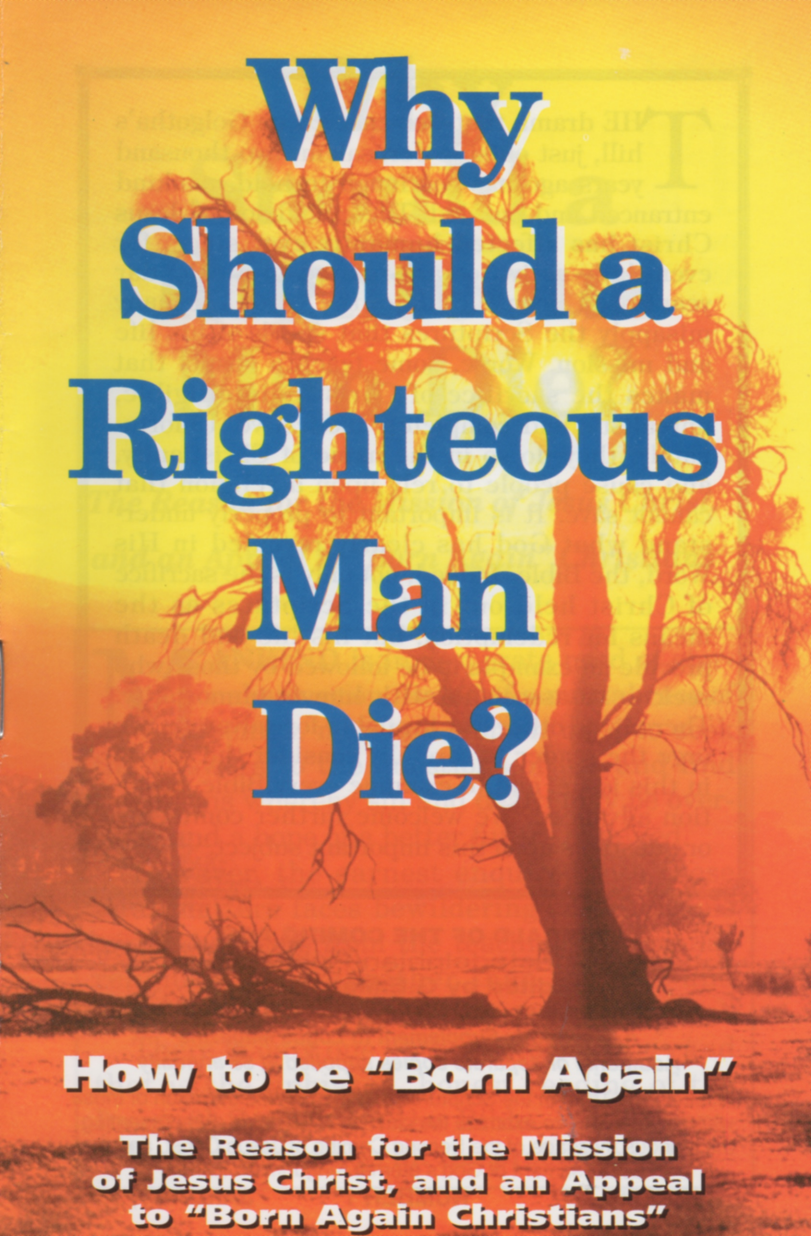




Why Should a Righteous Man Die?

How to be "Born Again"

**The Reason for the Mission
of Jesus Christ, and an Appeal
to "Born Again Christians"**

THE drama that was enacted on Golgotha's hill, just outside Jerusalem, two thousand years ago has continued to hold mankind entranced and puzzled. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ has affected humanity ever since, for even daily activities are related to a calendar year based upon the life of the Lord. Yet many misapply the Scriptures that speak of his life and mission. Worse, some teach a gospel that makes the sacrifice of Christ unintelligible, unrealistic and completely ineffective. Unfortunately, they do so in the name of Christianity, and cause people to rely upon a religion that cannot save. It is important to properly understand what God has clearly revealed in His Word, the Bible. Indeed, not only is the sacrifice of Christ held out in the Scriptures as the means for redemption, but his life and death provide an example to be followed by those who seek to be associated with him in immortality. There is no other way available for salvation. We urge the reader to carefully consider the article in this issue, and to examine every Bible quotation advanced. We welcome further comments or questions upon this important subject.

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Why Should a Righteous Man Die?

*The Reason for the Mission of Jesus Christ,
and an Appeal to "Born Again" Christians*

MANKIND is in desperate need of eternal salvation. Being of a mortal race of beings, men and women need to seek the answers to the questions of life and find the means whereby sin and death may be overcome and a hope of a better future obtained.

However, the earnest enquirer into these vital matters faces bewildering contradictions and dissensions from the teachings of popular religious leaders, rather than the real and clear plan of redemption.

There is only one pathway to Truth — and that is the unbiased, honest reading of the Inspired Scriptures: the Bible. It alone provides the answers to all the problems of life.

THE Bible describes the way to eternal redemption by the term: "*atonement*". Many do not understand its real meaning, and therefore miss the vital teaching of God that can lead to salvation. Yet the real meaning of the subject can easily be understood, and helps to open up the entire teaching of the Scriptures. It is the pivot upon which rests the whole principle of salvation and redemption for dying mankind, and so it is important to understand the implications of "The Atonement".

The original word occurs some eighty times in the Old Testament and not at all in the New Testament (in the AUTHORISED VERSION of the Bible the English word appears in Romans 5:11, but here it should be translated "reconciliation" as shown in the margin).

Some suggest that the word "atonement" means "*at-one-ment*", by which a person discovers how to become "at one" with God. This view cannot be sustained. The word "atone-ment" has been generally rendered from the Hebrew *kaphar*, and seven times from the word *kippur*, which words mean "to cover" or "to provide a covering", so as to hide something from view.

Thus, in seeking "atonement", in order to obtain salvation, a person must acknowledge that only God can provide a covering for sins, thereby wiping such sins out of existence as though they had not been. This concept is taught in New Testament language: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose *sins are covered*" (Romans 4:7).

When Mankind Was Created

The Bible records that in the beginning man was created a "living soul" — a living, breathing creature. He was not created with an immortal soul, as some erroneously teach. In fact, the words "immortal" and "soul" never occur together anywhere in the Bible. At the completion of the creation, God viewed His handiwork including Adam and Eve, and pro-

nounced it "very good" (Genesis 2:7; 1:31).

To test the worthiness or otherwise of their characters, God gave Adam and Eve a law which they were required to obey. To disobey would result in death (ch. 2: 16-17).

There was a serpent in the garden of Eden — a literal serpent with the power of speech, but not a supernatural devil, as some teach — which introduced into the mind of Eve a purely animal form of reasoning. The serpent did not possess any ability whatever to reason or moralise upon spiritual principles. However, Eve told the serpent that God had declared that breach of His law would mean death for the man and the woman. To this, the serpent replied: "Ye shall not surely die". The woman spoke the truth, but the serpent responded with a lie.

Truth and Error Incompatible

In declaring what God had said, the woman became a symbol for the truth of God's Word. But by introducing its own reasoning, the serpent represented the mind or thinking of the flesh and our fleshly nature which is the *source* of sin.

When confronted by God, Adam blamed his wife, Eve; she in turn blamed the serpent. All three of them now faced God's verdict.

The serpent had no one to blame. From him, and him alone, had come the false reasoning which resulted in sin. God addressed him: "Because *thou* hast done this... upon thy belly shalt thou go...", indicating that he had not originally been created with such a physical disability. The sentence emphasised that a creature unable to reveal any mental or moral capacity beyond *the flesh*, is "of the earth, earthy" (cp. 1Corinthians 15: 47). Those of mankind, who are governed only by that which is produced within their own fleshly minds, are the spiritual "seed" of the serpent (Matthew 3:7).

The Bible states that so far as the serpent was concerned, a state of "enmity" would continue to exist between the two antagonistic "seeds" — his own, and those of the woman. Those who strove to uphold the truth of God and struggled faithfully to walk in His ways, would find themselves in mental and moral conflict with those who defied the principles of God's truth, willingly walking in the way of error. However,

in pronouncing His judgment against sin, God declared to the woman (Gen. 3:15) that, in due time, her seed (singular) would overcome the power and influence of the serpent, by destroying sinful human nature in mankind. God said: "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" (Genesis 3:15).

In due time God sent His own Son to fulfil this promise. In him was to be achieved the decisive contest between right and wrong: the manifestation of the perfect righteousness of God within the mind of the Lord, and the sinful propensities of the flesh, developed through the original tresspass of Adam, and inherited in the nature Jesus shared with us. By his obedient life and willing sacrifice, the Lord Jesus finally overcame sin and the sin-nature he bore, and was exalted to immortality. He is now able to redeem us from sin and death (Acts 2:22-24; 1John 1:7-9; Isaiah 53:10).

How Sin Came

We must understand that, in the garden of Eden, sin resulted from "lawlessness" — a disregard for God's law (1John 3:4, RV); and that the result of sin was death. Man was not a death-stricken creature until he sinned. The apostle Paul wrote: "Through *one man* sin entered into the world, and death *through* sin" (Romans 5:12). Therefore Adam's transgression in Eden had immediate effect upon him and upon *all* his progeny — of which, by nature, Jesus Christ was one. Paul continues: "unto *all* men death passed through" (Romans 5:12, AV and ROTHERHAM versions). This single act of sin by Adam and Eve resulted in a constitutional change which carried through to all their progeny. "Through the disobedience of *the one man*, the many were *constituted* sinners" (Romans 5: 19, literal Greek text).

The Necessity for Atonement

With the introduction of sin into the world, the Creator faced two considerations. He could abandon the human race to its iniquitous ways, in which event the earth would continue to be populated with ever increasing numbers of *sinners*, living and dying without hope. Or else God could commence an undertaking that mankind itself could never do:

initiate a plan to rescue mankind from its hopelessness and to reconcile it with the Creator.

Thus, nowhere in the Bible is human nature (the mortality that came upon man after his fall from grace in Eden) ever described as being "very good". Rather, it is termed "sin's flesh" or, flesh under the *dominion* of sin. As the apostle Paul put it: "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7: 14). Note the present tense. He did not write: "I *was* carnal, until I became born of the spirit". He was, as he stated, "earthly", "a creature of flesh" (ROTHERHAM). Paul was not confessing that he was *morally* perverted, but was describing the *nature* he bore in common with all Adam's descendants. His baptism into Christ (being born of water) had not brought about any change in the nature which he had borne since his birth. And he knew that he would remain in that state so long as he continued to bear the weaknesses of human nature. Though he had learned to love God and His Son, and to walk in the way of God's truth, Paul acknowledged that he needed a physical change from human nature to divine nature. So that, whilst he hated and repudiated sin, he continued, by nature, to be under its "dominion".

Because of the nature with which he was born, God's own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was also under the "dominion of sin", until he rose from the dead and his nature was changed to immortality.

The Bible teaches that there are only two things which can alienate mankind from God. One is ignorance, the other is wicked works (Ephesians 4: 18; Colossians 1: 21). We suffer from both issues: we do not naturally understand what we should do to please God; and then we compound our problem by acting inconsistently with His commandments.

How, then, are we to attain to a state of harmony with God, in which we can receive forgiveness for sins? And how can Christ become an advocate for us, through whom we might continue to obtain God's grace in the future?

The answer to these questions is bound up in two basic doctrines upon which is established all Biblical teaching.

They are **GOD-MANIFESTATION** and **THE ATONEMENT**.

The first relates to *who God is*, and His purpose with

mankind. The second defines the *natural state of man*, identifies his needs, and teaches what he must do to benefit from God's plan for the salvation of mankind.

Yet, little is taught concerning these two vital doctrines by those who claim to expound the way to becoming "born again" christians. And because the churches of christendom are sadly astray from the Bible in their understanding of these two fundamental doctrines, they fail to proclaim the truth concerning the way of salvation.

If, for example, God was a trinity — three gods in one, as taught by christendom — the true Biblical teaching concerning the atonement would be incomprehensible, as we propose to show. Also, if man possessed an immortal soul — as is commonly, but erroneously, taught — the Biblical revelation concerning the doctrine of the atonement would be unnecessary and contradictory.

One God — One Means of Reconciliation

The Bible clearly reveals that God is One Being and not a trinity of beings. It testifies: "There is none other God but one... To us, there is but one God, the Father... One God and Father of all" (1Corinthians 8:4, 6; Ephesians 4:6). Many other passages in God's Word clearly endorse the truth that there is no God other than the One True God of Israel (Mark 12: 28-34, cp. Deuteronomy 6:1-4; Isaiah 44:6-8; 45:5; 46:9-10; 1Corinthians 8:4-6; Ephesians 4:4-6, etc.).

The Bible is equally clear in stating that man is wholly mortal, and that at death he entirely ceases to exist in any sense whatever (Psalm 6:5; 88:10-12; 146:3-4; Ecclesiastes 3:19-21; 9:5-10, etc.).

A correct understanding of these two doctrines is essential if we wish to understand the Biblical teaching concerning the atonement.

The Atonement Involves Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, Son of God *and* Son of Man, came into the world to *represent* mankind to his Father. Never does the Bible teach that he was sent to become a *substitute* for humanity: to die *instead* of us. Careful thought will reveal that there is a vast difference between the two propositions — one being true, the other false.

Concerning mankind's hope for forgiveness of sins and eternal redemption, three teachings are commonly set forth — all of them incorrect, and without Scriptural basis.

The first is that it was necessary for Christ to die to appease the wrath of a vengeful God. But this is a monstrous assertion. Is the holy and righteous God guilty of injustice? Certainly a God who gained satisfaction from resolutely demanding the death of an innocent victim could never be described as "a God of love".

The second is that Christ died as a "substitute" for us. This argument shows a total lack of understanding and scriptural reasoning. For, if Christ died *instead* of us, we would not die — but we do! Also, Christ should then remain dead — but he did not! And if Jesus Christ was punished in the place of the real sinner, what kind of God would inflict retribution upon a guiltless man, whilst at the same time permitting the guilty to escape and be freed from any obligation to the Creator? Such an idea is foreign to God's character, for He declared: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:1-4).

The third is that, upon accepting the above two doctrines, the newly converted christian becomes "born again" of the Spirit of God. This line of reasoning is without foundation upon two grounds: firstly, neither of the first two suppositions can be sustained; secondly, there is no Biblical evidence to support a concept of instant conversion to Christ with immediate "birth of the spirit".

Thus these three suppositions are all obviously false.

True faith is the *only* means through which a state of harmony with God might be attained (Hebrews 11:6; Galatians 5:6). And such a faith can *only* come by "hearing the word of God" (Romans 10:17). God has never indicated that faith could be developed in any other way.

The Justice of God

Consider the premise that Jesus Christ was punished in the place of the real sinner. Would God's character of absolute justice permit Him to inflict a penalty upon one who was guiltless, whilst permitting proven sinners to escape and be pardoned? Such a misconception of God's character

cannot be reconciled either with common logic or the teaching of Scripture. Paul wrote "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also *spare not* thee. Behold therefore, the goodness *and severity* of God" (Romans 11:22). Notice that these words were addressed to believers who had accepted the gospel of Christ — yet their ultimate eternal salvation could not be taken for granted as though it were an accomplished fact. Their final acceptance or rejection by God would depend upon the extent of their faithfulness. Paul warned the Corinthian believers: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye *have stood*, by which also ye are *being saved*, if ye *hold fast* what I preached unto you, *unless ye have believed in vain*" (1Corinthians 15:1-2, lit. Gk., mg.). Salvation is a process, a continuing development of a Christ-like character within the believer (2Corinthians 3:18, RSV).

Therefore, despite the goodness and mercy of God, it is possible that some will be found to have "believed" the gospel *in vain*. At Christ's return from heaven they will be revealed as having proven faithless to the terms of salvation set forth in the gospel.

If Christ had already been punished in the place of the real sinner, the "born-again christian" could never be in danger of losing his "born of the spirit" state, which, some assert, positively assures him of eternal redemption.

But he has no such assurance. The truth is that *all* believers — those who have accepted the true gospel and been "born of the water" through baptism — "must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, *whether it be good or bad*" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Elsewhere in the New Testament this fact is stressed even more strongly: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Hebrews 10 :26-27).

There is no Biblical evidence whatever to demonstrate that Jesus Christ died as a "substitute" for sinful humanity, thus freeing them from any claims which death might have

upon them.

Jesus Christ: A Representative Man

Though God was his father, by virtue of the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit descending upon the virgin Mary — thus making him no ordinary man — Jesus Christ was nevertheless a member of the human race. He shared, in every sense, the proclivities associated with human nature. "God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law... As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same... 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" (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14; 4:15).

In every natural sense Christ was a part of humanity: "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham... Of the seed of David, according to the flesh... Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3; 1John 4:3).

A Dilemma for the "Born Again" Christian

God caused His Son to come into existence in "the flesh". So far as fallen Adamic nature is concerned, there is only one kind of flesh: a flesh that is mortal, corruptible, decaying, death-stricken.

These Biblical facts place the "born again christian" in a dilemma. Why? Because the usual "born again" argument cannot reconcile a popular section of Scripture with those verses quoted above. We refer to the well-known conversation which took place between Christ and Nicodemus who visited Jesus with some vital questions (John 3:1-21)*.

Consider the claims of a "born again" christian. He would declare that he was "born of the water" at his natural birth, because the unborn embryo is immersed in "water" until the time of the birth. It is then asserted that the "born again" christian is "born of the spirit" at the time of his "conversion" to Christ. It is further affirmed that this puts the "born again" person in the same position as was Christ, at the time when he spoke to Nicodemus.

* Write to the publishers for a free copy of the booklet: *Christ's Death and Your Salvation* for further details of this conversation.

But this is not so. The Bible teaches that *adult baptism in water* is essential for salvation, and is an intrinsic pre-requisite for true conversion to Christ (Mark 16:15-16; John 3:5; cp. v. 23; Acts 2:38-41; 8:12, 27-39; 9:17-18; 10: 47-48; 16:14-15, etc.). As is evident from the references cited above, Bible baptism can only be effective upon the basis of a prior sound knowledge of the one true gospel. Thus to be "born of the water" through baptism is only attained through faith and obedience to the divine commandments (John 6:35-40; Romans 2:7; Matthew 3:17; John 12:25; Galatians 6:8).

Born of the Spirit

To be "born of the spirit" is entirely different. Whilst baptism in water relates to a change in *disposition* and *thinking*, being "born of the spirit" concerns a change in *nature* — a change to "spirit nature" which is divine nature (2Peter 1:4). Believers can therefore only hope for a change to divine nature (which is being "born of the spirit") *after* Christ has returned to the earth and the resurrection of the dead has taken place (Philippians 3:20-21; cp. Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; Acts 24:15, etc.).

These truths can be established from Christ's words to Nicodemus, as recorded in John chapter 3. Apart from three distinctions, Jesus and Nicodemus were identical men in every respect. The differences were: (1) that Jesus was literally and spiritually the Son of God; (2) that he was a sinless man; (3) that he could exercise miraculous powers.

Can it be argued that the Lord had been "born of the spirit" whereas Nicodemus had yet to undergo such a "rebirth"? By no means. Neither Christ nor Nicodemus had, at that time, been "born of the spirit".

How do we know this? The epistle to the Hebrews teaches that Christ "*being come* an high priest... neither by the blood of goats and calves, but, *by his own blood*, he entered in once into the holy place, *having found for himself* eternal redemption" (ch. 9:11-12). In Hebrews 9:12 the AUTHORISED VERSION has the words "*for us*" in italics, meaning that the words do not appear in the original Greek. They do not rightly belong there. The verses are not speaking of what Christ has done for *us*, but rather what he sought and found

for himself. Therefore, he could not save us without first having saved himself. Consideration of the Greek text will reveal that the key words "having found for himself" are in the third person, masculine, middle voice; hence the literal rendering shown above.

Most "born again christians" find this puzzling. The verse in Hebrews does not fit their concept of a Christ who had *always* been in a "born again" state, in the fullest sense. The Scriptures show that the Lord was not "born of the spirit" until he had been raised from the grave, and granted a "spiritual body". It was necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to be "*made into* a spirit, life-giving". Hence the apostle also taught that all bearers of human nature — including Christ — are *first* "a natural body... and afterward that which is spiritual" (1Corinthians 15:44-46).

Christ Benefitted from His Own Death

The means by which Christ became a "spiritual body" or, "born of the spirit" is clearly stated: "by his own blood..." Therefore until he had completed his life of sacrifice which culminated in his death and the shedding of his blood, he could not have "found for himself eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). This vital truth is repeated in the same epistle: "The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus... through the blood of the everlasting covenant". This was Christ's own blood (Hebrews 13:20) representing his willing sacrifice and dedication to God's will.

How, therefore, could Christ have already been "born of the spirit" at the time of his conversation with Nicodemus, when he had not, then, accomplished all that would be necessary for him to *find* "*for himself eternal redemption*"?

He could not. Look once again at John chapter 3.

Christ went on to say: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (vv. 14-15). It might be asked: How could anyone claim to "believe in him" without understanding either the meaning or significance of the first part of this statement?

What did Moses do in "the wilderness" that was so important, typically of that which Christ was later to accomplish?

See Numbers 21: 4-9. The children of Israel had sinned grievously against God. As a result, He "sent fiery serpents among them and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" — a powerful lesson to remind the Israelites, and ourselves, that the false reasoning of the serpent in the Garden of Eden brought sin, and, in its turn, sin brought death (Genesis 3:4, cp. ch. 2:16-17; 3:22-24).

To heal those Israelites bitten by the serpents in the wilderness, Moses was commanded by God to fashion a "serpent of brass" and "set it upon a pole". Identification of this object with the serpent in Eden is too obvious to miss. In addition, *brass* is a Bible symbol for human nature (Numbers 16:37-39; 31:22 Exodus 27:2; etc.). Every Israelite who had been bitten by a serpent in the wilderness and who gazed in faith upon the brazen serpent that Moses had constructed, lived. Christ later said that the brazen serpent typified himself. Thus all who look to the crucified Saviour "in spirit and in truth", may be rescued from the "serpent-power" of flesh, and live in hope of eternal life (John 4:23-24; Mark 16:15-16).

But what was Christ teaching in his significant words to Nicodemus (John 3:14-15)? He was showing that, in his life of perfect obedience to his Father and in his death by crucifixion, he would put to death the evil propensities of the flesh, thereby teaching that fallen human nature, as the source of sin, was rightly related to death. The flesh can produce "*no good thing*"; and only God is righteous (John 6:63; Romans 7:18-21; Galatians 5:19-21). There is nothing in natural man which can bring forth anything to the glory of God. The carnal mind — which is the product of the flesh — can never be brought into subjection to the will of God. It must therefore be crushed by the influence of God's Word (Romans 8:7, 13). Christ, alone of all humanity, fulfilled this ideal to perfection. He became the perfect example of "the Word made flesh" for in his every word, thought and deed, he was a *living* manifestation of God's Word (John 1:14).

God was in Christ — How?

Yet, for all this, Jesus needed to be delivered from the burden of human nature. He had "to be born of the spirit" by undergoing a transformation to a nature which never experi-

ences trial, temptation, weakness and death.

Thus, in offering himself as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of humanity — a sacrifice which required a life of perfect mental and moral obedience to the will of his Father — Christ “found for himself eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12). He benefitted from his own death.

A true understanding of the Biblical doctrine of the atonement will show the exquisiteness of God’s provision for man’s salvation. There could be no escape for humanity from sin and death until sin had been conquered in the *body* of a man who had rendered perfect obedience to God throughout his life. This fact epitomises the true doctrine of the atonement.

How, it may be asked, could Jesus Christ have been able to completely overcome the power of sin, whilst by nature being fully identified with the human race? The answer is, in effect, that *God* did it.

What do we mean by this? All children born into the human race inherit characteristics from both parents. In the case of the Lord Jesus, he inherited from his mother, corruptible, death-stricken human nature. From his Father, he derived a character which was able to meet the challenge presented by a sin prone nature, and overcome it. This is evident from the teaching of Scripture: “God was *in* Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2Corinthians 5:19). In view of Christ’s nature, God could only have been “in” him by means of His character — a character which is mentally and morally perfect. In this important sense, Christ was God manifest in the flesh (Matthew 1:16, 20, 23; Luke 2:30-32; John 1:13-14; Romans 1:3-4, etc.).

God’s Word makes this quite clear: “What the law could not do (i.e., bring eternal salvation to mankind) in that it was weak through the flesh (i.e., human nature was unable of itself, to perfectly keep God’s law), *GOD*, sending His *own* Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and *for* sin (i.e., to provide the means whereby sin could be rendered powerless) condemned sin *in the flesh*”. Another rendition (WEYMOUTH) has: “Sending His own Son, in the form of sinful humanity to deal with sin, God pronounced sentence upon sin, *in* human

nature" (Romans 8:3). This teaches that it was necessary for a life-and-death struggle to take place within the mind and body of one of Adam's race, with the perfect righteousness of God's character and morality triumphing over the flesh. Thus, when he died as a *sinless* man Christ had "overcome" the flesh. He had never allowed the serpent thinking, the "carnal mind" to influence his decisions. Once and for all, it was proven that "in the flesh" dwells "no good thing" and that "the flesh profiteth *nothing, nothing!*" (Romans 7:18; John 6:63, literal Greek). Therefore Christ put the flesh to death in obedience to the will of the Father (John 10:18).

Human Nature Versus God's Truth

God's commandment to His Son to put "the flesh" to death was the only God-honoring objective to be achieved with sin prone, human nature. Knowing this, Christ told Pilate: "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11; cp. Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28; Isaiah 53:10).

Thus, Christ fulfilled the will and purpose of his Father. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). This was no mere cold-blooded ritualistic death. Christ's sacrifice involved his whole being in obeying God in every respect, in all aspects of life — in both word and deed — culminating in the willing surrender of his own life.

What was his state afterwards? He became truly "born of the spirit" when his Father raised him to divine nature. Then: "Death had *no more* dominion over him" — implying that during his mortal lifetime, death did have "dominion" over him (Romans 6:9). But in his death, with the cessation of mortality, sin and its effects had been overcome.

Therefore, in perfect harmony with his Father, Jesus Christ "condemned sin, *in the flesh*" (Romans 8:3). This was the only God-honoring way in which such a victory could be accomplished. The word rendered "condemned" in this passage more literally signifies "to give judgment against". God cannot look upon sin. It was necessary, therefore, for God's Son to be fully identified with the nature which produces sin, so that he could join battle against all unrighteousness and overcome it. "Wherefore, in *all things* it behoved him to be

made *like unto his brethren*... He was in *all points tempted, like as we are*" (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15).

Therefore, although God was his Father, so far as fleshly constitution or nature was concerned, Jesus Christ was totally identified with all other sons of Adam. This gives purpose and meaning to his birth, mission, death and resurrection. Apart from an understanding of these principles, Christ's sacrifice would be little more than some kind of mysterious and meaningless ritual.

God's Merciful Provision For Our Need

What of our own present, urgent need?

If wise, we will echo the fervent words of the apostle Paul: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). His answer should be ours also: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"! Like Paul, we should accept the love and mercy extended by God, as manifested so exquisitely through His crucified and resurrected Son.

What is required of us if we wish to embrace the gospel of Christ as our hope of eternal salvation? Simply, like Christ, we must repudiate sin, and the nature which produces it. Paul wrote emphatically upon this point: "Sin shall *not* have dominion over you!" (Romans 6:14).

Even after submitting to Biblical baptism into Christ, we still need forgiveness for sins committed from day to day. "If we say that we have no sin", John wrote to true believers, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John 1: 8-9).

Those who consider that they have been "born of the spirit" (and who therefore ought to be completely free from any problems related to sin if their theory was sound), are urged to re-assess their position in the eyes of Almighty God. Should any ignore the fact that they still remain in need of the saving grace and forgiveness of God, even after they have been "born of the water"? Paul instructs: "Let not sin therefore *reign* in your *mortal body*, that ye should *obey it* in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12).

Christ's Example — What We Must Do

Surely, what is required from every man and woman is

the disposition shown by the Philippian jailor: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The answer to this question will only be found within the pages of God's Word. It will be seen that the salvation of men and women depends upon their acknowledging the perfect righteousness and holiness of God, which He will never impair or violate. Therefore, mere mortals must respond, with an intelligent understanding of, and obedience to, God's Word, and the goodness and mercy which God extends.

Christ can become our saviour if we correctly understand, appreciate and act upon the truths concerning his birth, mission, and all that God accomplished through him. "In the days of his flesh" the Lord Jesus Christ "offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the One who had the power to save him *out of death*, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been *made* perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:7-9, JERUSALEM BIBLE, mg.).

If we seek eternal salvation "in spirit and in truth", which God extends to us through His Son, "he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them". In view of this promise, and its glorious hope, what alternative could we hope to find? "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (Hebrews 7:25; James 4:8, RSV).

Within the pages of His Word, God has revealed the grace and mercy He is prepared to extend to perishing humanity. But salvation can only be attained by the means which He has clearly set forth. The question is: Will we seek His way? If we are really concerned with our own hope of eternal redemption, we will do so whilst we still have opportunity — before Christ returns to judge his people and to grant eternal salvation to all who have served him faithfully in accordance with the truth taught in God's Word (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11: 6; Revelation 5:9-10).

WE invite questions and comments upon the matter presented in this booklet. Please write to *The Editor, Herald of the Coming Age, Box 220, Findon, South Australia 5023.*



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They do not profess to have received any new revelation, but hold that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are able to make one wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Believing in the Divine Authorship of the Bible, they think it only reasonable to eschew any interpretation thereof which fails to harmonise all the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures; and finding that the creeds of the various existing sects are, in a great variety of ways, opposed to the direct teaching of the Bible, they feel compelled to stand apart, making appeal in all such matters to the statements of Scripture, and testing all teachings thereby.

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