

## Chapter 13

# WHEN THE FULNESS OF THE TIME WAS COME

*Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:1-7)*

The first revelation from God to man concerning salvation was given immediately after the sin of Adam and Eve. God spoke to each of those who were involved in the sin of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, including the serpent, to whom He 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)

Adam showed his faith in this promise by naming his wife *Eve, the mother of all living*.

This was accomplished by the Word of God and the Spirit of God when Adam applied this promise, *of the seed of the woman*, to the only woman living. Even though this was not the way

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God was going to fulfill this promise, it was, nevertheless, a manifestation of Adam's faith in God's promise. God then expanded the revelation of salvation to both Adam and Eve when He clothed them in the skin of an innocent victim (probably a lamb). This revealed that redemption would be accomplished *in the fulness of the time* by the sacrifice of an Innocent Victim (the Seed of the woman). This Victim, through the shedding of His blood, would provide a suitable covering for the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as the sins of the members of their race who would come to believe in God's promised Redeemer.

In the book of Hebrews we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God, is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. The truth of this is important to our understanding of the doctrine of salvation. The same book of Hebrews speaks of our Lord as being *the same yesterday, today and forever*, thus asserting His immutability. With His immutability and with His omniscience and with the Scriptural declaration, *Salvation is of the Lord*, we know that the plan of salvation was in the mind of God from all eternity, because *known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world*. We also know every believer of every age was chosen of God, in Christ, before the foundation of the world:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him: in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6, emphasis mine)

It could be successfully argued that the above Scripture is a reference to believers in the church age. Nevertheless the fact that God is not a respecter of persons; that He is immutable; that He is omniscient; that before Christ established His church, He told His disciples they were

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a gift from the Father to Him; that all that the Father had given Him, He would raise up at the last day; it follows, then, that what is true of the church in the above passage is true of all believers of every age. Therefore we must conclude that while God has dealt with different men of different ages in different ways, salvation has always been by God's grace through faith.

The more we learn of the doctrine of salvation, the more we realize how little we had to do with our own salvation. Paul also wrote the Ephesians:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Thus we learn that the faith we exercised to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ was not of ourselves; it did not originate with us; it was a gift from God and not of works *lest any man should boast*. Paul's term, *created in Christ Jesus*, in the above verse, speaks of our regeneration, that is, of each believer being *a new creation in Christ Jesus*. Creation requires a Creator and there is but one Creator in this universe. The universe did not create itself, as the evolutionist say, nor can man recreate Himself into the image of God: this requires the creative power and Person of God. The Psalmist tells us how God created and, thus, how he creates:

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. (Psalm 33:6)

Thus God created the universe by His Word and by His Spirit, and Paul tells us, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God* and ... *it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*. Further, our Lord said, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. Our Lord's reference to water is a

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reference to the Water of Life -- the living Word which came down from heaven, and His reference to wind, *pneuma* in the Greek text, is a reference, by interpretation, to the Spirit of God. (Note: The water and the wind were the *earthly things* our Lord spoke of to Nicodemus, which Nicodemus did not understand.) Thus without the regenerating work of the Spirit of God, acting upon the Word of God, it is impossible for anyone to be saved.

Paul tells us, *he planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase*. Truly, *Salvation is of the Lord*. Our Lord declared, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*. Further, when our Lord spoke to Nicodemus, He spoke to a Jewish rabbi during the age of the law and questioned him concerning the new birth (a truth which many regard as belonging solely to the church age):

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And 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. (John 3: 9-15, emphasis mine)

Our Lord's statement to Nicodemus clearly shows that the doctrine of the new birth, with its implication of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord from the dead, should have been known to the Jews, who were in a covenant relationship with God based upon the law. Nicodemus, as a rabbi in Israel, should have known that the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness was a portrayal of salvation by grace through faith. In contrast with Nicodemus, Job believed in the grace of God: for, in an age of limited revelation concerning the grace of God and

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at a time of great physical distress, he wrote:

My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh? Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. (Job 19:20-27, emphasis mine)

Our understanding of these fundamental truths is essential to our understanding of Paul's refutation of the *other gospel* of the Judaizers. If, in any age, any man has had an acceptable relationship with God based upon his human performance of righteousness, or the deeds of the law, then the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, apart from the deeds of the law, crumbles and evaporates into a system of empty promises and the useless crucifixion of the Son of God. Remember, as Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians respecting the possibility of a failed resurrection, *we, then, are of all men most miserable.*

We have been emphasizing the source of our salvation in the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. Indeed, *Salvation is of the Lord*. Now, in accordance with the truth we have seen in the book of Hebrews, the Lord is not only the *Author* of our faith, He is the *Finisher* of it. It is not our personal faith that is involved in this statement from Hebrews, but *the faith*: that is, the body of revealed truth concerning Jesus Christ in His Person and in His work in our behalf. This is the faith He authored and this is the faith He completed. To author something is one thing; to bring the thing authored to pass is another. Thus Paul wrote:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might

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receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

God's plan of salvation is one plan. It was authored before the foundation of the world. It was promised to Adam and Eve the moment there was a need for it. But the completion of that which was required to satisfy all of the aspects of God's Person, as well as His relationship with fallen man, had to wait for its completion in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in *the fullness of the time*.

This portion of our text, then, speaks of the incarnation of the Son of God to fulfill the promise of God to Adam and Eve, as well as fulfilling God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which promises were, in reality, one promise. For the salvation that was promised, to have its completion, there must of necessity be the outworking of the promise. This is the reason for a progressive unfolding of the partial history of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets, as well as the more complete history of the nation of Israel in the Scriptures. This is the reason for the revelation of the various covenant relationships between God and man. Perhaps one of the most important of the revelations of the Old Testament is the revelation of the total corruption and depravity of Israel; a people chosen of God and delivered from Egypt by His grace; a people who, sixty days after their deliverance from Egypt by grace (and acting in unbelief towards God's grace), upon hearing the law, declared, *All that the LORD our God hath spoken, we will do*. This is indeed a mystery: ... *that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in* (Romans 11:25).

The history of Israel has revealed completely that no people, no matter how highly motivated by a personal relationship with the true and living God, even being chosen of God, can

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live in accordance with the perfect law of God and be accepted of God on the basis of their performance. This is borne out in Isaiah's description of Israel:

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as [menstrual] rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. (Isaiah

64:6-7)

Nevertheless God had a covenant relationship with Israel based upon the law, a law which required a perfect performance for acceptance -- a performance which they could not supply. From God's perspective *the law was [their] schoolmaster to bring [them] unto Christ, that [they] might be justified by faith.* This faith was revealed in the shadows and types of the tabernacle worship and sacrificial system, given with the law on Mount Sinai.

On the other hand, Israel's perspective was that the law was an end in itself. They truly believed they could live according to the high and holy standards of God's law, because they were ignorant of God's righteousness. They did not see the sacrificial system as an instrument of faith, to enter into the promise God made to Adam, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but saw it as a religious necessity. Consequently they went *about trying to establish their own righteousness.* Thus when Christ came to fulfill the law and all righteousness and to provide redemption, they did not submit themselves to *the righteousness of God*, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, but rebelled against the Lord, crying, *Crucify him! Crucify him!*

The truth of salvation by grace through faith was not only missed by the majority in Israel, it has been missed by many who have tried to explain Israel's relationship with God to the church of Jesus Christ. Sunday School publishing houses have continued to try to make the patriarchs

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into role models for children in this church age: not role models of faith, but moral examples. This has left these publishing houses thoroughly frustrated with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon and anyone else they chose to use as a role model; for God has revealed these men in the Old Testament Scriptures exactly as they were: sinners saved by grace.

Despite Israel's ignorance, Paul spoke of the Jews' relationship to the law as being an outworking of the plan and purpose of God. He compared their relationship with God to the relationship of a father with his underage child. Thus he wrote:

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. (Galatians 4:1-3)

As a child is under the authority of his parents and his educators, Israel, in her covenant relationship with God, was under the bondage of the law and the rules and regulations of this world's system until the time appointed of the Father. Thus, in terms of fulfillment, Israel was under the law until *the fullness of the time*, which, according to the apostle Paul, was until *the seed should come*. The Lord Jesus Christ, Who is *the Seed*, fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law in His life, and in His death He bore the judgment for Israel's failures before the law. The Scriptures reveal there was no fault in the law. The fault was in Israel's weakness in the flesh, thinking she could fulfill the law. Thus Paul wrote:

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God [did] sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4)

Try as she may, Israel could not do what she had pledged herself to do. Thus the law was

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not given as a means of life, but to establish the *exceeding sinfulness of [the] sin*. Israel, then, was the vehicle through which this truth was established for the benefit of all of the families of the earth.

Nevertheless because of the deception of the Devil, this is a lesson hard learned. It didn't take long for the legalistic elements of Judaism to find their way into the church and to exert the same influence in the church that they had exerted in Judaism. To counter this tendency, Paul declared that the believer is not only redeemed by Jesus Christ, but Christ has given him His Holy Spirit and the right to call God, *Father*, by the spirit of adoption.

Thus it is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit Who guides the believer into all truth and gives him that sense of security and hope, that he could not have if he had to depend upon himself for an acceptable relationship with the Father. He is no longer regarded as a servant under tutors and governors, but as an adult son, who is an heir of God, with an inheritance that is incorruptible and is reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God, through faith.

Thus our Lord declared:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John 14:16-20)