

FREEDOM'S RING

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land" (Lev.25:10).

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What Was Nailed To The Cross?

Of God it is written that, "he canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). What was nailed to the cross?

Throughout my 67 years in the church, Bible teachers have asserted consistently that the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross. For most of my career I taught that without really questioning the validity of the claim. In more recent times, however, I have often wondered that it seemed to contradict Jesus' declaration that he came not to destroy (*kataluo*: to destroy utterly, to overthrow completely- Vine) the law. With your patient indulgence, I would like to add some thoughts relating to that question. Let me introduce the discussion with a few questions.

* Was mankind "law-less" during the seven weeks after the Cross until Pentecost?

* On Pentecost, did the Jews in synagogues throughout the Roman Empire become sinners because their Law was abolished and they had not heard and obeyed the gospel?

* Would not nailing the Law to the cross destroy it?

* Could the Jew who entered the Kingdom on Pentecost rightly continue to keep ordinances of the Law?

* If the Covenant of Law was destroyed by Jesus' death, how could it still have been only "ready to vanish away" thirty years later as "the day" of the coming of the Lord drew near (Heb. 8:13; 10:25)?

Early in his ministry, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told them, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17). Abolish (*katargeo*) means "to reduce to inactivity". In this and similar words not loss of being is implied, but loss of well-being" -Vine. Fulfill means "to complete."

If Jesus had told them instead to forsake the Covenant of Law given through Moses, they probably would have killed him immediately. If Peter and the apostles on Pentecost had told the crowd of Jews they should no longer follow Moses and the prophets, instead of 3000 coming to accept Christ, they more likely would have "come forward" to stone them! We will return to this point later.

To Gentile converts in Colossae many years later, Paul explained, "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:11-14). These Gentiles had not been under the Covenant of Law, yet each had a list of violations of God's

universal law on his record. It was this legal bond or "rap sheet" that was nailed to the cross. Our sin, not law, was nailed to the cross symbolically, with Jesus in his atoning sacrifice. God's gracious forgiveness canceled the bond.

God's acceptance of them had nothing to do with the Law of Moses, for Paul's next paragraph urges, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath" (Col. 2:16-22; see Rom. 14). They could practice or refrain from practicing those things as disciples.

The *New Easy To Read New Testament* renders this passage simply, "We owed a debt because we broke God's laws. That debt listed all the rules we failed to follow. But God forgave us of that debt. God took away that debt and nailed it to the cross."

In a parallel passage written to the Ephesians, Paul stated in slightly different terms, "For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in the place of two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end" (Eph. 2:13-16).

Evidently, Paul here alludes to the wall in the temple area beyond which no Gentile was permitted to go. Jewish law kept them separate, but grace ignores law. Grace is not dispensed according to law. In his flesh on the cross Jesus symbolically "reduced to inactivity" that barrier by no longer considering law-keeping as the condition of acceptance. Thus he could accept mankind from both sides of the wall, both Jews who had lived answerable to the Law of Moses and Gentiles who were accountable to the moral law. They both became one in Christ's body by grace through faith, not by law-keeping.

We Died To Law

It may be surprising to some to learn that, instead of the law dying, it was the sinner who died. "You have died to the law through the body of Christ," Paul assures, and he adds, "But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit" (Rom. 7:4, 6). Further, Paul confesses, "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal. 2:19-21). Not only is our list of infractions (bond) nailed to the cross, but the believer was nailed to the cross also symbolically being crucified with Christ.

Yes, when we were crucified with Christ, his gracious atonement nullified the power of law. Law only had power to bring sin. No law, or system of law, could, or can, save. With Hosea, Paul exults, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" Then he answers, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55-57). By his atonement Jesus "reduced to inactivity" the power of law to bring death. By his resurrection, the redemption and resurrection of those under the Law (Gal. 4:4), and the giving reconciliation and life to believers, he destroyed the last enemy which is death.

The Law of Moses was a schoolmaster-tutor-custodian to bring Israel to Christ for atonement (Read Gal. 3:21-29). Because the blood of animals could not atone for sin, offerings of atonement reminded them that they still had their guilt. Their constant reminder of the need for a better sacrifice pointed to Christ whose once-for-all-time offering could take away their sins and "reduce to inactivity" the ordinances and rituals of law. Jesus fulfilled, or completed, the meaning of the ordinances and rituals. He fulfilled the purpose of the covenant with Israel.

If you are inclined to think my arguments are weak and evasive, then explain the questions in our introduction.

Early in his ministry Jesus indicated that there would be some sort of extension, or overlapping, of the commandments into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:19-20). Not a jot or tittle of them would pass until heaven and earth passed away at their fulfillment. That dramatic language of celestial upheaval was used among the Hebrew writers denoting the overthrow of a system. It was used again by Jesus in Matthew 24:29-38 relating to the *parousia*, the coming of the Lord at the consummation of the covenant of law with Israel.

Yes, the atonement on the cross reduced to inactivity the covenant of law, but it did not leave people "law-less," or unaccountable, from then until Pentecost. Devout Jews in Rome and Alexandria were not made sinners on Pentecost when the gospel of grace was proclaimed and people entered the kingdom. Jesus had said, "And the gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end (of the covenant with Israel -ch) will come" (Matt. 24:14).

About thirty years after Pentecost, Paul spoke of "the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven" (Col. 1:13; 1:5-6; Rom. 10:18). During this period Judean disciples continued to keep the law (Acts 21:17-26). The Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) forbade the binding of circumcision, which represented the law, upon Gentiles, but there was no indication that Jewish believers would forsake it. After that, Paul circumcised Timothy. Paul, however, was rightly adamant that no one could look to the law for salvation, for that would have made Christ's atonement ineffective, thus causing one to fall from grace. But law-keeping as a matter of devotion and respect for their heritage was not forbidden. God gave a period of time for this transition.

If you will read the whole context of our texts in Colossians 2 and Ephesians 2, you will be impressed that disciples were no longer to be judged by keeping rituals and ordinances like those related to eating food, keeping days, and circumcision. Such were elemental matters beyond which being in Christ lifted them. Why should we squabble about them today as though they mattered?

In the sixties of the first century the writer of Hebrews declares, "In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). The covenant of law, after

being reduced to inactivity for over thirty years while the gospel message was expanding, had fulfilled its purpose in leading to the fullness of the covenant of grace and was ready to vanish.

Jesus said he would fulfill the law. That's what he did. All the ritual offerings would find their fulfillment in Christ – the Passover, scapegoat, atonement, firstfruits, peace offering, sin offering, trespass offering. Being fulfilled, these ceremonies would become irrelevant and fade from practice. The real thing replaced that which foreshadowed it. The law was not destroyed on the cross. It was fulfilled. It could no longer be kept after their temple was destroyed and their people were scattered. []

HOOK'S POINTS

➔ "One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time." - Andre Gide

➔ What a supportive congregation you are! We are a sort of cyberspace congregation. It thrills me to be in touch with you and to hear from you. When I think of how many of you there may be in this circle, I begin to have stage fright! Like when I served in the pulpit, I get to do most of the talking. You allow me to speak my piece without being too critical or judgmental. I do not claim to be the authoritative one. When I question traditional interpretations giving you a different view, I only wish that you check it out for yourself in further study. Since I have no prestigious status to protect, I can be more carefree in feeding you undigested materials. And you continue to be gracious. Thanks.

➔ For much of the last half-century, Leroy Garrett and Carl Ketcherside labored to turn us from divisive legalism to the uniting grace of God. They promoted the Biblical concept of "unity in diversity." They met with the usual (un)welcome and (dis)approval usually given reformers. So it is especially appropriate and refreshing that Leroy was invited to have part in Restoration history lectures at the ACU Lectureship this year. And – Surprise!! -- he was presented ACU's Award of Excellence "for outstanding contributions to the field of Restoration History in teaching, publishing, and mentoring." I am pleased that, now past eighty, he is being honored for his patient endeavors. The fact that the university can be bold enough to give that recognition indicates how widely his teachings have influenced our generation. I owe him much.

Speaking of Carl Ketcherside – his treasure trove of writings is available on the internet. Now, Bob Lewis has indexed all his writings, and Natalie Murrie has put that Index for our use there also. A tremendous source for reading and study. <http://www.unity-in-diversity.org/frm_page1.htm>.

➔ For those of you in the COC escaping from legalism who might wish to join a discussion group, Lee Wilson is providing just such a site. Check it out: <<http://www.freeyellow.com/members6/truégospel/index.html>>.

➔ If this issue of FR seems less focused than usual, it reflects my last several weeks. Lea's health continued to worsen so that she was hospitalized for ten days. With gratitude we can report dramatic improvement. Whereas she was almost bedfast, now she is able to be up a big part of the day and can move about unaided. While being stressed over her condition, the beauty of Oregon burst forth in blossom, and it seemed that each blossom added to my allergies. So I have lived in an antihistamine fog a big part of the time, but am now feeling much better and somewhat less grouchy. At our stage in life, every conversation includes a health report!

→ Do you suppose any of us ever has a thought that no one else has had? How about this one: Have you ever thought that the morning of Jesus' resurrection might have been windy and raining?

The Physical Made Spiritual

In the last issue of *Freedom's Ring* I wrote about our lack of perception of spiritual entities. We can relate to them only by giving them some physical or material dimension perceptible through our senses. Because of that, God communicated to us in accommodative ways employing physical concepts to reveal the unseen. A common tendency, however, has been to accept the literal, fleshly, earthly, materialistic accommodation as the real thing.

This manner of interpretation has prevailed in visualizing the nature of those in the heavenly realm in spite of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15. There he wrote, "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality" (v. 52-53). This "change" of which Paul speaks is generally thought to be a perfecting and immortalizing of the fleshly body, but an entity cannot be corporal and incorporeal at the same time..

A friend lent me his copy of Hank Hanegraaff's much publicized new book, *Resurrection*, which I scanned hurriedly. Especially in the area of apologetics, there is good material in the book, but I challenge his materialistic concept of heaven. Before I get to the main point, I will side-track to two other matters which I consider amusingly amazing.

Will there be sex after the resurrection, he asks? In answer to that question, he conjectures that, since God created sex in Eden, in the Eden restored (heaven) he will not remove it but redeem it – whatever that means. He explains that, even though there will be no marrying or giving in marriage, our risen bodies will still be male and female. Thus sexuality will still be a part of our nature so that men and women will enjoy each other, not in a mere physical sense, but in a metaphysical sense – whatever that means. After playing up the higher nature of our heavenly sexuality, however, he does state that there will be no physical sexual acts.

Even with such enjoyable spiritual sexuality, he does not reveal if the children who died before sexual maturity will miss out on that. Nor does he let us know if persons with same-sex attraction will have that inclination eternally. Nor if sexuality will allow for temptation. Nor if special privilege will be allowed former mates including those who had multiple mates. I suppose we will have to wait to find the answers but, in the meantime, I suggest that you not set your physical expectations too high!

Will we have our pets in heaven? Hank Hanegraaff offers "scriptural basis" for his assumptions that animals have souls by explaining that God created them "living creatures" (Gen. 1:20, 24; Rev. 8:9). Also, "Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down to the earth?" (Ecc. 3:21). What does that prove?

He conjectures that, since Eden had animals, there is reason to believe Eden restored will have them also. He further assumes that there will be green plants and flowers in heaven; so if God can raise grass to life again, why not cats? He (Hank, not God) definitely gives hope that one's pets may be raised! That is about as logical as saying that since the Garden of Eden

was on the Euphrates River in Iraq, restored Eden (heaven) will be in Iraq.

He does not explain if all animals will be raised, or what a poodle must do to qualify for eternal life! Will they be raised on the basis of having been loved by a human? If being the pet of a faithful individual qualifies them, then we may have an abundance of "immortal spiritual" cats, dogs, parrots, mice, skunks, snakes, horses, elephants, dinosaurs, porpoises – and even Keiko! If the nice monkey was the much-loved pet of an atheist, would that disqualify it from heaven? If a cat can be raised to immortality due to the love of a Christian woman, do you suppose she might get her unbelieving husband in by her love also? ☺ Not much evidence is required to "prove" something you want to believe!

Enough foolishness! Let's get to the main point. Will we have "flesh and bones" bodies in the resurrection? Hank says we will have such fleshly bodies made spiritual and immortal, and I would suppose that most believers accept that view.

He reasons like this: Jesus had a fleshly body that was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. In his transformed, spiritual body of the resurrection he demonstrated that he was still physical in the same body of his crucifixion. He consumed food. He invited them to see and touch his body with its scars, saying, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). Later, the disciples saw him ascend bodily into a cloud. So Jesus is in heaven in a body of flesh and bones. Because it was a spiritualized body did not mean it was not material also, he maintains. To illustrate that point, Hank states that the Bible is a material book but it is also a spiritual book at the same time. That is a poor illustration, however, for the spiritual quality of the content of the Bible is not comparable to the spiritual nature he attributes to the risen body.

The concept of a glorified physical body like that of Jesus would lead us to believe that fleshly imperfections like his scars and nail prints would be with us eternally.

Being the slow one in the class, I seem always to miss connective logic and that gives rise to questions. In the three manifestations of divinity – whether you call them the Trinity, the Godhead, or the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – do they not all have the same nature?

"God is spirit," Jesus said (John 4:24). "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God..." (Col. 1:15; see 1 Tim. 1:17). "No one has ever seen God," John asserts in John 1:18. Again, Jesus told them, "...a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have." So God, being spirit, has no flesh and bones. Since the heavenly realm is spiritual, Paul confirms, "I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:50).

Jesus' pre-incarnate state is described by John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2). Paul tells how he was in the form of God, with equality with God of which he divested himself in taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men in human form (Phil. 2:5-8). The Jews wanted to kill Jesus because he called God his Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:18). As he was about to become obedient to death, he prayed, "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made" (John 17:1-5). Jesus was to be restored to his pre-incarnate state divested this time of his human nature in which he had manifested himself to man. Otherwise, we have a "flesh and bones" King who cannot enter

his own kingdom, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Added to that is the popular expectation that Jesus will return to earth in a physical body to reign as king over a literal kingdom on earth. Talk about Nicodemus being confused about physical and spiritual things!

Failure to recognize that he is spirit would leave us with the concept of two unequal Gods with different natures. Do we have one spirit God who is invisible and omnipresent and another who is “spiritual flesh and bones,” visible, and limited in presence to that physical body?

“He was manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), even as God manifested himself in a burning bush and the Holy Spirit manifested himself in tongues of fire. The risen Christ is no more flesh than God and the Holy Spirit are fire. Throughout Bible history we read of God revealing himself through physical accommodations to which man in his physical state could relate.

What ultimately happened to Jesus’ “flesh and bones” body? Maybe you know. I don’t! It is not revealed. I admit with Paul, “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up to glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

We are informed, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Man, which included both sexes, was not made in a physical image of God, for God is Spirit. Of the Christ, it is written after his return to the Father, “He is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). To disciples awaiting his soon coming again, Paul wrote, “But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body..” (Phil. 3:10-21). The realm of our citizenship is heavenly rather than earthly. To other disciples expecting his appearance in their time, John assured, “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him (with scarred fleshly bodies? -ch), for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2-3). Since the divine is invisible, seeing him evidently means to discern him as is also indicated when Jesus said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

With these things in mind, let us look again at Paul’s word about the risen body: “If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, so we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:44-50).

What God does with our bodies, whether returning them to the earthly elements forever or giving them an eternal earthly nature, will not be determined by our understanding, imagination, or expectation. He will take care of that!

My concern is that believers tend to be too earthly minded and materialistic in perceiving spiritual truths. God began with fleshly Adam. He formed a literal nation. He ruled them by earthly kings and priests demanding performance of physical rituals. Through that earthly nation he brought forth his Son manifested in flesh in the form of man.

All of this was to reach out to earthly man in a manner he could comprehend in order to lead him to spiritual life. Now, through the spiritual Adam, Jesus, he has revealed The Way, The Truth, and The Life. Those accommodations to our physical perceptions have fulfilled their purpose and no longer prevail. We do not look for a restored kingdom or for heaven on this earth. He has led us from the tentative and physical to the eternal and spiritual. []

The Papacy in the Church

Is Pope John Paul in the Church of Christ? I don’t think many (any!) of our congregations would accept him “as is” if he requested to “place membership.”

The Reformers generally agreed that the “man of sin” (2 Thes. 2:1f) was/is the papacy. That belief was a part of my earliest indoctrination which I continued to believe and teach most of my career.

The man of sin was to “take his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” The bodies of individual disciples are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), and collectively the church, those saved, is God’s temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). That temple is we in our Restoration congregations, according to what I was taught and what is still taught widely. The temple, we agreed, is the Church of Christ, the universal church, as we thought of ourselves. So, when the man of sin was seated in the temple of God, he was in the Church of Christ (or church of Christ, if you prefer)!

Unwittingly, I had put the popes in the churches of Christ, while strongly denying that he was ever added by the Lord to his church!

The text does not indicate that the man of lawlessness would seat himself in the supposed temple, corrupted temple, or apostate temple. He would be in the real temple, but not among the redeemed ones added by the Lord. That temple was the center of Jewish worship in Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, and it was not the church!

Can there be such a thing as an apostate church? The church is the saved collectively. Does the Lord have an apostate saved group to which he adds persons? An existing group of saved persons may depart from the faith, thus losing their identity with God’s assembly, but is the next generation of any apostate group added to the church? If an apostate group perpetuates itself, it is not a church by Scriptural definition even though it is a Christian community. Therefore, historically the papacy could not be in the church.

Now, let me soften my dogmatism a bit. Although I am convinced that the papal system with its hierarchy and dogma are not what Jesus established, I will not usurp Jesus’ place in order to judge the sincere efforts of its adherents. He is not ruled by my convictions in dispensing his grace.

So, Pope John Paul has occupied no seat with us. Neither does the man of sin sit in the temple in Jerusalem, for it was destroyed shortly after Paul wrote his epistle. Actually, our reform movement which we call the Church of Christ has not even existed during most of the history of the papacy.

A “falling away” or “rebellion” would develop before the coming of the Lord that the Thessalonians were concerned about. Influenced by general assumptions, I always thought the falling away was to be within the church. However, now I am convinced that it is speaking of the rebellion of the Jews against the Roman rule which brought the destruction of their temple, city, and nation. Later translations use the word “rebellion.” This rebellion was in process, though restrained, when Paul wrote the epistle. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived at the

time, tells of the development of the rebellion. He names men who were involved, even the man who set himself up in the Temple in defiance of God and of Roman rule. Through this situation the Lord came in his judgment and vengeance upon his disobedient people. But that is an involved account which we will not pursue at this time.

This nationalistic Jewish zealot, rather than the popes, was the man of sin who desecrated the Jewish temple and instigated a rebellion against Roman rule which brought the downfall of the nation of Israel. []

CEREMONIES OF BAPTISM

Because Jesus attached importance to baptism, most all Christian groups practice baptism. We would expect that all would follow the same method and emphasize the same purpose, but that is far from the truth. My purpose in this column is to show without commentary the extreme difference.

No ceremony of baptism could be more simple and formal than that practiced by my people. A person was asked if he/she believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Upon an affirmative response, that person was immersed backward in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Seldom was there any embellishment of the event.

Toward fifty years ago I had in my possession an old set of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* from which I copied the "Ceremonies of Baptism" from Volume 2, page 273. Simply for your information, I include without commentary what I copied. I no longer have the book by which to check the correctness of my copy. The actions are in upper case type while explanations are in lower case. It follows:

The rites that accompany the baptismal ablution are as ancient as they are beautiful. The writings of the early Fathers and the antique liturgies show that most of them derived from Apostolic times.

THE INFANT IS BROUGHT TO THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH BY THE SPONSORS, WHERE IT IS MET BY THE PRIEST. AFTER THE GODPARENTS HAVE ASKED FAITH FROM THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE CHILD'S NAME, THE PRIEST BREATHEES UPON ITS FACE AND EXORCISES THE EVIL SPIRIT. St. Augustine makes use of this Apostolic practice of exorcising to prove the existence of original sin. THEN THE INFANT'S FOREHEAD AND BREAST ARE SIGNED WITH THE CROSS, THE SYMBOL OF REDEMPTION. NEXT FOLLOWS THE IMPOSITION OF HANDS, A CUSTOM CERTAINLY AS OLD AS THE APOSTLES. SOME BLESSED SALT IS NOW PLACED IN THE MOUTH OF THE CHILD. "When salt," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, "is put into the mouth of the person to be baptized, it evidently imports that, by the doctrine of faith and the gift of grace, he should be delivered from the corruption of sin, experience a relish for good works, and be delighted with the food of divine wisdom." PLACING THE STOLE OVER THE CHILD, THE PRIEST INTRODUCES IT INTO THE CHURCH, AND ON THE WAY TO THE FONT THE SPONSORS MAKE A PROFESSION OF FAITH FOR THE INFANT. THE PRIEST NOW TOUCHES THE EARS AND NOSTRILS OF THE CHILD WITH SPITTLE.

The symbolic meaning is thus explained (Catechism of the Council of Trid.): "His nostrils and ears are next touched with spittle and he is immediately sent to the baptismal font, that, as sight was restored to the blind man mentioned in the Gospel, who the Lord, after having spread clay over his eyes, commanded to wash them in the waters of Siloe; so also we may understand that the efficacy of the sacred ablution is such as to bring light to the mind to discern heavenly truth."

THE CATECHUMEN NOW MAKES THE TRIPLE RENUNCIATION OF SATAN, HIS WORKS AND HIS POMPS. AND HE IS ANOINTED WITH THE OIL OF CATECHUMENS ON THE BREAST AND BETWEEN THE SHOULDERS: "On the breast, that by the gift of the Holy Ghost, he may cast off error and ignorance and may receive the true faith, 'for the just man liveth by faith' (Galat. 3:11); on the shoulders, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit, he may shake off negligence and torpor and engage in the performance of good works; 'for, faith without works is dead' (James 2:26), says the Catechism.

NOW THE INFANT, THROUGH ITS SPONSORS, MAKES A DECLARATION OF FAITH AND ASKS FOR BAPTISM. THE PRIEST, HAVING MEANTIME CHANGED HIS VIOLET STOLE FOR A WHITE ONE, THEN ADMINISTERS THE THREEFOLD ABLUTION, MAKING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS THREE TIMES WITH THE STREAM OF WATER HE POURS ON THE HEAD OF THE CHILD, SAYING AT THE SAME TIME: "(NAME), I BAPTIZE THEE IN TH NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY GHOST." THE SPONSORS DURING THE ABLUTION EITHER HOLD THE CHILD OR AT LEAST TOUCH IT. IF THE BAPTISM IS GIVEN BY IMMERSION, THE PRIEST DIPS THE BACK PART OF THE HEAD THREE TIMES INTO THE WATER IN THE FORM OF A CROSS, PRONOUNCING THE SACRAMENTAL WORDS. THE CROWN OF THE CHILD'S HEAD IS NOW ANOINTED WITH CHRISM, "to give him to understand from that day he is united as a member to Christ, his head, and engrafted on His body; and therefore he is called a Christian from Christ, but Christ chrisim" (Catech.). A WHITE VEIL IS NOW PUT ON THE INFANT'S HEAD WITH THE WORDS: "RECEIVE THIS WHITE GRAMENT, WHICH MAYEST THOU CARRY WITHOUT STAIN BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT THOU MAYEST HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. AMEN." THEN A LIGHTED CANDLE IS PLACE IN THE CATECHUMEN'S HAND, THE PRIEST SAYING: "RECEIVE THIS BURNING LIGHT, AND KEEP THY BAPTISM SO AS TO BE WITHOUT BLAME. OBSERVE THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD; THAT WHEN OUR LORD SHALL COME TO HIS NUPTIALS, THOU MAYEST HAVE LIFE EVER-LASTING, AND LIVE FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN." THE NEW CHRISTIAN IS THEN BIDDEN TO GO IN PEACE.

In the baptism of adults, all the essential ceremonies are the same as for infants. There are, however, some impressive additions. THE PRIEST WEARS THE COPE OVER HIS OTHER VESTMENTS, AND HE SHOULD BE ATTENDED BY A NUMBER OF CLERICS OR AT LEAST BY TWO. WHILE THE CATECHUMEN WAITS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH DOOR, THE PRIEST RECITES SOME PRAYERS AT THE ALTAR. THEN HE PROCEEDS TO THE PLACE WHERE THE CANDIDATE IS, AND ASKS ALL THE QUESTIONS AND PERFORMS THE EXORCISMS ALMOST AS PRESCRIBED IN THE RITUAL FOR INFANTS. BEFORE ADMINISTERING THE BLESSED SALT, HOWEVER, HE REQUIRES THE CATECHUMEN TO MAKE AN EXPLICIT RENUNCIATION OF THE FORM OF ERROR TO WHICH HE HAD FORMERLY ADHERED, AND HE IS THEN SIGNED WITH THE CROSS ON THE BROW, EARS, EYES, NOSTRILS, MOUTH, BREAST, AND BETWEEN THE SHOULDERS. AFTERWARDS, THE CANDIDATE, ON BENDED KNEES RECITES THREE SEVERAL TIMES THE LORD'S PRAYER AND A CROSS IS MADE ON HIS FOREHEAD, FIRST BY THE GODFATHER AND THEN BY THE PRIEST. AFTER THIS, TAKING HIM BY THE HAND, THE PRIEST LEADS HIM INTO THE CHURCH, WHERE HE ADORES PROSTRATE AND THEN RISING RECITES THE APOSTLES' CREED AND THE LORD'S PRAYER.

The other ceremonies are practically the same as for infants. It is to be noted that owing to the difficulty of carrying out with proper

splendour the ritual for baptizing adults, the bishops of the United States obtained permission from the Holy See to make use of the ceremonial of infant baptism instead. This general dispensation lasted until 1857, when the ordinary law of the Church went into force. (See Baltimore, Councils of). Some American dioceses, however, obtained individual permissions to continue the use of the ritual for infants when administering adult baptism. []

In Defense of the Apostles' "Power Dispute"

You have long since learned that "A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24). You have wondered at their insensitivity and selfishness in being involved in a grab for power at such a crucial time.

Maybe it is my aging mind that is playing tricks on me, but the optical illusion that I have seen since my teenage years shifted suddenly so that I see the picture from a surprisingly different viewpoint. Let me share it with you. If you think it is a delusion instead of a true perspective, I will still try to love you even though I might not like you as well as when you agree with me.

During his ministry, Jesus had much to say about his kingdom. He had these shocking words to share with his little band of apostles. Rather early in his time with the apostles, he assured them, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Then, on the night of his betrayal, he added, "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28f).

Jesus was laying some awesome news on the twelve apostles who were without skill or experience in executive or administrative leadership. WOW!! No wonder that they would begin disputing about who would be greatest – the leader among them..

In the setting of his Transfiguration, Jesus told the disciples of the imminence of the kingdom and that he would be delivered up, killed, and raised the third day. The disciples were greatly distressed (Matt. 16:28; 17:22-24). Then the disciples inquired of Jesus as to who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (18:1). Jesus told them they must become as little children, for whoever humbles himself like a child is the greatest.

As Mark relates the account in Mark 9, he tells of Jesus pointing to the child as an example also, but adding "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and the servant of all" (v. 35).

In Luke's account, he states that an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. Then he quotes Jesus as saying, "Who is least among you all is the one who is great" (Luke 9:46-48).

No doubt, the disciples pondered Jesus' statements, yet he had not clarified specifically the questions in their minds. Who are these people you have in mind? Give us some names!

At another time the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, got into the act. Their Mom would help supply some candidates by name. She asked Jesus to let her sons have key and honored places in his kingdom. That became an embarrassment all the way around. Her request was not granted. The other disciples were indignant by the impropriety of her request and the sons going along with her on it.

Then Jesus gave them another lesson about greatness, saying, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:20-28). Still, Jesus did not answer specifically their burning question.

Time passes. It is the night of his betrayal. The cross will be tomorrow. They are gathered for the Last Supper, as Luke records in Chapter 22. Jesus was preparing them for his leaving. During the Passover meal it became clear that the time had come for Jesus to be delivered up and crucified. The anxiety of the disciples evidently continued to intensify. So there was another private discussion among the apostles about which of them was to be regarded as greatest.

In this awesome moment in history, were the apostles locked in a selfish power struggle? Had Jesus not already touched on this issue sufficiently? In view of the indignation expressed when James and John let their mother lead them into status-seeking, could they all now be caught up in a power dispute? Had selfishness conquered them all? Let's think better thoughts of them.

In this setting, Jesus told them, "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." You mean us? Lord, you can't mean that! We are just fishermen! We know nothing of administering a kingdom and of judging Israel! The thought of it brought overpowering fear!

From this viewpoint, let us imagine their dispute/argument sessions about who would be great. They asked, "If Jesus is going to put a kingdom in our charge, who among us is great enough to be ruler?" Philip speaks up, "I think Matthew would do best for he his older and has held a responsible government job." Andrew argues, "Maybe we should look outside our circle. Since James is the brother of our Lord and a son of David, it seems that he is the best qualified." Bartholemew puts in his word, "Simon Peter has the most courage and leadership qualities which a great man must have. He fits best." James, the son of Alphaeus, proposes, "We all know that John is the most spiritual minded among us and seems to be favored by Jesus. He has greater understanding than the rest of us."

Thus discussion could flow, even intensely, as they tried to get ahead of Jesus in the selection of the greatest man to serve. Though they were lacking in understanding of the nature of the kingdom, they were unselfishly trying to put a specific name where Jesus had not.

Back before the Transfiguration, Simon Peter was the first to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Upon his confession, Jesus promised to give him the keys of the kingdom which evidently he used in announcing the gospel on Pentecost. Here in this Last Supper setting, Jesus calls attention to the test Peter would undergo, perhaps as a reminder of the promise made to him earlier. After his resurrection, Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-13). They were equals in the kingdom.

All right, you think I have lost my sanity. You are not the first to reach that conclusion. Many other slow learners agree with you! ☺

A perverse attitude makes us more eager to interpret negatively than with compassion.

The lesson hardest to learn is that the great ones in the kingdom are those humble, unselfish persons who serve. Jesus did not establish a system of rule and authority of men in his church. He involves us all. []

WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU

(These notes with the names of their writers are copied from the Guest Book at my web site. To the writers of all these notes: Thanks for sharing you experiences and thoughts. Thanks also for your extravagant praise. You are most gracious!).

→ Thanks, Cecil! Your books have made such a difference in our understanding of God's word! -Gene Shoemake <gene346296@aol.com> Edmond, OK.

→ Cecil, I've read two of your newsletters (via Ray Downen) and finally checked out your site and will subscribe to your online newsletter today. Thanks for your clear and bold thinking and for challenging the 'business-as-usual-boys' to think outside the 'churchbox.' -Rex Boykin <bcofc@worldinter.net>, Belton, MO.

→ I believe it must be more than ten years since I corresponded, obtaining and distributing copies of "*Free In Christ*." The grace and freedom I've experienced and shared in the intervening years have been phenomenal, thanks in no small measure to the "Free" series of booklets which helped me to come to the realization I have an "abba" Father in God, not a stern visaged judge waiting to nail me for the least misstep. I am looking very much forward to renewing our acquaintance now that I am free to serve. Your fellow slave, Lex Barker <tarzan99@bellsouth.net>, Kennesaw, GA.

→ I am thankful to get back in contact with you. I've given away dozens of your books over the years. Your book *Free In Christ* has helped to change the lives of 100's of people that I know of. I thank God for you and your work. I'm the evangelist here in Fayette, MO at one of the few congregations that I can work with in Missouri as this state is pretty rigid. God led us to this congregation and worked everything out, long story but a good one. I found out you had a site on the web from a brother last night who came over from Moberly for our singing. I would like a dozen of your *Free In Christ* books to give away. I have learned not to give them to just anybody, as some won't get past the first page. -Ted Mountjoy <tedmontjoy@aol.com>.

→ Glad I found this. Look forward to accessing often. -Jimmy Crenshaw <mimijbc@aolcom> Metairie, LA.

→ I was brought up in the "Church of Christ," whereas my wife was brought up in the Episcopal Church. For the longest time, I thought that any other beliefs outside the Church were wrong. My wife even converted when I was stationed in Germany because she heard one of our missionaries come and speak to us about all the different types of faiths. He put on the chalk board all the beliefs and at the bottom he put the Church of Christ and then challenged us to find those in the Bible. The only one that could be found, he says, is the Church of Christ. Well, that won my wife over. I have just recently come to the understanding that I am and have been a fool. Who am I to say that all the other beliefs and the people who follow them are wrong? I have found that we as Church of Christ-ers, so to speak, are very judging. We are also using tactics to tear down each others' walls, such as guilt trips, taking the Lord's word out of context, and so on. I remember the only time in my life where Christ was everyone's focal point, was when

I attended York Christian College in Nebraska. We were all young and very unconcerned about the petty issues. We all just wanted to be with Him one day and we were determined to help each other get there. My wife and I are going through a very hard time now with the Church of Christ we attend. We are surrounded here by a predominant belief in Utah and I feel that may have a lot to do with what is going on in this congregation. My wife and I would love to hear from other Christians around the world, if for no other reason, support and outreach. I would be more than happy to write to anyone and most of all listen to any suggestions anyone may have. Thank you and God bless. -David Cooper <dacoupe@bigfoot.com> Hill AFB, UT.

→ God's blessings rest upon you! I want you to know how helpful for me your monthly newsletter is. I know you get weary and at times may even wonder, "why?" If I can, I'd like to encourage you and let you know that what you do is neither pointless nor in vain. Your method of teaching has challenged me to ask the tough questions I always seemed to find ease in avoiding. Now, I see things so much more clearly – so simply! Best of all, it makes sense too. Sister Hook is in my prayers. I want you to know what a blessing you and your work continues to be. -Rochester, MN.

→ I'd like to become active in this ministry. I read *Free In Christ* long ago and knew it contained teachings and insights that many of "our" people would disagree with. But I cannot put it down. I'm a brother and friend of John Hurley, who freely used the book to help others understand what I now know to be true, grace-filled, non-legalistic teachings of Christ. I subscribed yesterday and want to learn as much as I can about expectations and grace. -<stevec365@aol.com>, North Little Rock, AR.

→ Thank you so much!!! -Paul Neely, <neelyfam@mbusa.net>, Auburntown, TN.

→ I like what I see. I studied myself out of the organized religion of the Church of Christ about 12 years ago and have been just a Christian ever since and couldn't be happier. Am anxious to meet and communicate with others in similar situations. I'm glad to find your site as I don't have any likeminded people to fellowship with here where I live. -John A. Rhodes, rhoadesdev@lankaster.com>, Paulden, AZ.

→ Blind acceptance breeds a deadly type of conformity. One should openly, aggressively and honestly study the scriptures in effort to uncover the mystery of the gospel. The mainstream Church of Christ members, as a rule, place their trust in pulpit doctrine, flimsy interpretations, antiquated translations, distorted scriptures and worship based upon the traditions of man. That is why their membership is beginning to decrease drastically. That is why this site and similar sites are so popular. The more that people study, the less willing they are to participate and worship with a group that bases its beliefs upon condemnation, self-righteousness and religious bigotry. After a lifetime membership (and service as a deacon) in the mainstream Church of Christ, my family and I refuse to be a part of a group that wears "blindness" and shoots its wounded! We have been "Home churching" for over a year. We contribute directly to the poor and needy rather than allowing our contribution to be used for elaborate church buildings, luxury automobiles and huge salaries! -Ray Steelman <mail@bamajammer.com>, New Market, AL.

→ My 30-year experience with the Church of Christ was seriously damaged by a church in Richmond, VA where an elder discovered that I was divorced (my wife ran off with another man leaving me with our infant daughter) and told me not to come back because "we don't want unmarried divorced men in this congregation." They had a preacher whom I had called and he came and visited with me and invited me to attend. I came and then was told to leave. The churches of Christ are truly an army of believers who shoot their wounded. Then, two of my best friends, an elder in the church and a

rather famous preacher in the church left the church for reasons that mirrored my own experience. I wish religion could just concentrate on the positive aspects of it's mission and leave out the chastising, judgmentalism, and back biting that is so prevalent where I have been. I have related only one of several incidents which bring to mind the passage, "You shall know them by their works." I have seen the works and they do not point to the Christian ethics I have studied in the Bible. It is a shame you are running people away when you should be drawing them to you – good people with good minds and good morals and good works. Enough said. Thank you for this small platform. -Pat Baughman <jpatb70@hotmail.com> St. Matthews, NC.

→ Kindred spirits are a joy to experience. -Gary Bruce <gary.bruce@oc.edu> Oklahoma City, OK.

→ Thanks, Dave, for the address to this site! I thought I was all alone. I'm not spoon fed anymore by anyone! I read the Word

Christ? Also, is there a way of embracing the grace of God without embracing Calvinism in its various forms? In my opinion, the doctrine of predestination makes God the first cause and author of all evil in the world, and therefore man is not personally accountable for his sins. What do you think? -Mark, Birmingham, AL.

→ Just to know there is yet a caring, wonderful, intelligent man walking this earth, such as you, gives me a great lift, great hope, great joy! We slog along in the "Calf Path." Thank you dear friend. -Kathy, Kerrville, TX.

→ A friend gave me this address and, when I opened it and recognized the name, I felt a shiver go down my spine. I have been trying to let the Spirit lead me and open doors, and it's exciting when you realize He does lead you if you let Him have control. -Kathy Yarbrough, <noel@theriver.com> Hereford, AZ.

for myself and let the Spirit lead me. WOW! What a change! I was raised in a legalistic C of C (men can't have hair past their upper neck, suit and tie on Sundays, *Acapella* was even bad in my house because they made their voices SOUND like instruments) I could go on and on. Praise God that I am free and that HE is my judge! -Rose Stover <rdstover@kda.attmil.ne.jp> Kadena AB, AP Japan.

→ Excellent site. I pray for openness in the churches of Christ! Let us learn we can disagree on unimportant things and be bonded together on the central truth! -Kyle Swicegood <kswice@swicegoodwall.co> Mocksville NC.

→ I received the books I ordered from you on Friday. I have already read two. It is extremely difficult to "let go" of what you have believed is "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" all your life. However, intellectual honesty compels me to do that. Having been raised as a "you get grace by law keeping" Christian, I felt I made too many compromises with context to prove points that were simply not there. Not only is grace liberating spiritually and emotionally, it also frees from the guilt of intellectual dishonesty. -Randy, Colorado Springs.

→ I want you to know that your ministry has truly been used of God to set me free from the "traditions" I had become indoctrinated in through my years in the Church of Christ. Now, I am studying everything with an open mind and questioning all my prior assumptions. On some issues I have strengthened my stand, on others I have done a complete turn-around, and others (such as the role of women in the church) I am still studying. Thank you for offering these wonderful thought-provoking materials. -<swaf@bigbear.net>

→ I am a big fan of you and your books. My question is, have you noticed a wave of "Calvinism" sweeping into the Churches of