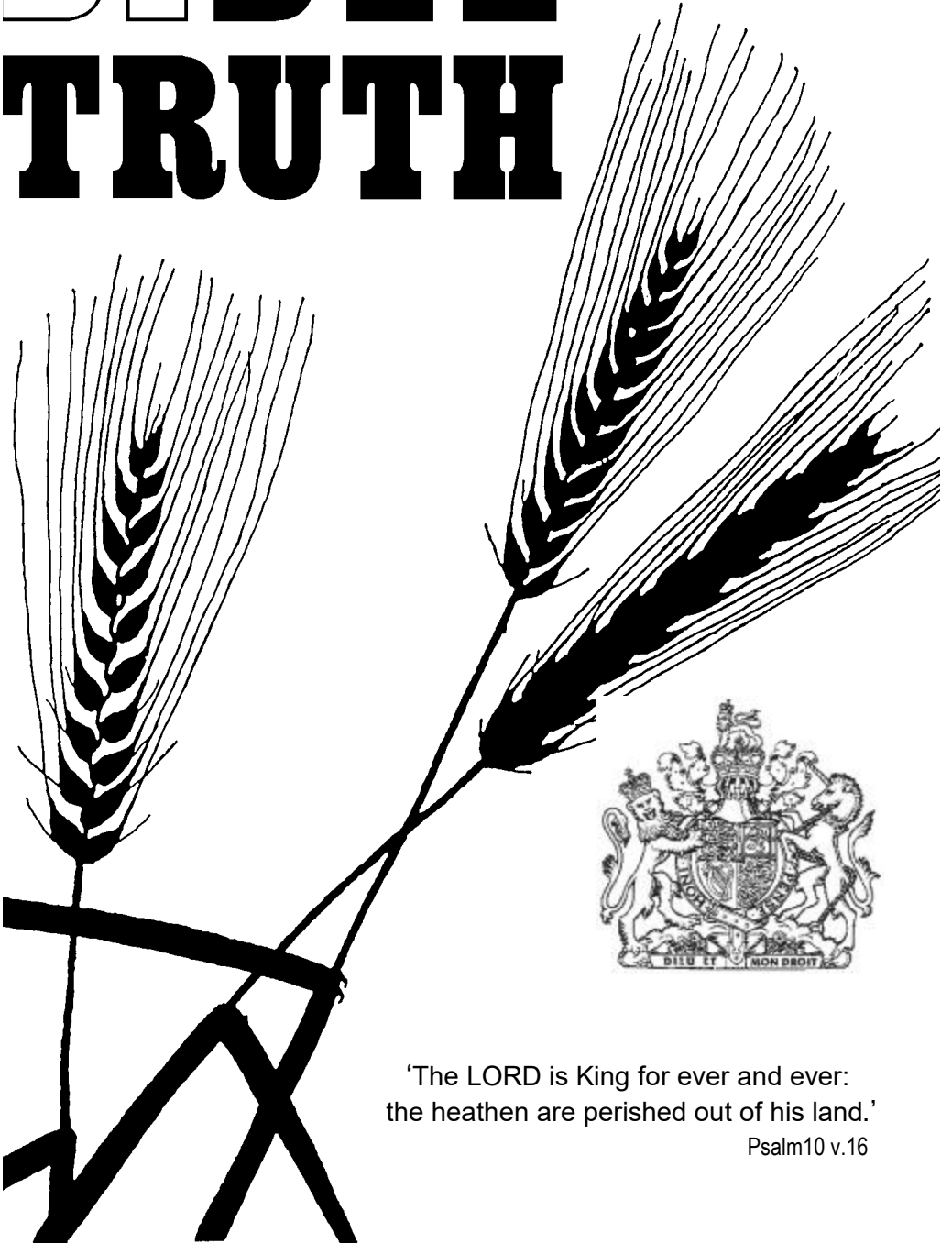


BIBLE TRUTH

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'The LORD is King for ever and ever:
the heathen are perished out of his land.'

Psalm10 v.16

SALVATION IN THE LORD

by the late W.Edmund Filmer BA

PERSONAL

The law of the Lord requires that man shall love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. That is, he must be wholeheartedly devoted to the service of God, and deal with his fellow men as he would wish to be treated by them. Failure to do this is sin.

The human race has entirely departed from this law, for not only do people ignore God, they deceive one another, and engage in bloodshed, war and destruction. There is no one who can say that he has fully complied with the law. All have sinned and come short of the required standard. Therefore, in the eyes of the law, no one can be declared righteous. Now the penalty for sin is death, but although the law makes everyone guilty before God, its purpose was not that everyone should be condemned to death. Its purpose was only to state what is right and wrong.

Now God has made it known that there is another kind of righteousness, namely righteousness by faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Even though all have sinned, all who believe that **Jesus Died On The Cross** bearing the penalty for their sins, are declared righteous, that is to say, they are justified before God. There are, therefore, no grounds for boasting that one person is better than another in the sight of God, for all must confess that they have sinned and are worthy of death, before they can believe that Jesus died for their sins. A man is declared righteous solely on the grounds of this faith, regardless of the extent to which he has kept the law.

Paul explains that he was teaching nothing new in this principle of justification by faith. God had told Abraham in his old age that he would have a son and heir, and we read that Abraham believed God and that this faith was counted to him for righteousness. Now this was before Abraham had received the sign of circumcision by which Israelites distinguished themselves from the Gentiles. By this example, therefore, the principle of justification by faith is seen to be universally applicable. People of all races and nationalities who believe that Jesus died for them as a sacrifice for their sins, are justified before God on account of that faith, and the question of whether they have fulfilled the law does not arise.

The New Covenant

Now the sacrifices prescribed by the law in the Old Testament made nobody any better, for the people continued to sin again and again meaning that sacrifices had to be offered year after year. But the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is of greater value, for it was not only a sacrifice for sin. Under the Old Covenant made at Sinai, the Israelites agreed to obey God's law by their own efforts, and the whole history of Israel and Judah in the Old Testament makes it quite obvious that man is unable to keep God's law by his own unaided efforts. Therefore God made known through the prophets the terms of a New Covenant, under which He promised to give man a new heart and endue him with a new Spirit to help him to obey the law.

'And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.'

Ezekiel ch.36 v.27

Now the terms of the Old Covenant at Sinai were first written down, and only became operative when Moses had made the prescribed sacrifice of calves and goats. Likewise, the terms of the New Covenant had already been stated by the Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but could only be put into effect by the offering of a blood sacrifice, and this was offered by Jesus Christ on the Cross. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is therefore, of far greater value than that of goats and calves, for it made it possible for every one to conquer sinful habits by the help of God's Spirit (see Hebrews ch.9 vv 11-28).

Being Born Again

When Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus to enquire about the Kingdom of God, Jesus told him,

'... Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'.

John ch.3 v.3

Nicodemus asked what was meant by being born again, and Jesus explained that there was a spiritual birth as well as a natural birth. Just as a child receives the spirit of life when he is born in the natural way, so must a man receive the Holy Spirit promised in the New Covenant when he is born again spiritually.

In the time of Moses many Israelites were dying of snake bites in the wilderness, but they were miraculously saved, if in faith they looked at a brazen serpent which Moses set up on a pole. In the

same way, if a man wishes to enter into the New Covenant relationship with God, receiving the Holy Spirit into his heart to help him keep God's law, all that he need do is to believe that God has made that promise available to him through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and he will be born again.

Those who are born again, and do not live according to their old natural desires, but are led by the indwelling Holy Spirit, are no longer condemned under the law. But those who have been born only in the natural way are interested only in natural things, and so give way to the weaknesses of human nature. They are under condemnation, for human nature rebels continually against God, and those who are governed by it cannot please Him. Those who are born again of the Spirit of God and are led by the Spirit are called sons of God, and just as Jesus Himself was raised from the dead, so will they be raised from the dead to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

NATIONAL

Besides personal sins, there are national sins, that is to say offences committed by the nation as a whole, either because they were led into them by their rulers or because through a democratically elected Government they chose to disregard God's law. The final punishment for sin is death or extermination in the case of a nation, but God in His mercy gives both individuals and nations time to repent before sentence is carried out. When Israel became a nation, and occupied the Promised Land, they were told that disobedience to God's law would be punished by a series of curses that would become progressively more severe until they were finally taken away into exile.

Justice requires that the sinner must die, but in Old Testament times God made it known that He would accept the death of an animal without blemish as a legal substitute for the sinner. Those sacrifices, in fact, prefigure the truly representative sacrifice that was to come, namely that of the sinless Man, Jesus on the cross. They taught that whether it be an individual that sins, or the whole nation, if there is repentance and confession of sin, accompanied by the offering of the proper sacrifice, sin will be forgiven. The hands of the sinner were to be laid on the head of the sacrifice to signify that his sins were transferred to the innocent animal. This was then slaughtered, the shed blood of the sacrifice representing the life given up in atonement for sin.

At Sinai, a whole series of sacrifices were laid down to cover every aspect of the law. These included both sacrifices that were to be offered every year by the High Priest on behalf of the nation. After making an offering for his own sins, the High Priest brought to the altar two kids of the goats for national sins. One of these was slaughtered to bear the death penalty as **A Sacrifice For National Sin** but the other, called the 'scapegoat', was driven out alive into the desert after the High Priest had laid his hands on it and confessed over it the sins of the people. Since part of the punishment for national sin was exile, the scapegoat represented Israel being driven into exile bearing their sins on its head.

As in the case of sacrifice for personal sins, the national sacrifice of the kid that was slaughtered had its counterpart in the sacrifice of Jesus, but that part of the punishment represented by the scapegoat was finally borne by the nation when it went into exile. The Epistle to the Hebrews confirms that those sacrifices which were made by the High Priest every year when he entered the tabernacle offering a sacrifice not only for Himself, but also for the sins of the people, prefigured **the Sacrifice of Jesus**.

In fact we are told that Jesus played the part both of High Priest and sacrifice, in that He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. Furthermore, before Jesus was crucified it had already been pointed out by Caiaphas, the High Priest at that time, that it was better that one man should die, rather than that the whole nation should perish. It is particularly emphasised that he said this under divine inspiration, signifying thereby, that Jesus was to die for the national sins of Israel.

The prophets repeatedly foretold, particularly Isaiah, that God would raise up a national Saviour from the house of David. He was to save His people not only from their enemies, but He would blot out their transgressions and cover their sins. Just before the Saviour was born, an angel revealed to Joseph that the child should be called Jesus, '... for He shall save His people from their sins' (Matthew ch.1 v.21). Again, Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, inspired by the Holy Spirit declared that God had visited and redeemed His people and had raised up a Saviour in the house of His servant David, so that they might serve Him in holiness and righteousness in fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham. Paul, preaching at Antioch, declared that of David's seed '... hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:' (Acts ch.13 v.23).

However, just as it is necessary for the individual to confess his sin, and accept Christ as his personal Saviour, so is it necessary for the nation as a whole to repent and accept Christ as their national Saviour, before Israel can be reconciled to God. Furthermore, just as it is necessary for the individual to enter into the New Covenant relationship with God in order that he may be enabled to keep God's law. so is it necessary for **The Nation** as a whole to enter into this relationship. As in the case of personal salvation, the Holy Spirit must be given to Israel as a whole to guide and direct the nation to live according to God's law and not lapse again into sin.

It is not always realised that the New Covenant is actually stated by the Old Testament prophets to be primarily a National Covenant which God is to make with Israel.

'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:'

Jeremiah ch.31 v.31

When Israel came out of Egypt, God made a covenant with the whole nation at Sinai which they did not keep. Next time it will be different.

'But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

Jeremiah ch.31 vv 33-34

The Old Covenant was ratified at Sinai by the sacrifice of goats and calves, but we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the New Covenant was ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now it requires acceptance by faith on the part of the whole nation, acting through its appointed representatives, to put it into effective operation.
